

Film and TV

TV / Sitcoms

Teacher's notes



Age: Teenagers/Adults

Level: Pre-intermediate (A2)

Time: 90 minutes (plus an optional writing exercise for homework)

Activity: In this lesson, students will:

1. practise speaking about comedy TV and using adjectives of personality;
2. improve listening comprehension of real-life English by viewing two video clips taken from famous sitcoms;
3. focus on useful vocabulary for talking about cleaning and being messy or tidy;
4. utilise new language from this lesson to invent a new sitcom.

Language focus: speaking, listening, vocabulary, reading, writing

Materials: one copy of the worksheet per student, blank paper (minimum one piece per pair of students), a PC or projector, an internet connection in the classroom, one dice per pair of students for the final task (if dice are not available, students could use their smartphones to access an online dice-roller)

students know that they shouldn't worry if they find the lesson challenging or if they hear certain words that they don't understand.

3. This lesson contains exercises which focus on listening, speaking, vocabulary and some brief reading. If you wish to maximise class time for listening and speaking, you could ask students to complete the reading and vocabulary exercises as preparatory homework before the lesson. It would then only be necessary to quickly correct these parts in class. The exercises which could be done as preparatory homework are marked with a symbol.

1. Speak (5 minutes)

Aims: to create interest in the topic of the lesson, to ensure that all students understand what a sitcom is

Procedure: If possible, before the class begins, get the board ready with a few pictures of famous sitcoms and have these on the board as students enter the room. Write the word 'sitcom' on the board and ask if anybody could give a simple definition for it. Then hand out the worksheets and ask students to read the definition in the box for Task 1. Once they have done so, ask them to discuss the subsequent questions in pairs. Finally, try to elicit more examples of sitcoms and give feedback on good language that students may have used, particularly if related to the next task (adjectives of personality).

2. Read and vocabulary (15 minutes)

Aims: to complete a short reading comprehension about an imaginary sitcom, to provide students with adjectives of personality which will help them to talk about sitcom characters, to identify and consolidate other adjectives of personality which students might already know

Procedure: Read aloud the task instructions from the worksheet, then refer students to the short texts about the three characters. Allow them just a minute or two to read the texts individually. Highlight that they don't need to understand all the words in the texts at this stage. Once they have finished, ask them to discuss the question in the box in pairs: *Which character do you think is the most talkative?* Finally, elicit the correct answer.

Key:

From the descriptions, we can imagine that Tina would be the most talkative.

Notes:

1. **WARNING:** This lesson contains online videos from sitcoms. The second video (from the Netflix series *Unbreakable Kimmy Schmidt*) contains some mild adult humour. We suggest that you watch it before the lesson to judge whether it is appropriate for your class.
2. This lesson is aimed at lower-level learners (approximately A2). However, certain vocabulary from this lesson would typically belong at higher levels. This is because the videos referred to are authentic and therefore not graded for language learners. You may wish to let students know that a small number of words from the lesson (e.g. 'gratitude', 'sink') are from a higher level. Let

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Now refer students to Task 2b and read the worksheet instructions aloud. Perhaps complete the first gap together as a class so that everybody is clear about the task. Allow students to complete the task individually. Monitor as they do this, and help weaker students. Once students have finished, ask them to compare their answers in pairs, and then check answers as a class.

Key:

a. messy, b. generous, c. rude, d. reserved, e. funny, f. awkward, g. tidy, h. friendly, i. quiet, j. geeky

Now put students into groups of three or four. Tell students that every group needs a pen and paper and to choose which group member is going to write the words. Read aloud the instructions for Task 2c, making sure everybody is clear about the instructions. Then start the activity and allow exactly one minute for each group to write their suggestions.

Once the time is up, ask each group to swap their page with a different group for correction. Monitor as they correct each other's suggested words and help them to resolve doubts. Finally, ask groups to add up the total number of correct words for the other group (remember, points are only awarded for adjectives that weren't mentioned in Task 2b).

