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Practical English Usage

LESSONS 1-10

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Lesson 1: Hope



1. Tenses after hope

After *I hope*, we often use a present tense with a future meaning.

- I hope she **likes** (= will like) her birthday card.
- I hope the train **comes** soon.

2. Negative sentences

We usually put *not* with the verb that comes after *hope*.

- I **hope** she doesn't get cold (NOT ~~I don't hope she gets cold~~).

3. Special use of past tenses

We can use *I was hoping* to make a polite request.

- I **was hoping** we could learn English together.

I had hoped refers to things that didn't happen.

- I **had hoped** that the sun would shine, but it rained.

Lesson 2: Life



Countable or uncountable noun

1. When we talk about *life* in general, or about a kind of life, *life* is usually uncountable.

- **Life** is beautiful.
- Jan enjoys **life**.
- I like city **life** (NOT ~~I like the/a city life~~).

2. When we describe particular lives, *life* is usually countable.

- My sister has a busy **life**.
- My grandparents had hard **lives**.

More on countable and uncountable nouns in future lessons.

Lesson 3: Nowadays



Nowadays is an adverb meaning *these days* or *at the present time*.

Examples.

- English learners have many helpful resources **nowadays**.
- **Nowadays** we are used to having information at our fingertips.
- It is easy to have our written English made perfect **nowadays**.

Nowadays is **NOT** used as an adjective.

Examples.

I like modern music (NOT ~~I like nowadays music~~).

Lesson 4: Tall and High



We use *tall* mostly for people, trees, buildings with many floors and some things that are higher than they are wide (industrial chimneys, pylons).

- How **tall** are you? (NOT ~~How high are you?~~)
- There are five beautiful **tall** trees in my garden.
- He is 180cm **tall**.
- What is the **tallest** building in your city?

In some cases we prefer to use *high*.

- Mount Everest is the **highest** mountain in the world.
- The prison has **high** walls. They are 4m **high**.

Distance above ground.

Use *high* to talk about distance above ground.

- The ceiling is too **high** for me to touch.
- The birds are flying **high**.

Lesson 5: Hire, Rent and Let



1. Hire and Rent

Hire and *rent* can mean: pay to use something

Rent - longer periods

- I would like to **rent** a house.
- We **rented** a T.V. for many years.

Hire – shorter periods

- She **hired** a car for her holiday in Greece.

Hire (out) and *rent* (out) can also mean: sell the use of something.

- My shop **rents/ hires** (out) golf clubs.

In U.S. English, *rent* is used for both long and short arrangements. *Hire* usually means to employ someone.

2. Let

Let is used in U.K. English, as *rent* (out).

- I have **let** my spare room to a student.

Lesson 6: Help



After *help* we can use object + infinitive (with or without *to*).

- Can you **help** me (to) push my car? (NOT ~~Can you help me pushing my car?~~)
- Our task is to **help** the team (to) reach the top of the league.
- I am here to **help** you (to) learn English.

Help can be followed by an infinitive without an object.

- Would you like to **help** tidy up?
- Can you **help** wash up?

Lesson 7: Can't help



If we *can't help* doing something, we mean that we can't stop ourselves doing that thing.

- He is a loud man, but you **can't help** liking him.
- I **couldn't help** hearing your conversation.
- I **can't help** the way I feel about you.

Can't help followed by *but and infinitive without to*. Same meaning as *can't help.....ing*.

- I **can't help but wonder** what Christmas presents I have.
- I **can't help** wondering what Christmas presents I have.

Lesson 8: Arise and Rise



Arise means: begin
appear
occur
come to notice

It is used mostly with abstract nouns as subjects.

- An argument **arose** about the quickest way home.
- A situation has **arisen** that makes it impossible to travel.

Rise means to get higher or come/go up

- House prices kept **rising**.
- The Sun **rises** in the east and sets in the west.
- I don't mean to **raise** your hopes, but

Arise and rise are irregular verbs.

(a)rise, (a)rose, (a)risen

Here are some common examples of words ending in **s** that do not change in the plural form.

Lesson 9: Plural same as singular



Singular	Plural
headquarters	headquarters
Swiss	Swiss
means	means
works (e.g. factory)	works (e.g. factory)
species	species
series	series
crossroads	crossroads
barracks	barracks

Lesson 10: Begin and Start



1. Meaning and formality.

Begin and *start* can both be used with the same meaning.

- She **began/started** working at the school after graduating university.
- If John doesn't come soon, let's **begin/start** the lesson without him.

Use *begin* when adopting a more formal style.

- Formal: We will **begin** the meeting when the manager arrives.

2. Sometimes using *begin* is not possible and we have to use *start*.

- (journey). I think we should **start** at night, when the roads are clear.
- (working – machines). The generator won't **start**.
- (make something start). The bell rang to **start** the meeting.

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