

Mini-plays

by Tim Bowen and Liz Plampton

Air travel

LISTENING SKILLS TEACHER'S NOTES

Teacher's notes and answer key

Level: Intermediate and above

Age: Adults

Time needed: 45 minutes plus

Procedure: The 'Twelve top tips' will give you extra ideas for using the plays in the classroom.

Notes on language and culture

1. Eric and Pam have fairly strong West Midlands accents. The West Midlands is a county in central England that is home to the cities of Birmingham, Coventry and Wolverhampton.
2. Although *shove* essentially means the same as *push*, the words are grouped together as the expression 'push and shove', used in a negative way to describe being pushed in a busy place.
3. A 'cuppa' is short for 'a cup of tea'. It can't be used for a 'cup of coffee'.
4. 'I could just do with one' is a colloquial way of saying 'I would really like to have one'.
5. The expression '(I) don't blame you' is another way of saying 'If I was in your situation, I would have done the same thing'.
6. When Pam says 'You cheeky so-and-so!', this is quite friendly because she is talking to her husband. The term *so-and-so* can be a fairly polite euphemism for a ruder word, as in 'He's a miserable so-and-so, he is'.
7. The colloquial expression 'Mind you, ...' is used when the speaker wants to make what they have just said sound less severe. Pam says she feels like she's 'been assaulted' by the security guards at airports but then light-heartedly jokes about being 'frisked by a man in uniform'.
8. When Pam says 'Used to be complimentary everything.', this means 'everything used to be complimentary', e.g. complimentary peanuts, complimentary drinks, complimentary biscuits, etc.
9. When Eric says 'They get you every which way', he means that the budget airlines use a number of different ways to get money from their customers.
10. When Eric says 'Bound to be.' he is not only agreeing with Pam but declaring that it is 'almost certain to be' better for the environment to travel by train.



11. '... the way things are going ...' is a shared reference to the fact that the speaker thinks the situation is getting worse. It is often accompanied by a shake of the head.
12. In this context, 'hold it in' means to resist the need to go to the toilet (because he doesn't want to pay).
13. 'You've got a point there.' is an expression used for showing that you think someone has made an important statement.

Twelve top tips

1. Take away the title of the play. Students try to guess the context. Who? Where? Why? What?
2. Ask students to describe the appearance, personality and social status of the characters in the play.
3. Cut the play up into four sections. Students then put it back in the correct sequence.
4. Supply several statements of fact or opinion about the play. Ask students to assess whether each one follows from the play, supports it, contradicts it or is assumed.
5. Use the play alongside a onestopenglish news lesson or news article on a related subject and hold a debate and discussion on the topic to link the content with students' experience or knowledge.
6. Students add their own stage directions, e.g. ... *he said angrily – rising from his chair.*
7. Students can finish the play off in their own words or change its ending.
8. Students interpret the play, perform it and then record and listen to themselves for correct use of stress and intonation.

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9. Students perform the play using the same words but in different styles, e.g. a romance, a ghost story, a thriller, etc.

10. Students identify vocabulary that has a negative connotation.

11. Students identify the word/phrase/phrasal verb that means ...

12. Take an adjective or adverb out of a sentence and put it in brackets at the end of the line. Students put it back in the correct place or wherever it will logically fit, for example:

The train might be more expensive than flying.
[ACTUALLY]

Actually, the train might be more expensive than flying.

OR

The train might be more expensive than flying, actually.

OR

The train might actually be more expensive than flying.

Answer key

1. Complete the phrases

1. credit card; 2. tax; 3. baggage; 4. cheques; 5. toilets

2. Vocabulary

1. c; 2. a; 3. b; 4. f; 5. d; 6. e

3. Find the colloquial expression

1. rake it in; 2. regular as clockwork;
3. over and done with; 4. make the most of it;
5. stretch to; 6. every which way

4. Colloquial language: Ellipsis

1. We could have had a cuppa while we're sitting here
2. You just can't win.
3. (It's) as regular as clockwork.
4. It's probably better for the environment too.
5. I heard it on the bus.
6. It wouldn't worry you though, would it?