On the board, write some of the correct words which have been suggested. Then announce the winning group.

3. Speak (10 minutes)

Aims: to speak about famous people using the adjectives of personality from previous tasks

Procedure: If possible, show on the board a few pictures of famous people. These could be either some of the people mentioned in the worksheet table for this task, or they could be famous people from your students' country/countries. Read aloud the worksheet instructions for this task and remind students that they could use some of the adjectives from Task 2. Allow them a few minutes to talk in pairs. Finally, provide feedback, focusing on descriptions of character.

4. Vocabulary, listen and speak (25 minutes)

Aims: to study vocabulary that will help students to understand a short video, to provide listening practice, to understand a TV clip, to provide speaking practice on topics related to cleaning and being messy or tidy

Procedure: Ask students to work in pairs. Give them a few minutes to complete the vocabulary task, 4a. Monitor as they do this, and help weaker students. Finally, elicit the correct answers and focus on pronunciation of new words.

Key:

Vocabulary	Definition
1. to be on the way	(3) a substance that you use (with water) to clean your hands or your body
2. a towel	(5) a big bowl in the kitchen or the bathroom where you can clean things with water
3. soap	(6) a special piece of glass where you can see yourself
4. a soap dish	(2) a piece of cloth that you use to dry your hands or your body (if they are wet)
5. a sink	(1) to be arriving soon
6. a mirror	(4) a small plate where you can put soap

Read aloud the initial worksheet instructions for Task 4b, until the point where students are asked to tick the items they hear. Play the video ('Rainbow 'teaches' the twins a lesson: Blackish – ABC' www.youtube.com/watch?v=RDLnIN8Pe1Y) and then elicit the answers.

Key:

the bed	clothes	towels	toys	the soap	the sink	the mirror	the window
	✓	✓		✓	✓	✓	

Before playing the video for a second time, ask students to work in pairs and to read the true or false sentences. They might be able to remember some of the answers at this stage. Play the video, then allow the pairs to discuss their answers. Finally, elicit the correct answers.

Key:

- a. False – the mother says she has cookies to attract the children but she doesn't really have any
- b. True
- c. False – she says it needs to be in the soap dish
- d. False – they are surprised when she cleans the mirror for them
- e. True – the mother says 'don't forget' and the children say 'we won't'



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It would be a good idea to draw students' attention to 'cleaning' verbs which have been mentioned in the video (*clean up, pick up, rinse, wipe*). This vocabulary will be useful to students in the final task in this lesson.

Ask students in pairs to discuss the questions in Task 4c. Give feedback, focusing on language which students have used which will be relevant to the final project in Task 6 (talking about conflicting characters and 'messy versus tidy').

5. Vocabulary, listen and speak (25 minutes)

Aims: to study vocabulary that will help students to understand a short video, to provide listening practice, to understand a TV trailer, to provide speaking practice on topics related to 'normal' personality traits and habits

Procedure: Ask students to work in pairs. Give them a few minutes to complete the vocabulary Task 5a. Monitor as they do this and help weaker students. Finally, elicit the correct answers and focus on pronunciation of new words.

Key:

Vocabulary	Definition
1. <i>an apocalypse cult</i>	(6) <i>to destroy someone's confidence, success or happiness</i>
2. <i>to rescue</i>	(5) <i>a pink colour on a person's face, usually because they are healthy, happy or young</i>
3. <i>bunker</i>	(3) <i>a room underground with very strong walls</i>
4. <i>normal</i>	(1) <i>a strange religious group who think the world will end soon</i>
5. <i>a glow</i>	(4) <i>something that is usual and ordinary; not surprising in any way</i>
6. <i>to break someone</i>	(2) <i>to save someone; to get someone away from something dangerous or unpleasant</i>

Read aloud the initial worksheet instructions for Task 5b, until the point where students are asked the *Is the young woman normal?* question. Play the video ('Unbreakable Kimmy Schmidt Trailer – IGN' www.youtube.com/watch?v=Hl4bOuGNMwo) and then elicit the answers.

