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046 – 5 American English slang expressions

Introduction

Hey there English learners, Lori here, your teacher from [BetterAtEnglish.com](https://www.betteratenglish.com). I've got a different type of episode here for you today. I'm gonna go through some American English slang expressions, some really common ones that you hear all the time if you're watching American English sitcoms or dramas on TV or Netflix.

And they're not super recent and super new, they're more general. They're ones that have been in use for quite a few years, and that you hear people in a wide range of ages using. So it's not just super new ones that are just used by teenagers and younger people. They're a lot more, I think, general and for me that means there are a lot more useful. So I hope that you will enjoy this episode.

It's, it's a bit scary for me because it's different from what I normally give you. But, you know, when I think about it, I'm always encouraging you to try new things with your English learning and to risk embarrassment, to risk failure. So all I can do is try to lead by example and hope that you enjoy this episode.

So here we go. The expressions we're going to look at are:

Oh my god
that sucks
tell me about it
to bomb, and
bummer or bummed

Oh my god

So let's start with the first one: *Oh my god*. This can be a confusing one because you hear people saying, "Oh my god" all the time. And you might be wondering, "Wow, is everybody religious?" Or "Why are they talking about

God so much? This situation makes no sense. It has nothing to do with God. I don't understand."

And I get it. That can be really confusing, but, um, the expression, *Oh my god* has nothing to do with gods or religion. And it's not just religious people who use it. It's just an expression that people use to express surprise at something, or shock, or amazement, or even, even excitement.

I'll give you an example and pardon me, I'm going to have to do some voices or something because I don't have a partner here to have a conversation with. But I'll, I'll do my best to keep it authentic and natural. So imagine you're in the office and someone comes up to you and says,

Speaker A: *I heard Jeff was in a car accident last night.*

You might say,

Speaker B: **Oh my god**, *is he okay?*

So in an instance like that, you've heard some shocking news and *Oh my god* is your way of expressing that it's a, yeah, a shock. And it doesn't have to be just for bad things like accidents or bad things happening. It can also be that you're showing excitement about something really good. Something really cool that happened to you.

So for example, you might say,

Oh my god, *I can't believe it. I won the lottery.*

And...which would be totally awesome and also very shocking. 'cause as you know, the chances of winning the lottery are ridiculously tiny and the prizes can be ridiculously awesome. So you might definitely say, *Oh my god* if you found out that you won.

Another use that you see out in the wild is *Oh my god* being used as a sort of general intensifier to just add emphasis to what you're saying and make it stronger. So you might hear a conversation, something like this.

Speaker A: *Hey, how'd you do on your math test?*

Speaker B: **Oh my god.** *You won't believe how hard it was. I'm sure I failed.*

That sucks

So let's move on to number two: *that sucks*. Why can that one be a bit confusing? Well, it has nothing to do with actual sucking or physical sucking, like a baby would do with a bottle or that you might do with a piece of candy. *That sucks* is what you say in response to hearing someone tell you that they've had a bad experience.

Maybe they've got some bad news. They've had a disappointment, or something kind of just generally sad or awful has happened to them. So let's go with our math test example. I think for the rest of these words, the context of doing poorly and failing a test is a pretty good one. So I'm going to stick to that for the rest of the examples.

And I'm also going to sneak in some bonus slang that you should be able to guess from context if you read through all the examples. And as always, you'll be able to find the full transcript of this, every single word that I say on the website, www.BetterAtEnglish.com.

Speaker A: *How'd you do on your math test?*

Speaker B: *Oh my god, you won't believe how hard it was. I'm sure I failed.*

Speaker A: *Oh, **that sucks**. Sorry to hear that.*

So, by saying *that sucks* in response to hearing your friend's bad news, you're showing that you, you sympathize with them and that you feel bad for them. You can also use the verb to suck just to talk about things that are bad or unpleasant, or disappointing in general. Let's go with another example here.

