

Seinfeld | The Contest

Vocabulary Breakdown

Hollywood English Club

1) "One thing led to another"

■ This phrase means something happened step by step, and the situation quickly turned into something more serious, often romantic, sexual, or embarrassing.

✓ Use this when you want to explain a chain of events without going into the messy details. It implies things escalated naturally.

- ▶ *"We were just watching a movie, and one thing led to another."*
 - ▶ *"He found an old magazine, started reading it, and one thing led to another."*
-

2) "Zip up"

■ To zip up means to quickly close the zipper on your pants or clothing.

✓ Perfectly innocent on its own, but context can make it loaded with embarrassment.

- ▶ *"I forgot to zip up before going on stage. Embarrassing!"*
 - ▶ *"He zipped up his jacket before heading outside."*
-

3) "In traction"

■ To be in traction means you are in a hospital bed with medical equipment holding your body still, usually after a serious injury.

✓ If someone says they ended up "in traction," the injury was bad enough to require hospital care and immobilisation.

- ▶ *"After the accident, he was in traction for three weeks."*
 - ▶ *"She broke her back and had to lie in traction to heal."*
-

4) "Because it's there"

■ A humorous or sarcastic way to explain why you did something. You are basically saying "I did it just because I could."

✓ Originally from mountaineer George Mallory. In everyday speech, it means the opportunity just presented itself.

- ▶ *"Why did I eat the whole cake? Because it was there."*
 - ▶ *"I didn't need the shoes. But they were 50% off and they were there."*
-

5) "Give me a break"

■ This phrase shows annoyance or disbelief, like saying "Seriously?" or "Come on!"

✓ Tone matters: said sharply it means genuine irritation; said with a laugh it is more playful.

- ▶ *"You expect me to believe that? Give me a break!"*
 - ▶ *"Give me a break. I was only five minutes late."*
-

6) "Hold out"

■ To hold out means to resist doing something tempting for as long as you can.

✓ Can be used in any situation where someone is resisting temptation or pressure. It suggests real effort and willpower.

- ▶ *"I was trying to hold out on eating sugar, but then came the brownies."*
 - ▶ *"He held out for three days before caving."*
-

7) "Make it interesting"

■ This phrase means to add a challenge or bet to make a situation more exciting.

✓ A natural way to propose a wager or raise the stakes. Sounds casual and inviting rather than confrontational.

▶ *"You think you can beat me? Let's make it interesting."*

▶ *"They were bored until someone said, 'Let's make it interesting. \$10 on the next round.'"*

8) "Care to...?"

■ A polite or slightly teasing way to ask someone to do something.

✓ Slightly more formal than "do you want to" but can sound playful or sarcastic depending on tone.

▶ *"Care to join me for dinner?"*

▶ *"Care to explain what you were doing in my office?"*

9) "Put up" (money)

■ To put up money means to offer or contribute money for a bet, challenge, or investment.

✓ Used in betting, poker, and business contexts. It means you are committing real resources, not just talking.

▶ *"You want in? You've got to put up \$100."*

▶ *"He put up the cash to join the poker game."*

10) "Honor system"

■ The honor system is when people are trusted to do the right thing without anyone watching them.

✓ Used everywhere from school exams to parking fees. It assumes people will behave honestly when no one is policing them.

▶ *"This is the honor system. Just take one cookie."*

▶ *"We're not tracking hours, so we're working on the honor system."*

11) "Glamour magazine"

■ Glamour is a real magazine known for fashion, beauty, and relationships, often read by women.

✓ A cultural reference as much as a vocabulary item. Finding a Glamour in someone's house was a cliché source of entertainment for bored visitors.

▶ *"She flipped through Glamour while waiting for her hair appointment."*

▶ *"He found an old Glamour magazine and started reading it out of boredom."*

12) "Clutching"

■ To clutch means to grab something tightly, often because you are scared, shocked, or in pain.

✓ "Clutching" adds physical intensity. It suggests panic, desperation, or a loss of control.

▶ *"She clutched the armrest during the scary scene."*

▶ *"He was clutching his chest, panicking."*

13) "It's like shaving"

■ A casual, humorous way to say something is a normal everyday routine.

✓ Using a mundane activity to normalise something taboo is a classic comedy technique.

▶ *"For some guys, going to the gym is like shaving. Just part of the day."*

▶ *"Skipping breakfast? That's like not shaving. Feels weird."*

14) "Baloney"

■ Baloney is slang for nonsense or something clearly not true.

- ✓ Very American, informal, and punchy. The equivalent of "rubbish" in British English.
 - ▶ "He said he won the lottery. That's baloney!"
 - ▶ "Pure baloney. She believes in aliens living under her house."
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15) "Two to one odds"

- A betting expression. "Two to one odds" means someone is less likely to win, so they have to bet more to get the same reward.
 - ✓ For every \$1 you bet, you win \$2 if you are right. The longer the odds, the less likely the outcome.
 - ▶ "You want in? It's two to one odds you'll lose."
 - ▶ "The horse had two to one odds, so it paid out double if it won."
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16) "Confines"

- Confines means limits or boundaries.
 - ✓ Often appears in formal or semi-formal language. Suggests a space or rules that something must stay within.
 - ▶ "Within the confines of the contract, we can't make changes."
 - ▶ "He felt trapped within the confines of his small office."
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English from Seinfeld's FUNNIEST Scene | Everyday Vocabulary

Student Worksheet
Hollywood English Club

Part 1: Match the Expression

Draw a line to match each expression with its correct meaning.

- | | |
|-----------------------------|--|
| 1. One thing led to another | A. To resist doing something tempting |
| 2. Hold out | B. An unmonitored system based on trust |
| 3. Honor system | C. Events escalated without being planned |
| 4. Baloney | D. Grab something tightly in shock or fear |
| 5. Clutching | E. Nonsense / something clearly untrue |

Part 2: Fill in the Blanks

Choose the correct word or phrase to complete each sentence.

Word bank: zip up | in traction | baloney | hold out | put up

1. After the car accident, she was _____ for six weeks.
2. He tried to _____ against the dessert, but the chocolate cake was too good.
3. "You want to bet on it? Then _____ some money."
4. He rushed to _____ his jacket before the interview started.
5. "That story is complete _____. I don't believe a word of it."

Part 3: True or False

Read each sentence and write TRUE or FALSE on the line.

1. "Give me a break" means you need to rest. _____
2. "Care to make it interesting?" is a way to suggest a bet. _____
3. "In traction" means someone is travelling a long distance. _____
4. "Because it's there" is often used as a humorous or lazy excuse. _____

5. "Two to one odds" means both sides have an equal chance. _____

Part 4: Rewrite the Sentence

Replace the underlined word or phrase with the correct expression from the box.

Expression box: make it interesting | confines | it's like shaving | give me a break | one thing led to another

1. "They said they'd win, so we decided to add a bet to raise the stakes."

Answer _____

2. "Within the limits of our agreement, we can't change the terms."

Answer _____

3. "Doing the dishes every morning is just part of my daily routine."

Answer _____

4. "We started chatting, and things gradually escalated into a full argument."

Answer _____

5. "You expect me to believe he ate the entire pizza? Come on, seriously!"

Answer _____

Part 5: Your Turn

Answer these questions in your own words. Use the vocabulary from this lesson.

1. Have you ever had to "hold out" against something tempting? What happened?

2. Can you think of a situation where you might say "one thing led to another"?

3. Write your own sentence using "give me a break."