



## Happy New Year everyone!

This is my first episode of 2024 and let's get serious for a moment because actually the purpose of this one is to help you consider where you are with your English (because that's what this is all about isn't it?) to encourage you to reflect on your learning of English in 2023, to approach 2024 with the right mindset and also give you loads of advice and tips for how to keep improving your English with this podcast and in plenty of other ways.

This episode has mostly been written out in advance, so I'm reading from a script in this one.

You'll find the PDF script on the page for this episode and there's a link in the description wherever you are listening to this.

"Link in the description" - Do you know what that means?

You can just download it free and I'm not even going to ask for your email address and then send you loads of emails tempting

you to buy my online course which is only available for a limited period of time for mysterious reasons that aren't fully explained.

Don't worry, I'm not going to do that. You can just download the PDF directly like in the old days of the internet.

By the way, if you prefer rambling episodes with no script, just hang on because I'll be doing one of them after I've done this episode.

The plan is to do this one which is fully planned and scripted, and then just do something totally spontaneous in the next episode.

So, there is a New Year rambling episode coming soon. Also there will be a premium episode coming soon for premium subscribers focusing on some of the language I use in this episode.

Premium subscribers - watch out for some of the words and phrases which are **highlighted in a lurid green colour** on the PDF - those bits of vocabulary will come up in a premium episode soon.

If you're not a premium subscriber, you can still notice those highlighted phrases and just consider how much you are missing out by not being a premium subscriber, and of course if you just can't stand missing out on the magic, and you want to be a premium subscriber or you just want more information about it, then go to [www.teacherluke.co.uk/premiuminfo](http://www.teacherluke.co.uk/premiuminfo)

By the way, I chose that **lurid green colour** so that it will also show up if you print the PDF in black and white. Also, it's a way of subtly reminding you to keep noticing vocabulary.

Also, I have various other episodes in the pipeline which I recorded late last year and they are coming too, over the next few weeks including a couple of Amber & Paul ones, an episode with Lindsay from All Ears English, one with my friend who works at UNESCO and some others, so just bear with me, they are coming as well!

As usual, I just have so many episodes to publish and things I want to say. I'd love to just publish new episodes every few days, to be honest, but I don't want to overload you completely. I know some of you might be happy for me to do that, but really - podcasting wisdom says that I shouldn't do that.

## This episode

What's this episode going to be? Let's get started.

First of all, I want to welcome new listeners and remind old listeners who I am and what this is all about. A lot of people will be **turning over a new leaf** and trying to make a fresh start with their English. Is that you? Have you made a new year's resolution to improve your English this year?

Maybe you've decided to listen to podcasts in English and here you are. Or maybe you're already a regular listener and you're happy to be back in LEPland with this new episode. In any case, welcome and welcome back. It's good to doing the first episode of the show in 2024.





## Some info about LEP for new listeners (and old listeners too, whose memory isn't what it once was)

Hello. Forgive me for stating the obvious here but I'm Luke Thompson and I'm the host of this podcast that you are listening to right now, which is called Luke's English Podcast. It's a podcast for learners of English. I'm Luke, **hence** the title of the show - Luke's English Podcast. Yes, I am very original and creative and I worked very hard to come up with that name.

In my episodes I talk about all kinds of stuff and help you learn English. *All you have to do is listen*, although if you want there are plenty of other ways you can use my episodes to work on your English. I'll mention some of those things later.

I talk about different topics, chat with different guests, tell stories, just ramble about what's on my mind, give advice for learning English, talk about British culture such as music, films and comedy, explain jokes and generally give you something to listen to in



English on a regular basis. This is an award-winning podcast by the way and I have a very loyal, enthusiastic and lovely audience who are affectionately called the LEPsters.

I'm an English teacher from England (West London and the West Midlands). I've been teaching English for nearly 25 years now. I first taught in Japan many years ago (have I ever mentioned that I used to live in Japan? - you get a point every time I say that, remember) then I taught in London for a long time at various language schools in places like Oxford Street, Covent Garden, Waterloo, Holland Park and Hammersmith, and these days I live and work in Paris, yes the one in France.


I went to university in Liverpool a long long time ago and graduated with a degree in media and cultural studies which means I am very good at watching movies.

I have CELTA and DELTA qualifications in English language teaching to adults, so don't worry, you are in safe hands, you can trust me I am fully qualified. I am a professional. I have a particular set of skills which I have developed over a very long career.

As well as being an English teacher, I am also a stand-up comedian, which you must have realised already because you can't have failed to notice how funny and witty I am. I do stand-up which means I go on stage in front of audiences and make them laugh with hilarious jokes and stories and things and it always works really well and everyone in the room laughs so much, so hard that they die and then can never tell anyone else how funny I am, which is why I don't have my own Netflix special.

I've been doing stand-up on a semi-professional basis for about 15 years - roughly the same length of time as this podcast, but not as consistently as this I have to say.

Most of the time these days I perform at comedy shows in Paris in the evenings sometimes, in English, to audiences of English-speaking ex-pats, tourists and local Parisians. If you want to hear me talking about my stand up comedy, check out my recent appearance on the Stolariod Stories podcast. The episode was called The Art of Making People Laugh with Luke Thompson from Luke's English Podcast.

 The Art of Making People Laugh: with Luke Thompson from L...

[https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=lsetgcIOHsU&ab\\_channel=FabioCerpelloni](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=lsetgcIOHsU&ab_channel=FabioCerpelloni)

I have been doing this podcast for about 15 years now. The show has had over 150 million downloads in total, which is mind-blowing. It is listened to by people all over the world. I am actually very famous but nobody knows who I am. Does that make sense? No, it doesn't. But somehow it is still true.

If I got all my listeners together in one place I'd be able to fill a few football stadiums, but that's never going to happen and I'm not even very good at football so it wouldn't be a very good idea anyway.

There are audio versions and video versions of this podcast. Audio in podcast apps, video on YouTube. Let me explain that to the uninitiated. \*

*\*Remember the words and phrases highlighted in green? That was one of them → “the uninitiated”. Get the PDF from the episode page on my website and you can see those highlighted bits.*

*I’ll add them all in a list at the end of the episode as well because I’m nice. You’re welcome. I’ll explain them in a premium episode coming soon, to help you remember them and also use them.*

You can listen to the audio podcast in any podcast app on your phone and this is the way that most people listen to my episodes, for example using Apple Podcasts, Spotify, PocketCasts and so on.