Key (suggested answer):

No, she is not normal. She lived fifteen years in a room with three other women so she doesn't understand modern life (e.g. she is happy to sleep in a cupboard, she eats candy for dinner, she yells in her sleep, etc).

Before playing the video for a second time, ask students to work in pairs and to read sentences a–e. They might be able to remember some of the answers at this stage. Play the video, then allow the pairs to discuss their answers. Finally, elicit the correct answers.

Key:

- a. *has happened*
- b. *happy with (she says it will be 'very comfortable' and smiles very widely)*
- c. *15*
- d. *start work at six (she is asked to arrive at six to get the child ready for school)*
- e. *shouts*

If students are confused by what time the woman's boss wants to be woken up, you may wish to point out that the boss asks the woman to get her up by ten, without waking her up – this is a joke, because it is impossible, and is intended to point out that the boss is not very normal herself!

Ask students in pairs to discuss the questions in Task 5c. Give feedback. Focus on language students may have used which will be relevant to the following activity (sharing a house, character personalities, etc).

6. Speak and write (10 minutes, plus 15 for the homework task)

Aims: to consolidate new language from the lesson, to provide spoken practice of language related to personality and imaginary sitcom characters, to aid long-term recall of language from the lesson by allowing students to come up with their own sitcom

Procedure: Ask students to work in pairs. Tell students that they are going to come up with an idea for a new sitcom and they shouldn't look at their worksheets. To decide the elements which their sitcom will include, each pair first needs to choose four numbers between one and six. They could choose their numbers in any of three ways:

- If dice are available, each pair could roll the dice four times and note down the four resulting numbers.



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- If the students have smartphones, they could visit the website www.random.org/dice and use this online dice roller to select their four numbers, noting them down accordingly.
- If neither of the above options are possible, students could just randomly choose the four numbers and note them down.

Refer students to Task 6 in their worksheets. Ask them to look at the four small tables, which each show a different element for the sitcom and its characters. On the board, write the numbers 6, 5, 2 and 3 (in that order). Ask students to find the information in the four tables which would correspond to these numbers. Once they have done so, ask them to check that the information they have gathered corresponds to the three bullet points in the example at the bottom of the page. Then ask them to read the written description of the sitcom. Ask them how the description has elaborated on the basic information from the initial bullet

points (the sitcom has been given a title, the characters have been given names and genders, the jobs and personality adjectives have been given a little bit of context, the description captures our attention by asking a question).

Ask students to look at the four numbers that they wrote down at the start of this task. In pairs, they should look at the information that corresponds to these numbers. This will allow them to complete the three bullet points for their own sitcom. For homework, ask students to use this information to write their own short description of the sitcom. Before the class finishes, allow the pairs a minute or so to talk and brainstorm ideas for how they can tie together the elements and come up with a concrete idea for a sitcom.

Remind students that when they are writing, they should use as much new vocabulary as possible from this lesson. They should submit their written work for correction in the next class.

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Worksheet

1a. Speak

Read the definition and then discuss the questions with your classmate.

A sitcom (noun) = A situation comedy. This is a type of TV series. Every episode usually lasts for around 30 minutes. It has funny characters who are often in strange situations. Some famous sitcoms include *Friends*, *How I met Your Mother*, *Modern Family*, etc.

- Do you know any other famous sitcoms?
- Describe the basic story of a sitcom that you know.



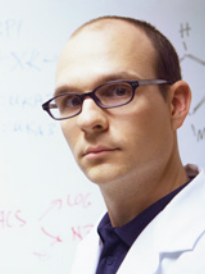
2a. Read

A TV channel has an idea for a new sitcom called *Three In The House*. This sitcom is about three people who live together in a house in Edinburgh city. The flatmates* have a lot of funny moments, and sometimes a few problems!

* flatmates = people who share an apartment (American English: 'roommates')

Read about the three characters from the sitcom and answer the question in the box:

Which character do you think is the most talkative?

