



039 – Real English Conversations: Daily Rituals part 4

Introduction

Hi English learners! Lori here, your teacher from betteratenglish.com. In this episode of Real English Conversations, you'll hear part 4 of my conversation with Kyla. Up until now we've been talking about the book *Daily Rituals* by Mason Currey. But in this part of the conversation we digress [go off topic] and talk about dealing with distractions and interruptions when we're trying to work. That's one of the fun things about conversations: you never know where they are going to go!

What kind of things do you find distracting when you are trying to work or study? How do you feel when you get interrupted when you're trying to concentrate? Do you think you have anything in common with Kyla and me? Listen to the conversation and find out!

If you want to read along as you listen, you can download the full transcript, including a bonus vocabulary lesson at betteratenglish.com/transcripts.

After the conversation I'll be back with three questions you can use for speaking practice.

OK, let's get on with the conversation!

Conversation transcript

Lori: Yeah, it's, I think, really important. I found that it kind of made me feel a little bit better about myself because I find that if I'm going **to sit down and do something**, maybe not necessarily– necessarily creative, but that really requires my **full attention** and concentration, I cannot handle **distractions** and **interruptions**...

Kyla: Yeah, yeah.

Lori: ...at all.

- Kyla: They've even done studies where, I think when you're trying to do something, every distraction, it takes you about 15 minutes to get back...
- Lori: Right.
- Kyla: ...to what you were doing? Like, that's the amount of time it takes your brain to handle, "There's been a distraction! What was I doing before? Where was I? Oh yes, here we are...":
- Lori: Yeah. It's —
- Kyla: "...now we're going again." And so that, having that sort of place to make sure that no distractions **bother** you.
- Lori: Yeah, it's really important. And I think nowadays, you know, people with families, and **not to mention** just our little devices **going off** and pinging us all the time. You know, it's— it's getting harder and harder to create that— that block of undisturbed, focused, uninterrupted time for yourself, I think.
- Kyla: It is. It— it really is. And I was, you know — Google just had their... just released their news on their, sort of their new gadgets; the new Android, the new apps they're coming up with.
- Lori: Okay.
- Kyla: And one of the things they're doing is they're trying to **integrate** all of your electronic devices so that if somebody calls you on your phone, it will alert you on your laptop.
- Lori: Nooo!
- Kyla: And I was just like, "That's a terrible idea!" [laughs]
- Lori: It's...I think it's a horrible idea.
- Kyla: Like, in order to get anything done, you **pretty much** have to disconnect from the internet if it's not required for what you're doing. [laughs]
- Lori: Yeah, totally. And you know, I've really **come full circle** when it comes to things like the internet and being connected in social media. I mean, in the beginning back in, well let's say, 10 years ago when it was still fresh

and new and people were talking about web 2.0., it was this fantastic thing.

And now I find, oh my god, I just, I don't want all that distraction and all those little tiny calls to my attention throughout the day that I've almost become anti- [laughs] internet. Which is, I mean, there's some kind of irony there because I also am running a website, and of course I want people to look at my website and listen to the podcasts. So it's kind of a, um — yeah, almost hypocritical but...



image by Wilengebroed on flickr

Kyla: No, I'm the same. I mean, for...and I'm sort of like, I'm not a...I'm a great—I'm a great social person in person but I'm not— I'm **not entirely sold on** this social networking **business**. But I'm a musician! [laughs] So...

Lori: Yeah.

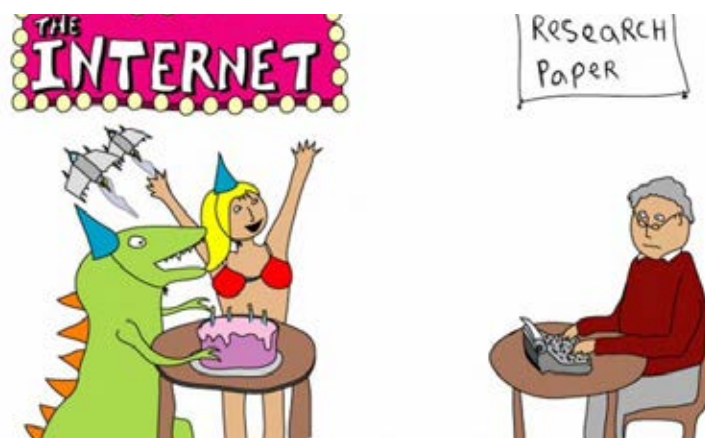
Kyla: Now I have all these, you know. All these, you know, different websites and, you know, the various platforms for getting your music out and I'm...I kind of have to be like, "Okay, I really need to schedule some time a day to actually go and use these things," you know? It's...I mean, it's a great tool to, you know, exactly kind of get your— get your music or your— your podcasts or whatever it is you're doing out to the world. But at the same time, if you spend all of your time on that, you kind of lose the time that is required to actually make the art...