I imagine people do something like this. They get up in the morning, stretch, have a shower, question their life choices, eat breakfast, maybe get the kids ready for school, go to work, and at some point get their phone out, put their headphones in, open up their podcast app of choice, tap on “Luke’s English Podcast” and start listening to a new episode or continue listening to one they started the day before.

Other people might just stay at home (because what’s the point of leaving the house really?) and maybe get their phone out, connect it to their bluetooth speaker or something, then listen to my podcast and maybe do some really exciting housework or something like that.

So that’s how to listen to my episodes in a podcast app on your phone. If you’re already initiated into the world of podcasting, that all might strike you as being very obvious, but you’d be surprised at the number of people who don’t understand what podcasts are,



how they work or even how the word podcast is spelled or indeed pronounced.

POD-CAST. POD-CAAAAST. /pɒdkɑːst/ not *postcard* or *pot-cat*.

I understand. It can be a tricky word actually. It's a relatively new word and in terms of pronunciation there are a couple of tricky consonant clusters in there.

The bit where the D and the C combine and the bit where the S and the T combine. Tricky stuff actually.

/pɒdkɑːst/ POD - CAAST

Try it again.

Not POST KAAAST

POD KAAAST

Not POK-KAAAST either

POD CAST

Podcast

Luke's English Podcast

ok

The word *podcast* is actually a combination of the word *broadcast* and the word *iPod*.

It's a broadcast on your iPod. A podcast.

It's a kind of audio broadcast (like a radio show - radio is broadcasted through radio signals from a radio tower thing, right?

The radio waves are sent out into the air and picked up by your radio. But with a podcast, the audio is sent out via the internet and you get it and put it on your iPod, although nobody actually uses iPods any more, it's all mobile phones now isn't it?

So, it might as well be called a Phonecast - because I broadcast my show to your phone. Not a phone call, because that's not how it works.

I don't just call you and start talking. I could, but that would be a very inefficient way of doing this, if I had to call you all one by one and say this to each person I called, again and again. No, thank goodness, that's now how it works. It's not a phone call, and it's not a phonecast, even though you listen on your phone (unless you listen on your computer on my website or something, or you actually do listen on an iPod because you're still using one. So, it's not a phonecast, it's a podcast. That should be clear.

If you don't know how to subscribe to the audio podcast, just download a podcast app on your phone. They're completely free (podcast apps, not phones). I recommend PocketCasts. Go ahead and download PocketCasts free from the app store on your phone. Install it, then open it and search for Luke's English Podcast, then tap "Subscribe" or "Add" (or whatever the equivalent is in your language) and my show will be saved in your list of subscriptions and you'll always be able to go back to the app to listen to my latest episodes when they are published, and the entire back catalogue, and your life will improve just a little bit, certainly a step

in the right direction. Switch on notifications and your phone will tell you when I've published a new episode. Happy days.

One of the advantages of listening to the audio podcast on your phone is that you can do other things while you listen, and people tell me that they listen while travelling, working out in the gym, doing housework, running or walking in the countryside, driving, and even at work or school while they should be doing something else.

I expect some people listen while doing incredible things, like flying planes, recovering from a general anaesthetic after having surgery or operating the safety systems of a nuclear power station.

I also publish video versions of these episodes on YouTube, and it's usually the same content as the audio versions, but often the audio versions have even more content because sometimes I ramble a bit at the beginning and end of episodes (and in the middle), and those bits don't always end up in the video versions.

My YouTube channel nearly has 1 million subscribers now, which I find incredible really. Not all my episodes get a million views of course, except the ones called "Learn English with a Short Story" which are particularly popular on the platform. The advantages of the video versions are that you can see me while I speak (do you consider that to be an advantage?)

You can see my body language, facial expressions and the movements of my mouth. For the more visually oriented people, that is a good thing. There are also automatic subtitles on YouTube which are getting better all the time, and I often show text on the



screen while I record so you can read and listen at the same time (that text is usually also available on my website for the audio listeners). But, again, the video versions often have less content than the audio versions and you do have to basically stay looking at the screen the entire time, whereas with the audio episodes you can just put your headphones in, put your phone in your pocket and do something else, like fishing or taking your dog for a walk, or if you prefer dogging and taking your fish for a walk, I mean it's your life, you can do what you want can't you?

My episodes can be quite long, but this shouldn't be a problem really (who said it was a problem?) Anyway, it shouldn't be an issue, because you can just pause the episode whenever you want, do something else, and when you return to your podcast app and find that episode again, the app will remember where you stopped and you can continue from that point. YouTube does exactly the same thing if you are signed into it with your google account.

So, you can just chill out about the whole "Your episodes should be 28 minutes long, no more no less" thing. Just listen to 28 minutes, then stop, then listen to another 28 minutes the next time.

So, long episodes aren't really an issue because you can listen to as much as you like, stop and do something else, then carry on where you stopped before.

Having said that, I do try to keep the length of my episodes under control. I don't want them to be too long, but the fact is I just have stuff that I want to say and I find it hard to shut up, so I need all that time!

For me, these episodes are similar to English lessons I do at school.

Lessons are usually at least 90 minutes long, often more. English lessons in a language school are very rarely less than one hour long. So, it's a similar story with my episodes.

Also, I also have a premium subscription (have I mentioned that before, I don't think I have, have I? No, I definitely haven't mentioned the premium subscription. Hey, I have a premium subscription. It's called Luke's English Podcast Premium. Forgive me for mentioning it again, it's just that the modest amount of money that I make from it helps me to feed two starving children and one wife and to heat our home which otherwise would be cold, and allows me to buy microphones and guitars and things - all essential purchases of course. Anyway, LEP Premium costs just 4\$ a month (and has the price gone up in line with inflation? No, it hasn't. Starbucks have raised the price of their bizarrely-named coffees, the fuel you put in your car is more expensive, but LEP Premium remains the same despite all those things) and gives you access to extra episodes which focus on teaching you vocabulary, grammar and pronunciation.

**So, my podcast has two branches → the free episodes and the premium episodes**

**The free episodes** → this is what I described before - me talking alone or with guests about things which I hope you will just find interesting and entertaining to listen to as part of your effort to get plenty of English into your brain via your ears. The free episodes

are the ones which are available free in audio podcast format, or YouTube video format.

