



Real English conversations: Chick magnet

Hi, Lori here, your teacher from Betteratenglish.com. In this episode of Real English Conversations, I talk to my English friend Andy. Our conversation is about the irresistible cuteness of dogs and puppies. It turns out that if you take a cute dog or puppy for a walk in a busy place, it's a great way to break the ice and meet new people. In fact, sometimes people exploit the power of doggie cuteness as a way to meet potential romantic partners (or so I've been told).

As always, you can find the full transcript and bonus vocabulary lesson for this episode at betteratenglish.com/transcripts.

OK, let's get started with the conversation!

Conversation Transcript

Lori: Do you ever go to the gym?

Andy: I don't go anymore; I used to go many years ago, but...

L: What...why don't you go anymore?

A: Well, it's very expensive, for one thing. And also it's a long way to travel from where **I'm living at the moment**; it's a long way to get to the gym, so I go walking with the dog and that's my exercise.

L: Oooooooh, **doggie!** Doggie! What kind of dog is it?

A: It's a border terrier.

L: Ooooh, is he cute?

A: Which is...Oh he is very, very cute, and he's very friendly. And also gets me lots of attention while I'm out, because everybody wants to say hello to my dog, so...

L: I know, isn't that funny about dogs, they're **total conversation starters**...

A: They're a great way to get chicks as well! L: Yeah, that's what I've heard!



a border terrier

- A: If you, if you have a very cute dog, then, yeah, then girls want to come over and pet your dog, and then of course you can start talking to them, so yeah, it's a great way to meet friends.
- L: Don't you call that "**chatting them up**" in British English?
- A: Yes, chatting somebody up is, I suppose, **flirting** with somebody, and um...
- L: Trying to get their phone number?
- A: Yes! That's the kind of thing, yes.
- L: Well I think that the **ultimate** weapon, you know, the ultimate **chick magnet** would probably be a cute little puppy.
- A: Oh, oh, most definitely. For sure.
- L: Because I can tell you from experience – and being a girl – that, oh, it takes all my power to resist going up to total strangers with cute little puppies and asking if I can pet the puppy. Seriously, it's...oh my God!
- A: Okay, I'm going **to get rid of** the ... [line drops out] ...then.
- L: **Sorry?**
- A: I'm gonna get rid of the dog and get a puppy instead; he's too old now.
- L: Oh yeah, total...total chick magnet. But you'll also be attracting a lot of **little old ladies** as well.
- A: **Pardon?**
- L: You'll also be attracting a lot of little old ladies as well.
- A: Oh okay, so there is a **downside** to it.
- L: Yeah, there is a downside...unless you like little old ladies.
- A: It's not really **my thing**, no, no...



a little old lady with her shopping basket

Final words

OK, that's all for this time. I hope you enjoyed the conversation. To get the most benefit from this conversations, make sure to download the transcript and vocabulary lesson. It explains the tricky vocabulary, and highlights some of the interesting grammar points. You can also use it to check your listening, to look up anything important that you didn't understand, or as a basis for English speaking practice with your teacher or language exchange partner. You can find it at Betteratenglish.com/transcripts. Until next time, have fun practicing your English! Bye for now.

Vocabulary and usage notes

I'm living

Grammar: this is a good example of the present continuous for temporary situations.

I'm living in Los Angeles at the moment. (Feels temporary for the speaker)

I live in Los Angeles. (Feels permanent for the speaker)

doggie (or doggy)

Adding an *ie* or *y* to the end of a word is a diminutive in English. Diminutive forms make the object sound cute, familiar, lovable (or pitiable), or small. Both the *-ie* and *-y* spellings are very common.

total conversation starters

Using the word *total* in front of a noun has an intensifying effect. It is typical in informal, conversational American English. Compare "He's an idiot" with "He's a *total* idiot." A *conversation starter* is any object or tactic that helps you start a conversation with someone, usually someone you don't know.

chicks

In the literal sense, a *chick* is a baby chicken (baby birds of many species are referred to as *chicks*).

In the context of this conversation, *chick* is an informal word for girl or woman. *Chick* is a word to be careful with because it can be perfectly OK or offensive. It depends on the social context. Women often playfully refer to themselves or other women as chicks. But if men refer to women as chicks, it can be offensive. When men talk about “getting chicks,” they usually mean establishing romantic relationships with attractive, desirable women.

Chatting them up

To chat someone up (BrE) means to talk to someone in a way that shows that you are sexually or romantically attracted to them.

Flirting

To flirt with someone means that you behave as if you are sexually/romantically attracted to them. You don't have to be seriously interested for it to be flirting. Sometimes people flirt even though they have no intention of actually getting involved romantically.

Ultimate

To describe something as *the ultimate X* means that it is the best (or worst) possible example of something. This is often used rather loosely in conversation just to make a point that X is extremely good (or bad).

Chick magnet

A *chick magnet* is a slang word for any person, object, or quality that attracts women (romantically or sexually). Fancy cars and other items that display a man's wealth and social status are often thought of as chick magnets.

To get rid of

To get rid of something means to throw it away, to dispose of it.

Sorry?

When you haven't heard what someone has said, you can say “Sorry?” (rising intonation) as a polite way to ask them to repeat what they said. *Sorry?* is one of many phrases that have this function. Others include *Pardon?* (see below), *Excuse me?* And *(I) beg your pardon?*

Little old ladies

If you describe a woman as a *little old lady*, people tend to think of a stereotypical gray-haired, good-natured, somewhat fragile, elderly woman. It is usually used in a playful or affectionate sense, but sometimes is used disparagingly. Even though Andy certainly likes sweet little old ladies, he's not interested in "chatting them up!" or flirting with them!

Pardon?

Saying *pardon?* with rising intonation at the end signals that you have not heard what someone just said, and want them to repeat it. *Pardon* and *I beg your pardon* are both a bit old-fashioned sounding now. *Sorry?* with rising intonation is much more common.

Downside

The *downside* of something is the bad or undesirable aspect of something. A synonym is *disadvantage*. The good aspect of something is the *upside* or *advantage*.

My thing

If someone says *X is not my thing*, it means that they are not interested in X. It can also be a less direct (and more polite) way of saying that you don't like something. For example, saying "Getting up early is not my thing" sounds much less direct than "I hate getting up early." You can be even more indirect by using *not really*, for example "Getting up early is *not really my thing*." But be careful! If you change the order to *really not* it makes your opinion sound much stronger and more direct. For example, "Getting up early is *really not my thing*."

**To vividem nimus Mae conc oc fatant inum tust L. Fulicur quidet vir-
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