

# Language for ...

## home repairs

**Age:** Teenager / adult



**Level:** Upper Intermediate – Advanced

**Length:** 90 minutes (approx.)

**Language Focus:** key expressions and vocabulary for typical conversations related to home repairs

**Skills:** speaking, reading

**Materials:** one copy of the worksheet per student; if possible, a PC/projector with an internet connection in the classroom (but this is not essential)

**Aims:** to allow students to effectively understand and use common expressions for talking about home repairs, both in the context of DIY and in dealing with tradespeople (plumbers, electricians, etc.).

### What are red words?

Ninety per cent of the time, speakers of English use just 7,500 words in speech and writing. These words appear in the Macmillan Dictionary in red and are graded with stars. One-star words are frequent, two-star words are more frequent and three-star words are the most frequent. 'Language for' lessons are based on red words and encourage students to improve their English through communicative tasks using collocation and commonly used phrases.

<https://www.macmillandictionary.com/learn/red-words.html>

- 1 Begin the lesson by showing the class an image of a famous hardware chain (e.g. *Home Depot*, *Leroy Merlin*, etc.). Ask them to brainstorm common reasons why people might go to these shops (e.g. to buy tools, to buy items like lightbulbs or screws, to talk to the shop assistants about how to repair problems in the home, etc.). Write up some of the students' suggestions. Tell the class that in this lesson, they'll study useful language to talk about home repairs.
- 2 Make sure all of the students have a copy of the worksheet. Put the students into teams of three or four and refer them to the photo in Task 1a of the student worksheet. Make sure the teams have a combination of weak and strong students. Elicit the names of two or three items from the photos. Then read aloud the instructions for the task. Tell students that each group must work together to come up with words, and all members should write these words in their notebooks.
- 3 Allow the students to start writing words. Remind them they have one minute and once the time is up, ask groups to compare the words they've suggested. Monitor the class as they compare, taking note of good suggestions. Write up these suggestions and elicit definitions for them. To ensure understanding for later tasks, make sure that you have focused on the following words: *sink*, *tap*, *pipe* (if these haven't been suggested by any groups, simply write them up and elicit definitions). Finally, decide which team suggested the highest number of correct words and declare them as the winner.
- 4 Refer students to Task 1b. Give them a certain time limit (e.g. three minutes) to discuss the question in pairs. Monitor the class as they do this and make notes. Then elicit the "circumstances" which each professional could deal with.
- 5 Now read aloud the instructions for Task 1c. When you reach the phrase *DIY*, ask your stronger students to explain what that means ("Do-It-Yourself"). Also take care to draw students' attention to the phrase "do some DIY", focusing on the unusual fact that *DIY* is usually preceded by the verb "do". Perhaps ask questions to ensure understanding (e.g. "*Maria*, have you done any *DIY* at home lately?"). Once this is clear,