**The premium episodes** → extra episodes published every month, and also available in a podcast app on your phone. When you sign up you can add the premium episodes to your podcast app.

Last year I published over 30 premium episodes, so that is 2 or 3 episodes per month. This is not just bonus content or out-takes or something. These are carefully prepared and thought-through lessons in which I help you build your English. All the info about the premium subscription is on my website at

[www.teacherluke.co.uk/premiuminfo](http://www.teacherluke.co.uk/premiuminfo)

The main difference between the two branches is that the free episodes are all about input and the premium ones are much more about teaching you directly.

In the free episodes I want to give you something to listen to in English which is made for you, which is entertaining, interesting and authentic, to help you listen more, listen for longer periods, and listen long-term.

Sometimes I ramble and just share my thoughts with you in a kind of stream-of-consciousness way, sometimes I talk with guests including my friends & family and other people who I hope will have interesting things to say on the show, talk about a variety of topics, tell stories.

In the premium episodes I tend to focus on teaching you things, and this usually means vocabulary - explaining, highlighting, demonstrating, clarifying words and phrases, showing you how



words and phrases are actually used with collocations, and other little important details. I also deal with grammar sometimes, and pronunciation every time - mainly giving you something to use for listen & repeat practice so you can regularly repeat after me, but also giving you insights into the pronunciation system in English in various ways. So, the focus is on teaching you language bit by bit.

Sometimes those two branches cross over, and I end up doing premium-type stuff on the free podcast (explaining vocabulary in short story episodes for example) or doing free-podcast type stuff in premium episodes (rambling episodes, short story episodes).

And, as a foundation, I want you to remember that I have been teaching English for most of my adult life now and so it is deeply ingrained in me, and in fact I couldn't really stop teaching English even if I tried, and so even when I am just talking to you I am still teaching you. There is always that intention there to help you notice language, to engage with this language, to aid you somehow - so even when I'm just talking with seemingly no focus, there is a focus and a method in the background which is to help you connect with English as it is spoken, English as a living language, and English which is a medium for making connections with people and for expressing yourself.

I am always attempting to reach out to you through the things I say and sort of grab you and shove English straight into your ears, but in a nice way.

Also, I just love doing this podcast and hopefully my enthusiasm will **rub off on you** and will encourage you in your journey.

I could continue to ramble on for ages about the benefits of listening to English podcasts long term, but I have done that plenty of times before. Just have a look back at my episode archive and see what you can see.

**By the way, I wrote most of this over the last few days of the school holidays** while sitting on my sofa in moments when my baby son was asleep or when my wife took the kids for a routine checkup at the doctor and I had some time to write down some thoughts which had been building up in my head during the Christmas holiday. I wrote these ideas down, and have edited them and added to them a bit since then.



## You & Your English in 2023 and 2024 📈

Now I'm going to talk about you and your English over the last 12 months and into the forthcoming 12 months.

Usually in the New Year period I do some kind of New Year episode, and so I have been thinking "What can I say to my audience that will put them in the right mental space to help them learn English with my podcast in 2024? What **inspiring words of wisdom** can I **impart**? What **sage-like advice** can I give?"

And after I had **lowered my expectations** for myself and just started writing, this is what came out. Listen carefully and hopefully you will **get swept up in what I'm saying** and the outcome will be that you'll get **a renewed sense of positivity and possibility** for your English this year. Or maybe you'll just have a nice relaxing sleep. I don't know. Hopefully it'll be good for you, either way. Just please be careful if you are driving or operating heavy machinery whilst listening to this.

Remember, there's a PDF for all of this and you can download it from my website. Just click the link in the show notes to find the episode page - the PDF is there.

It's the new year period. This is a time when we look back and **survey** the year we've just completed, then look forward to the **forthcoming** 12 months and consider how we're going to spend that time. I invite you to do that with me here in this episode.

This is a podcast for learners of English. So, we're going to focus on English of course. In this episode I want to encourage you and help you **to take stock of your English** learning at this moment in time.



First let's look back and consider the last 12 months, and your English.

### **Over the last 12 months**

- What kind of progress have you made in your English?
- What has worked for you?
- What have you done that has had a positive impact on your English?
- What were some positive experiences and moments you had?
- What about negative experiences? What can you learn from them?

### **Grammar Pause**

Note that I said “over the last 12 months” there and then used present perfect tense “What progress have you made?”. If I'd said “in 2023” then it would be past simple “What progress did you make?” “What worked for you?”.

This is because “Over the last 12 months is an unfinished time period. Basically - don't use past simple with unfinished time periods.

For more details about present perfect (in fact, everything you ever wanted to know) then listen to premium series 12 - P12. That's a premium episode. Did I mention my premium subscription? Again, get the details at [www.teacherluke.co.uk/premiuminfo](http://www.teacherluke.co.uk/premiuminfo)

So, those questions again.

**Over the last 12 months**

- What kind of progress have you made in your English?
- What has worked for you?
- What have you done that has had a positive impact on your English?
- What were some positive experiences and moments you had?
- What about negative experiences? What can you learn from them?

Perhaps you have no clear sense of what you've done or whether it's been positive or negative.

If that's the case, if you're thinking "errr, I **dunno** actually" it probably means that...

a) you haven't really done much with English - and this doesn't just mean "studying" in the traditional way, but just using English either in a productive way (speaking, writing) or receptive way (reading, listening). There hasn't been much English in your life for the past 12 months,

or...

b) you're just not being very **mindful about** your relationship with English or the things you do in relation to your English. Perhaps you're not really that **aware of** the ways that you are learning this language. You listen to my episodes, do other things in English sometimes but you don't **reflect on** it all in an objective way, or an academic way.

To be honest, I doubt that you **fit the description** I just mentioned. I think most of my audience are pretty aware of their English.

And in fact maybe you are very conscious of it, and take quite a **metacognitive** approach to it - maybe you are constantly **analysing** and **strategising** the way you learn English, and applying different methods.

In any case, this is a moment when I invite you to be mindful about your English.

Maybe you feel like you haven't really noticed a significant improvement in your English recently, which is a very common feeling.

Is that you? Are you waiting for some kind of **breakthrough moment**? Do you feel like you're on a long **plateau**? Do you feel like you made significant progress a while ago but nothing has happened more recently?

Or maybe not, maybe you're currently really excited because you've discovered new abilities, like a superhero in the first half of their superhero origin movie or something.

