
BBC LEARNING ENGLISH

6 Minute Vocabulary

Binomials



NB: This is not a word-for-word transcript

Finn

Hello and welcome to 6 Minute Vocabulary with me Finn...

Alice

And me Alice. And today's show is all about binomials.

Finn

Or as some call them, binomials. Yes, those short and sweet phrases English speakers love to use in everyday English. We'll look at what binomials are, what they mean and how to use them.

Alice

There'll be a cheap and cheerful quiz...

Finn

And we'll leave you with a quick and dirty tip for learning vocabulary.

Alice

So: to start off, let's listen to Charlie and his mum talking about football practice.

Finn

Here's a question to think about while you listen: what's a good treatment for aches and pains?

Alice

What's good for aches and pains? Let's find out.

INSERT

Mum

Hello, love. How was practice today?

Charlie

Horrible. I hate football.

Mum

Oh dear. Why's that?

Charlie

I'm sick and tired of being in goal. Look at these bruises – I'm black and blue.

Mum

Let's have a look...oh yes love, why don't you jump in the bath? Warm water's very good for aches and pains.

Finn

So, that's Charlie and his mum. And we asked you: what's good for aches and pains?

Alice

And Charlie's mum says the answer is: a warm bath.

Finn

That's right. And the phrase aches and pains is our first binomial.

Alice

Now binomials are short English phrases made of two words that go together – and the two words are often joined with and. Like aches and pains. Which means: general pains in the body, that usually aren't serious.

Finn

Ok: now it's important to remember that binomials are always fixed: you can't change anything about them. You can't say pains and aches. You can't say aches and hurts and you can't say hurts and pains. So, Alice Do you suffer from aches and pains?

Alice

Sometimes Finn, when you're around. Anyway, poor Charlie said he was black and blue. He's talking about the bruises on his body he got from playing football.

Finn

Black and blue? Must have been a tough game...?

Alice

Yes, no wonder Charlie said he's sick and tired of football.

Finn

Sick and tired. It means really fed up and bored with something. And remember, we can't say tired and sick.

Alice

We can't say sick and bored either. What are you sick and tired of at the moment Finn?

Finn

I'm sick and tired of commuting: travelling to work. It took me about an hour this morning.

Alice

That's a really long time.

Finn

And another binomial: bit by bit - this time, the word in the middle is by instead of and.

IDENT

You're listening to BBC Learning English dot com.

Finn

And we're talking about binomials. And if you were listening carefully at the beginning of the show you might have noticed that we used a couple of binomials right at the start. Short and sweet was one of them – it means simple, quick and useful.

Alice

Short and sweet or: quick and dirty. That's another binomial with a similar meaning: quick and dirty means simple, short and basic.

Finn

And another similar one is: cheap and cheerful.

Alice

So, three binomials there you can use to describe something as quick, simple and basic.

Finn

Now let's hear today's expressions again.

Alice

Aches and pains.

Finn

It describes body pains that aren't serious.

Alice

Sick and tired.

Finn

Fed up, bored and angry.

Alice

Bit by bit.

Finn

To describe slow change. And to say something is simple, short and basic we had three binomials:

Alice

Short and sweet; quick and dirty; cheap and cheerful.

Finn

Thank you Alice And now it's quiz time. Number 1. Choose the correct answer: I'm learning French. It's difficult, but I'm getting better a) bit by bit b) bit by little c) bit and bit.

Alice

And the answer is: a) bit by bit.

Finn

Number 2. Sarah fell over and hit her eye yesterday. Today it's a) blue and black b) black and blue c) black and white.

Alice

And the answer is: b) black and blue.

Finn

Ouch. And finally, number 3. At only one minute long, the presentation was a) sweet and short b) cheerful and cheap or c) quick and dirty.

Alice

And the answer is: c) quick and dirty.

Finn

And that brings us almost to the end of the programme.

Alice

But before we go, here's a cheap and cheerful tip for remembering vocabulary: play games. Making and playing a simple card game where you match up the beginning and ends of binomials will really help you to remember them.

Finn

That's right. And there's more about this at BBC Learning English dot com. Join us again for more 6 Minute Vocabulary.

Both

Bye!

Vocabulary points to take away

Binomial	Definition	Example sentence
aches and pains	general body pains that aren't serious	A warm bath is great for aches and pains.
sick and tired	fed up, bored and annoyed	She's sick and tired of this bad weather.
black and blue	sore and bruised	Look at these bruises – I'm black and blue.
quick and dirty	short, simple and basic	It was a one-minute quick and dirty presentation.
cheap and cheerful	simple, basic and often inexpensive	The cafe was cheap and cheerful but the food was great.
short and sweet	quick and simple	Our Monday meetings are always short and sweet.
bit by bit	gradually; a small amount at a time	The weather is going to get better bit by bit.