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- allow students a few minutes to talk in pairs about the items in the list. Take notes as they speak. Finally, give feedback, focusing on any good *DIY* language that students may have used.
- 6 Read aloud the instructions for Task 2a and set a time limit of a few minutes for students to complete it. Allow them to work individually. Monitor the class as they do this, helping weaker students with difficult parts of the texts. Once the time is up, ask all students to compare their answers in pairs. Finally, elicit the correct answers. For questions which students may have found difficult, look back at the corresponding parts of the texts.
  - 7 Refer students to Task 2b and read the instructions aloud. Again, set a time limit and ask students to work individually. Once the time is up, students compare their answers in pairs. Finally, check the answers as a class and focus on the correct pronunciation of the new words.
  - 8 Now, read aloud the instructions for Task 2c. Complete the first item together as a class, eliciting a concise but accurate definition for the verb *flood* (see Answer Key). Then ask students to work in pairs to come up with definitions for the remaining words/phrases. Finally, elicit a good definition for each and write it up. It might be good to discuss the benefit of using the context of the conversation to define words and phrases.
  - 9 Before starting the next task, ask the class what they think are the most common DIY jobs that people do. You may need to help students with new vocabulary for this. Write some of their suggestions on the board. Now read aloud the instructions for Task 2d. Ask students to work in pairs to read the items in the list. Ask them to use the descriptions of the jobs and the words they have learned to help them. Again, draw their attention to the benefit of context because while there is less context in this task, there is enough to understand the words.
  - 10 Refer students to Task 2e, specifically to the final part. Allow them a few minutes to speak in pairs and rate the difficulty of each of the FIVE items from the list. Ask students to write the number of the jobs in order from easiest to most difficult. Monitor and provide feedback. Check if there is any consensus about which DIY job is the most difficult.
  - 11 Refer students to Task 3a and read the instructions aloud. Perhaps elicit which word fits the first gap as a class, showing students that they may be able to identify the answers without looking back at the texts. Allow students a few minutes to complete the gaps in pairs and then elicit the answers.
  - 12 Read aloud the instructions for Task 3b, asking students to work individually. Monitor the class as they do this and help weaker students by highlighting the problematic word in each sentence. After a few minutes, ask students to compare answers in pairs before finally checking answers as a class.
  - 13 For Task 4, put the students in new pairs and ask them to decide who is Student A and Student B. Read the instructions aloud and ask students to turn to the corresponding page for Student A or Student B at the end of the worksheet. It could be a good idea for you to first do a sample roleplay with a volunteer. Select one of the four conversations and do the roleplay – it should only take a minute or two. Once everybody is clear about what they need to do, set a time limit for students to complete all four roleplays

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(e.g. ten minutes). Allow them to begin, monitoring them as they speak and taking notes. When the time is up, ask individual students to retell some of their conversations to the class (e.g. *Silvia, why did you tell Hugo that his quote was ridiculous?!).* Finally, give feedback.

- 14** Students remain in the same pairs. Refer them to Task 5. Give students a few minutes to discuss the sentences, encouraging them to incorporate new language from this lesson. Once the time is up, you could have a brief class debate about who in the class most enjoys doing some DIY. Finally, provide feedback on both good language and errors which may have come up.

### Key

#### 1. Warmer

Task a:

Key: refrigerator (fridge), freezer, cupboards, sink, tap, (water) pipe, cooker, oven, extractor fan, socket, counter, drawer

Task b:

**plumber** = someone whose job is to fit and repair pipes, water tanks, and other equipment used for supplying and storing water; **electrician** = someone whose job is to repair or install electrical equipment; **locksmith** = someone whose job is to fix locks on doors and windows and to open doors for people who have lost their keys; **painter** = someone whose job is to paint walls, doors, etc. or the outside of houses and other buildings; **handyman/handywoman** = someone whose job is to repair things and do other types of practical work in people's houses

#### 2. Text

Task a:

1. True; 2. False; 3. False; 4. True

Task b:

1. quote; 2. leak; 3. crack; 4. the mains; 5. kit; 6. lever; 7. patch; 8. call-out

Task c: (suggested definitions)

to **flood** = to become covered or filled with water; a **burst pipe** = a pipe which is broken in some way, allowing water or gas to come out; to **send** somebody **around** = when a company sends a professional (plumber, doctor, social worker, etc.) to your house to deal with a problem; to **replace** something = to get rid of something, and to put a new thing in its place; a **hardware shop** = a shop that sells metal goods and things for your home or garden such as pans, knives, tools, and chemical products; a **video tutorial** = an online video in which a person explains how to do a certain action (usually a complicated action with various steps)

Task d:

1. blind(s); 2. unblock; 3. drain; 4. ceiling; 5. draught; 6. fuse; 7. fuse box

#### 3. Language in Use

Task a:

1. drain; 2. send, around; 3. hardware; 4. leak; 5. quote; 6. fuse

Task b:

1. ... I need to phone a plumber ... → ... I need to phone a **locksmith** ...  
 2. ... put it up. → ... put it **together**.  
 3. ... turn off the sink. → ... turn off the **tap**.  
 4. ... to do an emergency meeting ... → ... to do an emergency **call-out** ...  
 5. ... turn off the gas at the tap ... → ... turn off the gas at the **mains** ...  
 6. ... a cold air coming in ... → ... a cold **draught coming** in ...