But it is very common to get stuck in the so-called "intermediate plateau" and if that is the case for you, then I will say these things: don't give up, don't stop, keep going. The progress might not be obvious to you, but it's probably still happening and will be revealed later. You just have to be willing **to stick with it**.

Sometimes you **get stuck in a rut**, or stuck in a routine and it feels like you're **going over the same ground** and you're not climbing to the top of any mountains or getting any significant **feelings of reward** - **moments of triumph or glory**.

But that's ok. You can't have those moments all the time.

Sometimes they are **few and far between**. Sometimes those breakthrough moments in language learning, or those meaningful moments of magic are rare.

But keep going. Sometimes there is a lot of progress being made, but it's under the surface and you don't notice it.

Language learning can be a weird thing. It can be hard to see it happening. It can be invisible, but that doesn't mean it isn't happening.

With English you have to **put in** a lot of hours. You have to absorb a lot of language, and you have to do plenty of practice. Spending a lot of time on it is necessary, and so you have to **see the bigger picture**.

Imagine it like a long **journey**. There might be times on that journey where you climb to very high points, like the top of a hill or mountain and you get a clear, dramatic sense of achievement. But at other times you have to travel along a long flat **plain** and it can feel like you're not even moving at all. But keep going. You're making progress, but you might not be aware of it. It's not all going to be moments of glory and sometimes your progress is not fully visible to you, but it is happening.



You also have to fail quite a lot - you've got to get things wrong a lot before you come back and get them right. This can make you feel **disheartened**, as if you just keep making mistakes.

But keep going. Don't stop. This is all part of a process. People don't improve in their language learning because they give up. So, keep listening, keep doing whatever you're doing. Stay in the game. Keep your English alive in 2024, and there will come a time or a moment when the time you have spent with it will **pay off** somehow.

At the very least, you're understanding everything I'm saying, right? You're understanding this. You understand me and you're also noticing that I'm using certain phrases and expressions, aren't you?

I'll sum them up for you later. Not all of them, but a lot of them - I'm talking about some of the little phrases I have just used (the ones which are highlighted in that lurid green colour on the PDF), like "**breakthrough moments**" or "**few and far between**" or "**disheartened**". I'll sum them up later, help you properly understand them, remember them, and pronounce them too.

You're noticing those things, you're hearing them, aren't you?

It's all going in. That's all fuel or food for your English, you know.

And **the more** you are exposed to English as a living thing like this, **the better** your position is, as a learner of English. The better prepared you will be for the moments when you have to open your

mouth and produce the language, or when you're **on the spot** and you're in conversation with someone and you have to understand what's coming out of their mouth and then you're suddenly having to respond, and these bits of English come to you, seemingly from nowhere. That's all thanks to the fact that you've been keeping your English alive and at the very least listening to this podcast and keeping your ears open.

If you feel stuck at the intermediate plateau, keep going, **keep the faith**, realise that there is progress being made but you might not notice it every day. **Keep your chin up.**

But also consider **shaking things up** a bit, **adopting** some new habits maybe, and perhaps give yourself a challenge - maybe some kind of speaking challenge, or change the kinds of practice you're doing, or perhaps add a bit of discipline into your routines with some other little exercises you could do. I'll mention some ideas for that later.

## What have you been doing with your English?

Now, bear in mind that in language learning *anything* is probably better than *nothing*, so even if the only thing you've been doing in English is to listen to podcasts sometimes, watch some stuff in English or occasionally speak it **when the need arises**, then fine, that's still good. It's better than nothing.

Also, if you've been listening to all of my episodes I must say that puts you in **a select group** of extremely special people. Not everyone listens to podcasts in English. If you're in public, have a

look around. How many of these other people listen to Luke's English Podcast, or any other podcast for that matter, in English?

Ah, yes, you are one of the special ones. You are part of that elite group of people who have access to this exclusive and slightly secret world. You're one of the ones who not only knows what a podcast is, but also how to pronounce it, spell it and also listen to it regularly.

Anyway, listening to podcasts is definitely good for your English, even if it is the only thing you do. But I do recommend doing more than just listening. I've said it before, and I'll say it again - this podcast is **best consumed as part of a balanced diet**.

Perhaps the *worst* things for your English are things like this...

- a) doing absolutely nothing in English at all, and
- b) getting into **a negative mindset** in which you tell yourself that your English is no good, that you just can't do it, or you're one of those people who simply doesn't **have what it takes** to use this language effectively. *Never mind* those negative thoughts. They will not help, so try not to say those things to yourself. Give yourself a break in 2024!

Everyone is naturally able to learn a language, you just have to maintain some good habits, a **positive mental attitude**, a sense of enjoyment and perhaps a sense of **drive** to push things further.

**So, what have you been doing in English? What has worked for you?**

Can you recognise the things that have...

- a) helped you to make progress
- b) caused you to feel good about your English?

How can you **put your best foot forwards** and repeat some of the successes of the last year and **build on** them and generally move in the right direction, towards growth, progress and prosperity, in your English, but in your life?

Let's try to maintain a positive cycle in 2024, where one good thing causes you to feel a bit more positive about your English, leading to a growing sense of confidence, which causes you to step outside your comfort zone a little bit more easily, and do something else with a bit more success, which again feeds into your positivity and sense of achievement, and this continues in a generally **upward trajectory**.

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~ Let's take a quick break here ~

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**To keep this simple, let's consider these questions:**

- What have been the good moments in your English learning over the last 12 months?
- What were those situations? What exactly did you do? What happened? What caused you to feel an improvement in your English and the way you feel about your English?



- How can you repeat those successes and build on them in the coming months?
- And, if there were negative things - experiences or feelings in relation to your English, how can you learn from them?

To demonstrate this a bit, let me **reflect on** my learning of French, which admittedly I have not been engaging with properly (and there you see my somewhat negative attitude towards my relationship with French, revealing the frankly unhealthy condition of my French language learning).

Let me just reflect on my French here and consider my answers to the questions I have above.

Here are some notes which I will **expand on**.

#### The cooking class

- Tell the story - where, when, who, what why etc...
- The good things - I listened to what the others said and I copied them. I prepared myself in advance, in my head. I decided to just enjoy the moment. I went out of my comfort zone. I will remember the little things that I noticed and used.