Lori: Exactly!

- Kyla: ...that you're making **in the first place** and —
- Lori: Yeah, I couldn't have said it better myself. [laughs]
- Kyla: [laughs] We actually — the album that I recorded with my band a couple of years ago — we'd had...we recorded the whole thing about three times, and I just wasn't happy with it. There were things that we just weren't happy with the first couple of times. And we're all recording at home. And we finally got recorded but we moved into a new apartment and just decided not to get internet until the album was done. And it really— it really did **work out** well. And it's fine because I work full time, and we watched *Doctor Who* every night which is, like an hour and a half long. Like, I was like, "I don't understand how we recorded an album!" because I was working 40 hours a week, and we watched TV every night. But at some point between the 40 hours and the TV, there was about 2 hours in which I was just plugged in and recording guitar so...
- Lori: Oh, cool.
- Kyla: But it was kind of, yeah, there— there was absolutely no outside distraction. And I still need it too, you know. I mean at the time, well, and still, like, email is the way you contact me **for the most part**. So I still had to be going, like, I had to take about, you know, 45 minutes to go to a café or the library to use the Wi-Fi too to do those things. But it was really like, "This is the time of day in which the internet is attached," and, you know. And it kind of worked out, like, yeah, it was almost like, "Here's a schedule for this," and then the rest of my day didn't have any of those distractions. I was like, "How come I can't do that when I have internet in the house?"
- Lori: Right. When you were using that little block of time every day to— to do your internet things; did— did you notice that you were more efficient or that you got more done?
- Kyla: Oh, definitely. Definitely. Yeah.
- Lori: Because —
- Kyla: Because it was like I'd...I would have a list! I'd be like, "Okay, these are the things I need to do on the internet. So you know, check this email,

make this post and..." and yeah. And I did. It was, like, "Here's my time. I don't want to be here too long." Yup, I definitely.

Lori: Yeah. I can't remember who it was, I heard someone else talking about that or reading about it who was basically saying the same thing — had trouble with their internet at home and was, like, forced to just go out to a café or something once a day to do all the emailing and would just, like, **bang through** all these! Everything! Get it all answered in, like, half an hour. **Whereas**, when he had his great internet at home, he could spend forever on the internet and not get anything done.



Kyla: Oh yeah, absolutely. Absolutely.

Lori: So there's something about that idea of— of putting some kind of limitation on yourself or knowing in advance that it really is just a **discrete** amount of time that you had to do something that kind of forces you to really **get down to it** and get it done. It's very interesting.

Kyla: Yeah.

Lori: So yeah! [laughs] This is **turning into** quite the conversation. [laughs]

Kyla: It is! Yes, it is. [laughs] We're somehow— we're somehow still on topic but not at all talking about the book.

Lori: Yeah. But that is the way— the way things go...

Kyla: That's the way things go.

- Lori: ...it's kind of cool. Did you —
- Kyla: [crosstalk]
- Lori: No, **go ahead**.
- Kyla: Oh, you go ahead.
- Lori: No —
- Kyla: No, you —
- Lori: No, no, no, no, you. You, go ahead.
- Kyla: No, no, you! [laughs]
- Lori: No, I've already actually already forgotten what I was going to say! So...

Final words

That's all for this time. I hope you've enjoyed the conversation. Remember that it's important to practice speaking if you want to improve your English fluency. Here are 3 discussion questions that you can use to practice with your teacher, tutor, or your language exchange partner.

