

BBC Learning English

Weekender

Housekeeper



Jackie: Hello, welcome to the programme, I'm Jackie Dalton.

Margaret

Hello, my name is Margaret McMullen...

Jackie: Today we're going to explore some work-related language and find out about a certain job. Any ideas what?

Margaret

I'm the Head **Housekeeper** at this incredibly beautiful Tudor house, which has had a variety of inhabitants throughout its long history, but now has been restored and brought back into a full-time family house.

Jackie: Margaret is a housekeeper in a big house – a housekeeper is someone who looks after a house, makes sure it's clean and looks after the people who live in it. Margaret is going to tell us now about the most enjoyable aspect of her job. The 'most enjoyable aspect' - the thing she likes most. What does she like most? Listen to find out:

Margaret

The most enjoyable aspects of the job are definitely the **buzz** of giving very good service to guests when they come. Even just making their beds, you know. I mean,

making beds is making beds, but there's a way of doing it well and you get 'Yes, that really does look good.'

Jackie: Did you get the answer? The most enjoyable aspect for Margaret is giving very good service to guests - she used the word "buzz".

Margaret

...the **buzz** of giving very good service to guests when they come.

Jackie: If you get a buzz from something, you enjoy it, it makes you feel excited. Listen to more examples of that expression being used.

Voice: I get a real buzz from taking part in a big race.

Voice: I love the buzz of knowing hundreds of people are watching me perform on stage.

Jackie: Now it's time for the next listening comprehension question. When did Margaret decide to become a housekeeper? And what did she do before?

Margaret

Well, I decided to enter into the service world when I became **redundant** from my public service job. I worked in a school.

Jackie: Margaret made the decision when she was made redundant from her previous job, which was being a teacher. To be made redundant is to lose your job because you are no longer needed.

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Jackie: Why was Margaret a bit worried about the decision she made?

Margaret

When I decided that I would do this, I thought myself ‘Are you being completely mad here? Here you are, you are a university graduate, you’re a qualified teacher, you’ve had a professional career - why on earth do you want to go and be a professional Mrs Mop?’

Jackie: Margaret was worried because she was well qualified and had a professional career and was going to do something which she saw as not a professional career – as she puts it, being ‘Mrs Mop’ - a kind of joking way of describing a simple person who spends her time cleaning the floor. But Margaret decided to make the change anyway. Why did she finally make that decision?

Margaret

And I thought well, I don’t particularly want to carry on doing what I’m doing because it is stressful, I want to do something different so I’m going to give it a go.

Jackie: Margaret decided she wanted to do something different and teaching was too stressful. What expression did she use to say that she was going to try being a housekeeper? Listen again.

Margaret

I want to do something different so I’m going to give it a go.

Jackie: To ‘give it a go’ – to try something to see what it’s like. Listen to more examples of that expression in use:

Voice: I'm worried about riding horses because they look scary, but I'll give it a go!

Voice: Go on, give it a go! You might actually enjoy it!

Jackie: Once Margaret had become a housekeeper, she was uncomfortable at first when other people asked her what she did. Why was that?

Margaret

Now, when it came to actually working as a professional Mrs Mop, when people ask me in a social situation, 'What to do you do?' that hit me across the head personally, that I could no longer say that I was a professional bursar or I was a teacher – something that had **status**. I was saying, 'Well actually I'm a housekeeper. And I had difficulty with that myself because I'd always perceived myself as being a professional person in a professional job. I never associated housekeeping with being a profession.

Jackie: Margaret was worried about her status – whether other people would see her as being not very educated or important. She said she didn't see housekeeping as a professional job. But what does she think now?

Margaret

...and it wasn't until I was in it for about six months that I realised it was. And I was **being** particularly **insecure** by holding back from saying what I did. Now, I say it very happily.

Jackie: Well now Margaret is comfortable with being a housekeeper. She used to be 'insecure' about it – uncertain, embarrassed, but now she is quite happy to say what she does!