#### Reading **graphic novels**

- I love graphic novels in French and there are so many. I finished the series called L'Arabe du Futur, I've been reading one about the story of the making of Star Wars, one about an Indonesian woman who lives in France and observes funny cultural differences, one about crime and police in Baltimore which I found really difficult to follow, one about a journalist's trip to North Korea and more.

- You can read direct speech.
- There is awesome art work and the pictures definitely help to support my understanding.
- I get a sense of achievement from actually finishing the books.
- I have found something that I actually really enjoy doing in French. I don't know why, but a lot of things turn me off. I find social interactions in French to be extremely painful.
- I can go at my own speed (unlike TV shows which are harder to keep up with)
- I tend to just read and read, and unfortunately I sort of skip over the phrases which I don't understand or don't know how to pronounce. I should actually stop and check those things, note them down, try to use them myself. (more comments on this kind of thing later)
- There's no audio though, so I can't actually hear the pronunciation.
- I should try reading other things like magazine articles or books. I did buy High Fidelity in French but just couldn't get into the habit of reading it. I have quite bad reading habits actually, even in English.

#### Open my ears and just listen to people around me

- This really just means getting out of my **bubble** and noticing the French which people are using around me.
- Being part of conversations when lots of people are talking can be very overwhelming and exhausting. It's all too much for me and I just become **cut off from** the French I'm hearing. As I've said before, I feel like I'm watching a game of tennis and after a while I just can't see the ball any more.

Being a bit more **gregarious** and **outgoing** - stop avoiding social interactions, take out my headphones and be a bit more present.

Don't **beat myself up**

Don't care so much

Just enjoy it!

Lower my expectations for myself - take the pressure off my shoulders a bit

There are millions of other things I could be doing to improve my French - perhaps I'll mention some of those things later - but you know what, part of what **holds me back** with my French is this sense of pressure that I should be a master language learner because I am a professional language teacher. I put a lot of pressure on myself and as a result I have a bad relationship with French and I often avoid it and avoid learning it. You heard me talk about some of these things in the episode with Fabio from last year. Episode 850 "Any Language You Want", also the one with Rhiannon Carter.

(This has become a therapy session now)

Because I make it my business to help other people learn a language, and I do know a lot of methods and have so much pedagogy spinning around inside my head, and that is connected to job-related and career-related pressure, I am extremely aware of all the things I am not doing in my learning of French. I carry all of that on my shoulders and it causes me to feel quite ashamed of my language learning, and shame doesn't help. It just kills that outgoing, curious, risk-taking, adventurous side that you need to encourage in yourself because that is so important in language learning. It also kills the motivation you need to **push through**

things like slightly boring or unexciting language practice exercises you can do, which require discipline.

There are also other reasons for my lack of progress including the fact that a lot of people just switch to English when they speak to me, I am actually more capable of having meaningful conversations in English than French, I can't really speak French at home with my wife because our relationship is based in English and more. As I've said before, my French is not that great but my excuses are improving all the time.

Anyway, I would like to take all that pressure off my shoulders and just come at this a bit more fresh, as if I have no idea that I'm climbing a big mountain - I'm just going for a great walk in the countryside and I'm enjoying the view.

## Things to improve

- Attitude (I've just talked about that - just **take it easy on myself**, basically)
- Keep a vocabulary/grammar note book → just a notebook, or perhaps notes on my phone, where I can **note down** or **jot down** any little things which I notice and would like to remember. Little phrases, little bits of grammar or structures that keep coming up, little reminders of pronunciation. I can check an online French dictionary or even ChatGPT or other online tools like DeepL translator. Online translators can be extremely useful tools - just don't use them to cheat (to writing all your emails and stuff), use them to help you learn.



- Check my note book later and remind myself of what I noted down.
- Practise by testing myself - simply covering up some words with my thumb, reading things out loud and then running them through Google Translate to hear them said, in order to check my pronunciation (Not translating, just making Google Translate say the French I'm learning)
- Devote just 10 minutes a day to doing some reading or listening in French and then investigating the language I notice with my note book.
- Try to convert listening to speaking, and reading to writing. Repeat some of the things I've heard. Write down some of the things I've read. ChatGPT can help with the writing - just ask it to correct you and perhaps explain your errors. Other chatbots are available of course. And I only mention ChatGPT here in case you can't find or can't afford a human teacher.
- Consider taking some one-to-one lessons with a human being perhaps on iTalki.

I have to sort out my time management for this. All my time is used up at the moment, but I should make time.

## Questions for you

- What do you think of the things I just said?
- I mean, did it make you think of your situation at all?

Maybe it just made you think of me and my language learning. To be honest, I don't really want you to analyse and **diagnose** my language learning situation. I'm not looking for advice or help with my French, I'm just using it as a little example.

- Did it encourage you to reflect on your English?

I **strongly suspect** that your English is better than my French, so your concerns might be a bit different to mine. You're probably looking for ways to get out of the intermediate plateau, or ways of progressing to a very proficient level of English. I have people with a pretty wide variety of English levels listening to this, from pretty low-level people who only just manage to follow what I am saying (you have my respect) to non-native speakers who are really advanced and even teach English as a living, and who just enjoy listening to another teacher do his thing, and want to maintain their level and keep their English alive and fresh (you have my respect too).

Anyway, with my own example as a case study, I gave some suggestions of little ways to work on your language there, beyond just listening to this podcast.

Maybe that can give you some inspiration or ideas.

***But really, the main thing I want to get across***

***to you here is*** the importance of having a positive relationship with the language you are learning.

So, for me and my French, the things I will hold in my mind are

- a) The positive experience I had at the cooking class
- b) The comfort and enjoyment I experience from reading graphic novels in French

## Hey! Leave a comment!

I have something to ask you. Please comment on this episode. Spread some positivity in the comment section. I want to encourage you to give any positive comment that you can right now. This will be good for you as it will help you realise something positive about your English and will give you a little bit of writing practice, but it will also be good for everyone else because it can help to create a good vibe and also can give people some inspiration and some general support in their English learning.

- What positive experiences have you had with English?
- What do you love about learning English?
- What little methods, exercises or resources have helped with your English?
- What have you enjoyed in English lately?

Leave your thoughts in the comment section.

## Summary

Sometimes I worry that I am too **wordy** and the main core message of what I am saying **gets watered down** by the slightly **long-winded** way in which I put things. It's probably fine and I just worry too much about these things, or something. Anyway, I want this episode to be clear, so I've asked ChatGPT to summarise the things I just said to you. I entered the text which I wrote on my sofa over the last few days and which I have read to you, and asked it to summarise it for me.