1. What is the biggest internet distraction for you, and how do you deal with it when you need to work?
2. How do you feel about constantly getting email and social media notifications on your phone or computer?
3. Do you think you work more productively when you have a set block of time? Why or why not?

Make sure to download the transcript so you can read along to check your understanding. The transcript also has notes about the language we use in the conversation, and explains a lot of the vocabulary. You can find it at [Betteratenglish.com/transcripts](https://betteratenglish.com/transcripts).

Until next time, keep on practicing your English. In fact, you can practice right now by leaving me a voice message or joining the conversation on the [Better at English Facebook page](#). You can find all the ways to get in touch at [Betteratenglish.com/contact](https://betteratenglish.com/contact).
Bye for now!

Vocabulary and usage notes

to sit down and do something

People often use the phrase *to sit down and do something* to talk about starting to do tasks that take a lot of time and attention, for example writing a long text, working on a drawing, answering a lot of email, etc. Usually you need to sit down to do these tasks, and the hardest part of doing them is forcing yourself to start.

to handle

To cope with or deal with something successfully

full attention

All of someone's attention. *Full* is a very strong collocation with *attention*, so learn it as a phrase!

distractions

A *distraction* is something that takes your attention away from where it should be, or where you want it to be.

interruptions

And *interruption* is something that stops you from doing whatever you are doing for a short period of time.

to bother

If something bothers you, it annoys you, often because it interrupts you or distracts you.

not to mention

Not to mention is a fixed phrase that shows you are adding more information about the main point you already said.

going off

If something *goes off*, it suddenly starts making a noise. Common things that *go off* are alarms and timers. Nowadays, alerts on our smart devices are always *going off*.

to integrate

If you integrate something, you connect separate parts into one system.

pretty much

An informal fixed phrase whose meaning ranges from *more or less* to *almost completely*.

to come full circle

If someone or something *comes full circle*, it has been through a period of change and is now the same as it was in the beginning.

to be sold on something

To be sold on something means to be confident that it is true or has value

business

This is a special usage of *business*. Here it means a general situation, idea, or activity that you are giving your opinion about. Kyla says “*I’m not entirely sold on this social networking business.*” This means *I am not completely sure that social networking is good/useful/valuable.*

in the first place

In the first place is a fixed phrase that means *in the beginning* or *at the start* of something.

Example

I’m glad I wasn’t invited to the wedding because I didn’t want to go *in the first place*.

to work out

If something *works out*, it happens or develops in a certain way.

1. *I’m glad the new job is working out!* (good result)
2. *I’m sorry the new job didn’t work out.* (bad result)

for the most part

usually, mostly, generally

to bang through something

In this context, to work effectively and finish a lot of tasks, like answering many emails. A similar expression is *to bang out*, which means to produce something quickly.

Examples:

1. I *banged through* 50 emails in 5 minutes.
2. She *banged out* the report in a few hours.

whereas

Whereas is a conjunction (connecting word) that introduces a some kind of contrast or comparison.

Example:

1. Her husband can eat anything he wants without gaining weight, whereas she has to be very careful.

discrete

It is easy to get the words *discrete* and *discreet* mixed up, because they sound the same. *Discrete* means separate, distinct. *Discreet* means careful not to attract attention or cause embarrassment.

Examples:

1. The job is divided into three *discrete* tasks. (discrete = separate)
2. He was trying to be *discreet* about it, but it was obvious that he was staring at the beautiful girl.

to get down to it

To get down to it a fixed phrase that means you stop delaying and begin seriously doing something that you need to do.

Example:

1. I am tired of looking at all this unanswered email in my inbox. I need to get down to it and answer them.

to turn into

To become, to change from one thing into another

Example:

1. Caterpillars *turn into* butterflies.
2. We meant to have a short chat, but it *turned into* a long conversation.

go ahead

It is generally rude to interrupt someone when they are speaking. But sometimes on the phone it is hard to know when the other person is finished, so you interrupt them accidentally. When you realize your mistake, you can tell the person to *go ahead*. This is a short way to explain “Sorry, I did not mean to interrupt you. Please continue.” Sometimes both speakers want to be polite and let the other talk. So they keep telling each other to “go ahead.” The end of this conversation is a great example of this!