Transcript

Scenario: A couple waiting in the departure lounge at Birmingham airport

Characters: Eric, Pam, airport ground assistant (GA)

- Eric** I'm going to sit down.
- Pam** That's a good idea.
- Eric** I'm in no hurry.
- Pam** Yes, let 'em push and shove if they want to.
- Eric** Could've had a cuppa while we're sitting here.
- Pam** Yes, I could just do with one now.
- Eric** I'm not paying their prices, though.
- Pam** Don't blame you.
- Eric** Must be raking it in, now you can't take any liquids through with you.
- Pam** I wouldn't mind, but every time I go through that scanner, it beeps! Regular as clockwork.
- Eric** Maybe it's those old fillings of yours!
- Pam** You cheeky so-and-so!
- Eric** Yes, up and down, up and down they go. What they can find in that time, I'll never know. It's all over and done with before you can say "knife".
- Pam** I always feel like I've been assaulted. Mind you, it's not often that I'm frisked by a man in uniform!
- Eric** Make the most of it!
- Pam** Did you want anything to eat for the journey? You know how expensive they can be on these budget flights.
- Eric** No, it's only a three-hour flight.
- Pam** Maybe we could stretch to a coffee on the plane, then. We could share if you like. I won't drink a whole one.
- Eric** Why? The toilets are still free!
- Pam** Used to be complimentary everything. Still, the flights are so cheap nowadays.
- Eric** Not that cheap. Not after they've added on the tax and the extra baggage charge, and then there's the charge for paying by credit card.
- Pam** And they won't accept cheques.
- Eric** They get you every which way!
- Pam** Calm down Eric. They won't let us on! They'll think you've had too much to drink.

Transcript

- GA** Priority boarders only, please!
- Eric** And that's *another* charge! What happened to 'women and children first', anyway?
- Pam** We're not on the Titanic now, dear.
- Eric** Just can't win. Seems like every airline is changing its rules. We'll take the train next time.
- Pam** I suppose so.
- Eric** Probably better for the environment too.
- Pam** D'you think so?
- Eric** Bound to be. Apparently, one tonne of CO₂ is produced for every 4,000 miles flown by an air traveller. Heard it on the bus.
- Pam** See what you mean. And the train's certainly got its advantages, especially if these airlines are going to start installing 'pay toilets'.
- Eric** Well, the way things are going, I wouldn't be surprised!
- Pam** Wouldn't worry you though, would it? You'd just sit there and hold it in for three hours. Like a camel, you are!
- Eric** Yes, but it's better than paying. Actually, the train might be more expensive than flying.
- Pam** You've got a point there. But at least I wouldn't get frisked.
- Eric** We'll wait until they do budget train travel, shall we?

Worksheet

1 Complete the phrases

The two people in the play are complaining about how they are treated by budget airlines. Complete the sentences using the words in the box.

cheques tax toilets credit card baggage

1. There's a charge for payment by _____.
2. Then they add on the _____.
3. And there's the extra _____ charge.
4. And they won't accept _____.
5. The _____ are still free, though!

Now listen to the play and check your answers.

2 Vocabulary

Match these words from the text with their meanings.

- | | |
|------------------|---|
| 1. shove | a. a piece of equipment used in airport security |
| 2. scanner | b. make a short high-pitched electronic sound |
| 3. beep | c. push something or someone with force |
| 4. filling | d. search someone with your hands |
| 5. frisk | e. free of charge |
| 6. complimentary | f. a small amount of metal used to fill a hole in a tooth |

3 Find the colloquial expression

Look at the transcript and find the following words and phrases. Note that they are in the order in which they appear in the play.

1. a three-word expression meaning *earn a lot of money*
2. a three-word expression meaning *very often*
3. a four-word expression meaning *completely finished*
4. a five-word expression meaning *enjoy it while you can*
5. a two-word phrasal verb meaning *afford*
6. a three-word expression meaning *in all possible ways*

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Worksheet

4 Colloquial language: Ellipsis

Which words are missing from these examples from the play?

1. Could've had a cuppa while we're sitting here.
2. Regular as clockwork.
3. Just can't win.
4. Probably better for the environment too.
5. Heard it on the bus.
6. Wouldn't worry you though, would it?

5 Discussion

- Have you ever flown with a budget airline? If so, describe your experience.
- Are budget airlines a good thing? Why? Why not?

6 Listen and speak

Listen to the recording and read the play aloud in time with the recording.