

Greetings, everyone! My name is Laurence, and this is *English in Practice*!

## MUSIC

Welcome to this bonus episode of *English in Practice*, in which I shall explain the meanings of five idioms that contain either the word *medicine* or *salt*. At least two or three of these are very common, so it is certainly worth knowing them.

Before we start, I need to give you a quick update on myself and explain why I have uploaded so few episodes recently. As mentioned in the previous episode, I was away a fortnight ago. Then last week my laptop broke, so I've had to buy a new one; and at the end of September I'm moving to Spain to start an internship as a journalist. In short, I'm very busy at the moment, but I'm hoping that by mid-October I will be back into a good podcasting rhythm. I thank you for your understanding until then.

On another note, I haven't received any messages for a very long time, even though *English in Practice* is growing nicely. I cannot emphasize enough just how much it means to me to hear from you. In fact, it's what makes this podcast worth running – so please don't hesitate to get in touch. Once again, the email address is [englishinpracticepodcast@gmail.com](mailto:englishinpracticepodcast@gmail.com). Otherwise, you can message me via the Facebook page, 'English in Practice: A Podcast for Intermediate-Advanced Learners.'

Also, I now pay some money to keep this podcast running, and so I've set up a link for donations through PayPal, which you can find in the episode description. Any financial support would be fabulous, though on the whole it is building a community with my listeners that matters most to me. If you send me an email to tell me a bit about yourself and why you are learning English, I can promise you that it will make my day.

For those who wish to download the transcript, simply visit my website: [www.jamesfable.com](http://www.jamesfable.com). Again, the link is in the description – along with all the other important information. Remember, James Fable is a pseudonym I use for writing. My real name is Laurence.

Excellent. That was all for the announcements. Let's move on to today's sayings!

## MUSIC

So, I have picked out three sayings with medicine and two with salt. There are quite a few English idioms that contain the word *salt*, but you tend not to hear them much. The two I have chosen, however, are very common, so ingrain them in your mind, if you'll excuse the grating pun. Okay, I promise to stop now.

The first saying is *to take something with a pinch of salt*. You usually use this when referring to what someone – or something, such as a newspaper – is saying about a certain topic. It means, 'don't assume that their information is entirely accurate', or 'bear in mind that they are probably exaggerating.'

For example: 'Take everything that David says about the workload at university with a pinch of salt. He is not exactly known for being a hardworking student.' That means: 'Don't assume that everything David says about the workload at university is accurate. He doesn't work very hard, and so isn't a reliable source of information.'

Another example. Imagine you are a teenager and have just played violin at a concert. Afterwards, your aunt says that your performance was awful, that you were a total embarrassment. Your mother might say to you: 'Take your aunt's words with a large pinch of salt. As a musician, she has extremely high standards. I think you played fine.' That's like saying: 'Don't worry. She's exaggerating enormously. In reality, your performance was okay.' I hope that's clear.

## SOUND EFFECT

*To rub salt in the wound*. This means to make someone's unhappiness, shame or misfortune worse. Wounds can be painful, but rubbing salt in them makes the pain even worse – and that's precisely where this saying comes from. You will sometimes hear people say *to add insult to injury*, which is a synonym for *to rub salt in the wound*. The sayings are equally common, I would say.

Here's an example: 'Don't rub salt in the wound by telling Daisy that the party was amazing! After all, she had to miss it to go and see that aunt she doesn't like!' In that instance, having to miss the party to visit her aunt would be Daisy's 'wound', so to say, and hearing then that the party was amazing would be like having salt rubbed in that wound.

One more example, this time using the alternative saying. 'Everyone knows that Abdul didn't get the promotion he wanted. But do you know who did? His ex-girlfriend! Now that's what I call "adding insult to injury!"' Here, Abdul's 'injury' is not getting the promotion, and the added 'insult' is the fact that his ex-girlfriend got it instead.

Let's move on to the sayings with medicine!

## SOUND EFFECT

The first of our medicine idioms is *a spoonful of sugar helps the medicine go down*. As I'm sure you're aware, medicine can often taste unpleasant, but if you take it with a spoonful of sugar then it doesn't taste quite so bad. That's the logic behind this idiom, which means 'something good makes something bad more palatable, more bearable.'