This is what it wrote.

Here's what it said.

The text you provided is an extensive reflection on English language learning and personal experiences related to language acquisition. The author encourages listeners to assess their progress over the past year, emphasizing the importance of reflective practice and mindfulness in language learning.

The piece **delves into** various aspects:

1. **\*\*Looking back:\*\*** Encouraging individuals to consider their progress in English over the past year. Reflecting on what has worked positively, identifying experiences that have impacted learning, and acknowledging both positive and negative moments.
2. **\*\*Acknowledging learning challenges:\*\*** Addressing the common feeling of being stuck in the "intermediate plateau" and offering encouragement to persist despite feeling stagnant. Emphasizing that progress may not always be immediately visible but is still happening.
3. **\*\*Adopting a positive attitude:\*\*** Encouraging a positive mindset, emphasizing that failures and setbacks are part of the learning process. Highlighting the importance of perseverance and staying committed to learning.
4. **\*\*Suggestions for improvement:\*\*** Offering personal experiences with learning French and outlining strategies for improvement, such as keeping a vocabulary/grammar notebook,



practicing reading and listening, and exploring speaking opportunities.

5. **\*\*The importance of enjoying the learning process:\*\*** Stressing the significance of enjoying the journey of learning a language and removing self-imposed pressure to achieve perfection.

6. **\*\*Encouragement for sharing experiences:\*\*** Inviting listeners to share positive experiences, effective learning methods, and resources in English.

7. **\*\*Future goals:\*\*** Posing questions about how individuals want to spend the next 12 months, emphasizing the value of enjoying time spent learning English, and expressing enthusiasm for continuing the podcast journey.

Overall, the text serves as a reflective guide, encouraging learners to consider their language learning journeys, embrace challenges, find joy in the process, and engage with the learning community by sharing experiences and positive energy.

## A note about AI chatbots like ChatGPT

Sometimes listeners on YouTube post AI-written summaries of my episodes in the comment section and they're usually a bit wrong, for example the AI seems confused by moments of humour or comedy in my episodes, or by funny little conversational tangents and doesn't seem to be able to distinguish between those tangential moments and the main topic of the episode, and so its summaries are a bit **off the mark**. I'm talking about Tammy AI here. I don't know if it uses the same engine as ChatGPT. Anyway, that

summary which ChatGPT gave me for this episode is good and I'm happy with it.

By the way, I'm not relying on ChatGPT here, overusing it and becoming dependent on it. I say that because I think some people out there are wary of ChatGPT and see any use of it as being **a slippery slope** to over-reliance on it and therefore a sort of **slipping of standards**. But I think that AI can be used **sparingly** and **to good effect**, and that summary is an example of that. It came up with that summary in seconds. I read it, checked it and decided to use it.

## Speaking challenges

I said before that I would give you some ideas for speaking and writing challenges. So here are some things you can do to work on your productive skills in English.

## Working on your speaking

In a perfect world you will have people to talk to, and you can just have these long conversations, practise expressing yourself for long periods until you are really tired and that night you fall asleep with your mind **whizzing** and **whirring** with English words, structures and pronunciation. But, for so many of you out there, you don't have this opportunity.

You could try joining a community of English speakers. For example, Zdenek has a Discord server called The Achievers Chamber which is a place where you can practise speaking with

other learners of English who have a similar level to you.

[https://teacherzdenek.com/?page\\_id=2816](https://teacherzdenek.com/?page_id=2816)

Or you can go to italki.com [www.teacherluke.co.uk/talk](http://www.teacherluke.co.uk/talk) and find a person there to talk to, or a teacher to have lessons with. There are teachers from all over the world including the UK, Ireland, Canada, Australia, USA etc.

You have to pay for this of course, and sometimes it can take time to find the right teacher or conversation partner for you, but it can be an effective way to find someone for speaking practice with feedback and also lessons for specific purposes. By the way, if you use my link you can get a \$10 voucher when you buy some lessons on italki [www.teacherluke.co.uk/talk](http://www.teacherluke.co.uk/talk)

You could also enrol in language classes in a language school near you, like The British Council, and you'll probably find that they offer courses which include lessons on vocabulary, grammar, pronunciation and all that stuff. You might not find specific classes only for speaking and feedback though. You'll have to check the BC's website for more information. See if they have a teaching centre near you, and what services they offer. They also have online courses. <https://www.britishcouncil.org/english/adults>

But even if you can't access English speakers or teachers for conversations and language feedback, you can still find ways to practise your speaking on your own. You just have to think outside the box a little bit and be prepared to do something that seems a bit unconventional, like speaking to yourself. Don't worry, it doesn't mean you're weird, and if someone overhears you and wonders what you're doing, just say "it's ok - there's nothing to worry about

- Luke told me to do it.” and they’ll say “Who is Luke?” and then you’ll have to just make them listen to LEP and then they’ll become LEPsters and my evil plan will finally **come to fruition** and I’ll take over the world.

### **Talk to yourself**

Just try talking to yourself, out loud, in English. There are many things you can talk about or try to do (there are ideas coming).

Simply the act of attempting to express yourself out loud in English is good practice. When you get stuck and you realise you don’t know how to say something you want to say, you can just go to Google Translate (other translators are available - DeepL for example) and just write what you want to say in your language and translate it into English. You can also press the “audio” button to hear how to pronounce it.

### **This is not *cheating*. It’s using Google Translate as a tool.**

You might think that Google Translate is a bad thing, it’s cheating, it’s lazy, it’s bad for your English or it’s unreliable. Well, it’s actually pretty good I find, as long as it’s not the only thing you are working with.

There’s also ChatGPT with the Google Chrome extension “Voice control for ChatGPT, which allows you to just ask questions to ChatGPT, get it to translate things for you, and listen to it say its responses. You can control things like speaking speed and different accents. It’s no replacement for speaking to an actual



human, but if you see it as a tool for certain kinds of controlled practice, it can be pretty useful!

So, consider using things like Google Translate or ChatGPT as tools to help you practise speaking on your own.

If you don't know what to talk about, here are some ideas.

1. Commentary

Give a commentary of all the things you are doing while doing them.

2. Commentary in the past

While you are doing things, talk about them as if they happened in the past. Imagine you're in the future and you're describing all the things you did.