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Speaker A: *How did you do on your math test?*

Speaker B: *Oh my god, it **sucked**. I'm sure I totally tanked.*

Speaker A: *Oh, **that sucks**. Sorry to hear that.*

Speaker B: *Well, to be honest, my teacher really **sucks**, so I don't feel all that bad.*

So you see, in that instance, we had *suck* being used to just describe something that was bad, and also *that sucks* being used to show sympathy.

Tell me about it

So moving on to number three: **tell me about it**. *Tell me about it*. When you hear *tell me about it* in the context I'm going to describe for you, it doesn't mean that the person wants you to say more about your topic. So they're not asking you for more information about something. It means that they agree with you or that they, they understand you, usually because they've experienced something either the same or something similar. So let's look at our math test example.

Speaker A: *Oh, my god, my math teacher totally sucks. I know I'm going to fail this year.*

Speaker B: *Tell me about it. I had him last year. He's probably the worst math teacher I ever had.*

So by saying *tell me about it*, you're sort of showing sympathy with the other person and showing them that you understand because you had a similar experience.

To bomb

So let's move on to number four: **to bomb**. And notice that *bomb* is spelled B O M B. So it's got a B on the end, but the B is silent. You don't need to pronounce the B.

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So why can *bomb*, when you hear someone talking about bombing something, why can that be confusing? I think it's because it has nothing to do with actual bombs or explosions. If someone in American English slang is talking about *bombing* something, it means that they failed or they did something extremely poorly, that they're very disappointed with their performance.

And it's often used in the context of some kind of performance or act that other people are going to judge you for, like tests or speeches, presentations, some kind of public performance. So let's look at our math test example.

Speaker A: *Hey, how's your math test?*

Speaker B: *Oh my God. It was terrible. I'm sure I totally bombed.*

Speaker A: *Oh, that sucks.*

Bummer / Bummed

That takes us to number five, which will be our last one in this episode: **bummer** and **bummed**.

Now I should note that *bum* has several meanings in both American and British English, and I'm not going to go into all of those here because it would get too long and confusing. We're just going to look at the meaning in American English slang.

You can use *bummer* as a noun to describe any disappointing, sad, undesirable experience that you've had. And you can also use it as a response when you hear somebody else telling you about their bad day or their, their bad experience. Let's, let's look at our math test example.

Speaker A: *Hey, how'd you do on your math test?*

Speaker B: *Oh my god. It was such a **bummer**. It was so hard. I'm sure I totally bombed.*

Speaker A: *Oh, what a **bummer**. Sorry to hear that.*

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So there, you can see, it was used in both ways, the person describing their bad experience and as a response showing sympathy and showing that you understand.

You can also use *bummed* as an adjective to describe that feeling of being sad or disappointed by something. So let's go back to our famous math test as an example.

Speaker A: *Hey, how was that math test?*

Speaker B: *Oh man. I am so **bummed**. It was a disaster. I didn't even finish it. I just walked out.*

Speaker A: *Oh, what a **bummer**! Sorry to hear that.*

And finally let's wind things up with a nice phrasal verb: **to bum someone out**. And what that means is that you cause somebody to feel disappointed or upset or, or sad in some way.

So I don't want to *bum you all out*, but we're coming to the end of this episode. And maybe if you thought the whole episode was a disaster, if it was a total *bummer* and you thought that I totally *bombed*, you will be relieved that we're coming to the end and you won't feel *bummed out* at all.

That was five expressions that I could think of off the top of my head, pretty spontaneously, I have to say. Uh, I tried to stick with ones that are very common and that you hear a lot in American English TV, uh, like sitcoms and dramas, and I hope you found it useful.

If there are any American English expressions that you've come across that have left you scratching your head and wondering. "Why in the world do they say that? What the heck do they mean by that?" just let me know. You can always stop by www.BetterAtEnglish.com and reach me a variety of ways through my contact page.

Until next time, this is Lori signing off from Better at English headquarters, wishing you an inspired and productive day. Bye for now!