

# THE FLATMATES

Language point:

Binomials:

peace and quiet



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LEARNING ENGLISH



## BBC Learning English – The Flatmates

### The Flatmates – Binomials: peace and quiet

You can see this language point online at:

<http://www.bbc.co.uk/worldservice/learningenglish/flatmates/episode81/languagepoint.shtml>

#### Background:

There are many phrases in English that use two words connected with 'and'. For example, **peace and quiet**, **fish and chips**. These expressions are known as **binomials**. In these phrases the word order is usually fixed; we say '**peace and quiet**', we **don't** say 'quiet and peace'.

The following binomials are all **noun phrases**, although there are also many adjective and verb phrases that are binomials.

#### Noun and noun:

Many binomials combine words which are similar or closely connected in meaning:

**peace and quiet**: freedom from noise and disturbance

He sent his children to the park so that he could have **some peace and quiet**.

**life and times**: the story of someone's life, especially in its social context

I'm reading a book about **the life and times of** Winston Churchill. It's fascinating.

**law and order**: the maintenance of a good society because people follow the laws and criminals are caught and punished.

After the war there was a serious breakdown in **law and order**. It has taken a long time for the police to gain control of the situation.

Other binomials refer to things that are closely or frequently connected:

**fish and chips**: the popular and traditional take-away food in Britain

I can't be bothered to cook, I'll go and get some **fish and chips**.

**salt and vinegar**: the condiments or flavourings that are often had with chips

Do you want **salt and vinegar** on your chips?

**pros and cons**: the advantages and disadvantages of something; the things for and against something.

What are the **pros and cons** of capital punishment?

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### Rhyme and alliteration:

Many binomials combine words that rhyme:

**odds and sods:** a collection of small and unimportant things. **Odds and ends** has the same meaning.

I've done all the important building work; I've just got the **odds and sods** left, you know, like fitting the door handles.

**hustle and bustle:** a lot of noise and activity

I love the **hustle and bustle** of city life. I'd get bored in the countryside.

Many binomials use **alliteration**. This is when the sounds at the beginning of the words are similar.

**rest and relaxation:** a time of inactivity, for example when on holiday

The doctor said I need some **rest and relaxation**; I've been working too hard.

**trials and tribulations:** the difficult challenges that we face in life

Remember, while marriage is a wonderful thing, it also has its own **trials and tribulations**, which you both have to survive.

### Grammar words:

Many binomials combine grammar words such as prepositions and conjunctions.

**ups and downs:** the good and bad times in life

The **ups and downs** of life are similar all over the world, but people react differently to them.

**ins and outs:** the details and fine points of something.

I don't know all the **ins and outs**, but it seems the Prime Minister has made a serious mistake.

**down and out:** a homeless and jobless person. This is also often used as an adjective.

Did you see the poor **down and out** sleeping in the park? Should we tell the police about him?'

**ifs and buts:** the reasons why someone doesn't want to do something; their objections

Whenever we try to change the work routines, the workers have so many **ifs and buts** that we never manage to change anything.

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### Abbreviations:

Many common binomials are referred to by an abbreviation of the initial letters.

**R and R:** rest and relaxation

I'm going on a 2 week beach holiday. I really need some **R and R**.

**P and P:** postage and packing – usually seen when you buy something that needs delivery.

You know you want to buy that bicycle over the Internet? Did you check that the price includes **P and P**?

**R and D:** research and development – usually a department in an industrial business.

Sony has a very strong **R and D** division: that's why they keep coming up with new products.

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