<p>Name: Amal Age: 34 Job: Dentist</p> 	<p>Name: Tina Age: 27 Job: Fashion designer</p> 	<p>Name: Steve Age: 36 Job: Scientist</p> 
<p>Amal is a quiet person but she is usually very friendly with people who she knows well. She is very tidy and likes everything to be in the correct place. She is also very geeky, with a strong passion for things like <i>Batman</i> comics and scientific TV series like <i>Star Trek</i>.</p>	<p>Tina has lots of friends and is very funny but she is also extremely messy! She always throws her things on the floor and never picks them up. Apart from this, she is very generous, often giving money to poor people and helping her friends as much as she can.</p>	<p>Steve doesn't talk to other people very often so he is a little socially awkward. Some people think that he is rude but Steve prefers to think that he is just a little reserved. He likes to have things in order, so he cleans up the house once a week.</p>



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Worksheet

2b. Vocabulary

The texts in Task 2a have various adjectives of personality. For each of the definitions below, find the right adjective from the texts.

- A person who is not organised and doesn't clean the house very often = _____
- A person who shares their money or time with other people = _____
- A person who is not polite (e.g. he/she doesn't say 'please' or 'thank you') = _____
- A person who doesn't show their feelings = _____
- A person who makes other people laugh = _____
- A person who is difficult to talk to because he/she doesn't know how to have a good conversation = _____
- A person who is organised and likes everything to be in order = _____
- A person who is pleasant with other people and likes talking to them = _____
- A person who is generally silent and doesn't talk much = _____
- A person who has a very strong interest in special items, like superheroes or films about space = _____

2c. Vocabulary

Brainstorm! Work in groups. On a separate piece of paper, write adjectives of personality that have not been mentioned in Task 2b. You have one minute to write as many adjectives as possible.

3. Speak

Talk in pairs about famous people. There are some examples in the box below. Or, if you prefer, talk about famous people from your country. For each famous person, talk about:

- his/her personality
- your opinion of this person (explain)

Sports	David Beckham, Leo Messi, Pele, Cristiano Ronaldo, Maria Sharapova, Serena Williams
Music	Adele, Beyoncé, Justin Bieber, Jennifer Lopez, Madonna, Ed Sheeran
Films	George Clooney, Leonardo DiCaprio, Tom Hanks, Scarlett Johansson, Jennifer Lawrence
Politics	Angela Merkel, Narendra Modi, Vladimir Putin, Justin Trudeau, Donald Trump, Xi Jinping
Business	Bill Gates, Elon Musk, Sheryl Sandberg, Mark Zuckerberg



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Worksheet

4a. Vocabulary

In the next task, you will watch a video about a family. To help you to understand the video, first match the vocabulary to the definitions.

Vocabulary	Definition
1. to be on the way	(3) a substance that you use (with water) to clean your hands or your body
2. a towel	() a big bowl in the kitchen or the bathroom where you can clean things with water
3. soap	() a special piece of glass where you can see yourself
4. a soap dish	() a piece of cloth that you use to dry your hands or your body (if they are wet)
5. a sink	() to be arriving soon
6. a mirror	() a small plate where you can put soap

4b. Listen

Watch this video from the TV sitcom Blackish (ABC). In this scene, we see a mother talking to her two children.

www.youtube.com/watch?v=RDLnIN8Pe1Y

Watch the video for the first time. The mother mentions some items which are dirty or not in the correct place. Tick (✓) the items which she mentions:

the bed	clothes	towels	toys	the soap	the sink	the mirror	the window

Now watch the video for the second time. Decide if the sentences below are true or false.

- The mother has cookies for the children.
- The mother is going to have another baby.
- The mother says that the soap needs to be in a box.
- The children are surprised when their mother cleans the sink.
- The children say that they will do what their mother says.

4c. Speak

Discuss with your classmate:

Describe the personalities of the two children and the mother.

Do you think you are messy or tidy? Explain.