3. Shadowing

Listen to a short audio clip or video in English and try to imitate the speaker's pronunciation, intonation, and rhythm. Repeat the sentences or phrases immediately after hearing them. There are specific episodes in the premium subscription designed to help you do this.

4. Record yourself

Pick a topic or a short passage (maybe a topic from a podcast episode, or a passage from an episode with a transcript - like a story episode), read it aloud, and record your voice. Then, listen to the recording and analyse your pronunciation, intonation, and fluency. Take note of areas that you could improve.

5. Monologue or ramble challenge

Choose a topic or an object around you and talk about it for a

few minutes as if you're giving a presentation. You can discuss its features, uses, history, or any related information.

6. Role play

Act out conversations between different characters or personas. You can use scripts from movies, TV shows, or even create your own scenarios. This helps with practicing natural language flow and expressions. Also, you can just talk to yourself. Try it now! (I'll demonstrate it if you like)

7. Describe and Explain

Take an object, a picture, or a scene and describe it in as much detail as possible. This exercise helps in expanding vocabulary and enhancing descriptive skills.

8. Debate with yourself

Choose a topic you're interested in and argue both sides of the debate. Express your opinions, provide reasons, and counter-arguments as if you were having a real discussion.

9. Storytelling

Create and narrate stories. It can be a personal experience, a fictional tale, or a summary of a book or movie. Just describe what happened. My StoryTime episodes in the premium subscription are specifically designed to help you do this.

10. Sing along and karaoke

Practice singing along to English songs. It can help with pronunciation, rhythm, and intonation. You can also find karaoke versions of songs on YouTube with the lyrics on the screen and sing them as if you're performing. Just remember that songs often break the rules of grammar and pop songs are usually sung in an American accent, not that there's anything wrong with that of course.

11. Read Aloud

Choose a book, article, or any text in English, and read it

aloud. Focus on clear pronunciation, appropriate pauses, and intonation as if you're narrating it for an audience. If you also have the audio version of that text, you can listen to it and compare it to your version. I talked about the benefits of doing this in episode 794.

If you have other cool ideas, feel free to share them in the comments section.

Remember, the key to improvement is regular practice. Mix and match these activities based on your preferences and gradually increase the difficulty level as you progress. But remember, self-assessment and feedback are really important for monitoring your improvement.

Again, consider recording yourself and listening back.

Also consider using Voice Control for ChatGPT and talking to it, and then ask it to give you feedback. You can say “I am going to speak English to you. Can you give me some feedback on my English, and correct some of my errors?” Then speak for a few minutes. It will focus on things like grammar and vocabulary, rather than pronunciation though. But if you notice that you’re saying certain words and ChatGPT is hearing *other* words, it might mean you are pronouncing those words wrong, and then it’s time to use Google Translate to check the pronunciation of the word or words you’re having trouble with. Of course, good online dictionaries have phonetic translations and audio recordings too.

☐ [www.dictionary.cambridge.org](http://www.dictionary.cambridge.org)

☐ [www.collinsdictionary.com](http://www.collinsdictionary.com)

□ <https://www.oxfordlearnersdictionaries.com/>

## Writing challenges

- Write a diary or journal

YOu can simply describe the things you did, or write about your feelings. Either way, it's good to get into the habit of trying to express yourself in written English.

But it's important to remember that we normally write *certain kinds of text* and so you should probably practise writing in these modes.

Here are the kinds of text you might have to write. This is the sort of thing that comes up in writing sections of Cambridge Exams

- A for/against essay
- A business report or academic report with an introduction, findings and conclusion
- An informal letter to a friend or family member describing an event or planning something
- A formal business letter to get or give information
- A business proposal (similar to a report but with a recommendation at the end)
- A short fiction story
- A covering letter or personal statement for a job application

Again, I am going to refer to ChatGPT here, but there's no denying how helpful it can be here, in lieu of a real human teacher.

Here's a template for a ChatGPT prompt which you can use to create writing tasks.



Write this prompt. You can change the underlined part depending on what kind of writing you want to practise.

Can you give me a short writing task to help me practise my English? I'd like to write a business email. Can you give me some feedback on my writing, and also provide me with an example answer for your task?

ChatGPT will give you the task, then tell you to write your text as a reply and it will give you some feedback. It will also give you a sample answer to your task which you can use as a model to copy / get ideas from.

Here's ChatGPT's response to my prompt:

Absolutely! Here's a scenario for your business email:

**\*\*Scenario:** You work for a software company and need to email a client regarding a delay in delivering a project. The client has been eagerly anticipating the completion of the project and is expecting it by the end of the month. Craft an email to notify the client about the delay, explain the reasons behind it, and reassure them about the revised timeline.\*\*

When you draft your email, make sure to maintain a professional tone, be transparent about the situation, offer apologies for the inconvenience caused by the delay, and propose a revised timeline or solution.

For feedback and an example answer:

When you've written your email, you can share it here for review and feedback. Additionally, I'll provide an example email response for the scenario described above:

Subject: Update on Project Delivery Timeline

Dear [Client's Name],

I hope this message finds you well. I am writing to provide an update on the status of the project we've been working on.

Regrettably, I must inform you that there has been a slight delay in the delivery of the project. We understand the importance of this project to your business objectives, and please accept our sincerest apologies for any inconvenience this delay may cause.

The primary reason for the delay is a need for additional testing and refinement to ensure the final product meets the high-quality standards we've committed to delivering. Our team encountered unexpected technical issues during the final phase of development, which required more thorough testing and adjustments than initially anticipated.

We are fully committed to delivering a flawless product that exceeds your expectations. To ensure the highest quality and functionality, we estimate that the project will be completed and ready for delivery by [Revised Date].

Rest assured, our team is actively addressing the challenges, and we are implementing strategies to expedite the process without compromising the quality of the final product.

In the meantime, we will provide regular updates on the progress to keep you informed about the status of the project. Your satisfaction remains our top priority, and we appreciate your understanding and continued trust in our services.

Should you have any questions or require further clarification, please do not hesitate to reach out to me directly.

Thank you for your patience and understanding.

Best regards,

[Your Name]

[Your Position]

[Your Contact Information]

Feel free to use this example as a reference while drafting your email. Once you've composed your message, share it here for feedback, and I'll be glad to assist further!

So, you can use that prompt to ask ChatGPT to give you similar tasks, feedback and model.