Let me give you a personal example. At school, my teachers once made a mistake regarding our essays, meaning that we would have to rewrite them. Before they told us this bad news, they gave us all some cake. That was a textbook example of giving us sugar to help the medicine go down, of giving us something pleasant to make the bad news more bearable.

Another example. 'I'm not sure how to tell Lindsey that I won't be able to come on holiday with her. I promised that I would, after all.'

'Well, perhaps you could give her a present just before telling her. You know what they say – "a spoonful of sugar helps the medicine go down."'

Good. I hope those examples have made the meaning of that saying a little clearer. Whether a spoonful of sugar really does help the medicine go down is another question, but let's not delve into that right now. Instead, let's move on to our penultimate saying!

## SOUND EFFECT

*A taste of one's own medicine.* Just like the last idiom, this one relies on the assumption that medicine does not taste very nice. It is a fairly common saying and denotes experiencing the same unpleasantness that one inflicts on others. That's a bit wordy, I know, but I think a couple of decent examples should make the meaning clear.

Imagine you are playing football and the other team keeps fouling your players on purpose. They are playing rough – *dirty*, to use a more colloquial term. At halftime, your captain says: 'Right, everyone. Let's give them a taste of their own medicine! From now on, play dirty – studs up. Let's get a couple of their players injured!' That means: 'Let's employ their own tactic against them; show them how unpleasant dirty play is.'

Another example, this time building on our very first example from today. 'After all the criticism she has given me, I was so glad to hear someone tell my aunt that her own violin skills are not very good. That's called "getting a taste of your own medicine."' I bet that medicine would taste bitter indeed.

Good. Here comes today's fifth and final saying!

## SOUND EFFECT

Having talked about how bitter medicine can taste, I'm pleased to say that we'll be ending on a slightly sweeter note. *Laughter is the best medicine* means exactly what it says on the tin: nothing cures you better than laughter; nothing puts you in better spirits than having a good laugh. Once again, you could question how true this actually is, but now is not the time to enter a philosophical discussion.

Here's an example: 'Anjali was in a bad mood after learning that her flight had been cancelled. But once we had got back home and watched some *Monty Python*, she started to feel much better.'

'Well, they do say that laughter is the best medicine.'

In case you aren't aware, *Monty Python* is an old British comedy series. And if you haven't yet seen any of their films, then you definitely should. They're integral to British culture.

A final example. 'I know I've been miserable recently, but if you tell me again to go out and watch a funny movie, I might punch you. Trust me, laughter is not always the best medicine.'

## SOUND EFFECT

Excellent. I hope you found those explanations useful. You're bound to come across at least a couple of those idioms at some point, if you haven't already. Let's recap them quickly before I plead once more for you to send me a message or some feedback:

*To take something with a pinch of salt* = this means 'to bear in mind that someone is probably exaggerating', 'to assume that their information is not entirely accurate'

*To rub salt in the wound*, or *To add insult to injury* = you say this when someone makes another person's shame, misery or misfortune even worse than it already is

*A spoonful of sugar helps the medicine go down* = something good makes something bad more palatable. For example, receiving good news just before hearing bad news makes the latter more tolerable

*A taste of one's own medicine* = experiencing the same unpleasantness that one inflicts on others

*Laughter is the best medicine* = a good laugh cures you better than any other thing

Good. I hope some of the more amusing examples helped the idioms go down. Alas, I broke my promise about making poor puns, but maybe you'll forgive me. In case you noticed, I occasionally pronounced 'medicine' as a three-syllable word and sometimes as a two-syllable one, *medicine*. The former is better English, but you will hear people pronounce it in both ways.

As mentioned at the beginning, please do get in contact to let me know a bit about yourself and to leave any feedback. Also, if you have enjoyed the podcast or found it helpful, please do tell your friends about it, share the Facebook page on social media, subscribe, etc. A donation is also appreciated, if you would like to help out in that way.

That's all from me for today. I hope you have enjoyed this episode of *English in Practice*. I'm not sure if there will be an episode next week – you'll just have to see. All the best. Over and out.