Describe a very tidy person who you know.

Describe a very messy person who you know.



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Worksheet

5a. Vocabulary

In the next task, you will watch a video about a woman with a secret. To help you to understand the video, first match the vocabulary to the definitions.

Vocabulary	Definition
1. an apocalypse cult	(6) to destroy someone's confidence, success or happiness
2. to rescue	() a pink colour on a person's face, usually because they are healthy, happy or young
3. bunker	() a room underground with very strong walls
4. normal	() a strange religious group who think the world will end soon
5. a glow	() something that is usual and ordinary; not surprising in any way
6. to break someone	() to save someone; to get someone away from something dangerous or unpleasant

5b. Listen

Watch this video from the TV sitcom *Unbreakable Kimmy Schmidt* (Netflix). In this trailer, we see a young woman move to the city. She gets a new flat and a new job.

www.youtube.com/watch?v=HI4bOuGNMwo

Watch the video for the first time and answer the question in the box:

Is the young woman normal?

Now watch the video for the second time. Decide the correct option to complete each sentence below.

- The women in the bunker think the end of the world _____ .
 - won't happen • has happened • will happen soon
- The woman is very _____ her new, small bedroom.
 - unhappy with • surprised by • happy with
- The woman spent _____ years in the bunker.
 - 15 • 20 • 25
- The woman's new boss asks her to _____.
 - wake her up at six • take her son to school at six • start work at six
- The woman's flatmate says she _____ in her sleep.
 - shouts • laughs • cries

5c. Speak

Discuss with your classmate:

- Describe the personality of the woman.
- Do you think you are normal? Explain.
- Do you think it is important to be normal? Why or why not?



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Worksheet

6. Project: A new sitcom

In this task, you will write an idea for a new sitcom. Your sitcom will have two main characters. Work in pairs. First, decide your four numbers. Then look in the tables to see the information that corresponds to each number.

The two characters know each other because ...

1	2	3	4	5	6
They are a married couple	They are in the same English class	They are flatmates	They always go to the same bar	They are brother(s) and/or sister(s)	They walk their dogs in the same park

Characters' jobs

	1	2	3	4	5	6
<i>Character A</i>	a dancer	a waiter	an actor	a chef	a singer	a footballer
<i>Character B</i>	a doctor	a teacher	a dentist	a scientist	a politician	an artist

Characters' personalities

	1	2	3	4	5	6
<i>Character A</i>	friendly	relaxed	talkative	funny	reserved	hard-working
<i>Character B</i>	quiet	rude	awkward	rude	friendly	generous

Are the characters tidy or messy?

	1	2	3	4	5	6
<i>Character A</i>	extremely tidy	extremely tidy	a little messy	extremely tidy	extremely messy	a little messy
<i>Character B</i>	a little messy	extremely messy	extremely tidy	extremely tidy	extremely messy	extremely messy

For example, imagine your numbers are 6, 5, 2 and 3.

This allows you to complete the information below:

- The characters know each other because **they walk their dogs in the same park**.
- *Character A* is a **singer** who is **relaxed** and is also a **little messy**.
- *Character B* is a **politician** is **rude** and is also **extremely tidy**.



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Worksheet

From this, you could write a short description of the new sitcom:

Sitcom title: Is that your dog?

Frank is a singer in a rock band. Every morning, he takes his dog for a walk. In the park, he always sees Vanessa. She is an important politician, but she is very rude! She hates Frank because he is very messy and he doesn't clean up after his dog. Frank is very relaxed, so he doesn't pay much attention to Vanessa or her little Chihuahua. One day, their two dogs become friends. Can Frank and Vanessa do the same?

Now find the information for your numbers. Complete the gaps below:

Our numbers are _____, _____, _____ and _____.

- The characters know each other because _____.
- *Character A* is a _____ who is _____ and is also _____.
- *Character B* is a _____ who is _____ and is also _____.

And now write your short description (50–100 words):

Sitcom title: _____