By the way, I couldn't help having a bit of fun with ChatGPT and I decided to write a *really terrible response to the task it gave me*. I just wanted to see what feedback it would give me.

Here's my answer to your task.

Sorry mate but I ain't done that thing you wanted cos sh\*t got intense and I had to stay at home. Sorry about that can you give me more time though and it'll get done proper innit bruv. Alright boss.

Here's the feedback ChatGPT gave me. It showed great restraint here. If one my my students had given me this work I would not have been quite so professional I think.

Your message has a casual tone, which may not be suitable for a professional business email. To maintain a more formal and professional approach, consider the following revised version:

Subject: Extension Request for Project Delivery

Dear [Client's Name],

I sincerely apologize for the delay in delivering the project as initially planned. Unfortunately, unforeseen circumstances arose, requiring my urgent attention and presence at home.

I understand the importance of this project and the inconvenience caused by this delay. I assure you that I am fully committed to completing the project promptly and to the highest standard possible.

Could I kindly request an extension of [X amount of time] to ensure the project is finalized thoroughly and accurately? This additional time will enable me to dedicate the necessary focus and effort to ensure a successful outcome.

I appreciate your understanding and flexibility in this matter. Please be assured that I am prioritizing the completion of the project and will strive to exceed your expectations.

Thank you for your patience and cooperation.

Best regards,

[Your Name]

[Your Position]

[Your Contact Information]



This revised version maintains a polite and professional tone while effectively communicating the need for an extension. Feel free to incorporate this structure and tone into your future business emails for a more formal and appropriate approach.

OK, so that brings us to the end of this episode.

Well done for getting to the end. I trust you have not turned into a skeleton with headphones on. Do let me know that you are still breathing and that you found this episode to be useful.

What about that vocabulary highlighted in that lurid green colour on the PDF?

As I said before, I will devote a premium episode (maybe a series) to this vocabulary. So, you'll need to be a premium subscriber to get that. Did I mention my premium subscription at all?

[www.teacherluke.co.uk/premiuminfo](http://www.teacherluke.co.uk/premiuminfo)

But here is a list of all those highlighted expressions for your reference.

## **DID YOU NOTICE THIS VOCABULARY IN THIS EPISODE?**

**I'll be explaining all of this in an upcoming Premium episode.**

- watch out for some of the words and phrases **highlighted in lurid green** on the PDF
- A lot of people will be **turning over a new leaf** and trying to make a fresh start with their English. Is that you?
- It's a podcast for learners of English. I'm Luke. **Hence** the title of the show - Luke's English Podcast.
- There are audio versions and video versions of this podcast. Let me explain that to **the uninitiated**.
- If you're already initiated into the world of podcasting, that all might **strike you as being very obvious**
- I just love doing this podcast and hopefully my enthusiasm will **rub off on you** and will encourage you in your journey
- What **inspiring words of wisdom** can I **impart**? What **sage-like advice** can I give?"
- And after I had **lowered my expectations** for myself and just started writing, this is what came out.
- Listen carefully and hopefully you will **get swept up in what I'm saying** and the outcome will be that you'll get **a renewed sense of positivity and possibility** for your English this year.
- This is a time when we look back and **survey** the year we've just completed, then look forward to the **forthcoming** 12 months and consider how we're going to spend that time.
- I want to encourage you and help you **to take stock of your English** learning at this moment in time.
- "errr, I **dunno** actually"
- you're just not being very **mindful about** your relationship with English
- you're not really that **aware of** the ways that you are learning this language
- ou listen to my episodes, do other things in English sometimes but you don't **reflect on** it all in an objective way

- To be honest, I doubt that you **fit the description** I just mentioned.
- in fact maybe you are very conscious of it, and take quite a **metacognitive** approach to it - maybe you are constantly **analysing** and **strategising** the way you learn English
- Are you waiting for some kind of **breakthrough moment**?
- Do you feel like you're on a long **plateau**?
- You just have to be willing **to stick with it**.
- Sometimes you **get stuck in a rut**, or stuck in a routine
- it feels like you're **going over the same ground**
- getting any significant **feelings of reward** - **moments of triumph or glory**.
- You can't have those moments all the time. Sometimes they are **few and far between**.
- With English you have to **put in** a lot of hours.
- you have to **see the bigger picture**.
- Imagine it like a long **journey**. (trip, journey, travel)
- But at other times you have to travel along a long flat **plain** and it can feel like you're not even moving at all.
- This can make you feel **disheartened**
- the time you have spent with it will **pay off** somehow.
- **the more** you are exposed to English as a living thing like this, **the better** your position is,
- when you're **on the spot** and you're in conversation with someone
- keep going, **keep the faith**,
- **Keep your chin up**.
- consider **shaking things up** a bit, **adopting** some new habits maybe
- watch some stuff in English or occasionally speak it **when the need arises**

- I must say that puts you in **a select group** of extremely special people.
- this podcast is **best consumed as part of a balanced diet**.
- getting into **a negative mindset**
- one of those people who simply doesn't **have what it takes** to use this language effectively
- you just have to maintain some good habits, a **positive mental attitude**, a sense of enjoyment and perhaps a sense of **drive** to push things further.
- How can you **put your best foot forwards** and repeat some of the successes of the last year and **build on** them
- this continues in a generally **upward trajectory**.
- To demonstrate this a bit, let me **reflect on** my learning of French
- Here are some notes which I will **expand on**.
- Reading **graphic novels**
- This really just means getting out of my **bubble**
- I just become **cut off from** the French I'm hearing
- Being a bit more **gregarious** and **outgoing**
- Don't **beat myself up**
- part of what **holds me back** with my French is this sense of pressure that I should be a master language learner
- you need to **push through** things like slightly boring or unexciting language practice exercises
- just **take it easy on myself**, basically
- notes on my phone, where I can **note down** or **jot down** any little things which I notice
- I don't really want you to analyse and **diagnose** my language learning situation
- I **strongly suspect** that your English is better than my French



- Sometimes I worry that I am too **wordy** and the main core message of what I am saying **gets watered down** by the slightly **long-winded** way in which I put things.
- The piece **delves into** various aspects
- its summaries are a bit **off the mark**
- some people out there are wary of ChatGPT and see any use of it as being **a slippery slope** to over-reliance on it and therefore a sort of slipping of standards
- AI can be used **sparingly** and **to good effect**
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- my evil plan will finally **come to fruition** and I'll take over the world.



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