

Running out of things!

Posted by Peter on 7 December 2009



A family waiting beside their car, which has run out of petrol! Picture by [Rusty Russ/flickr](#)

Today, we are going to run out of things.

"To run out of" something is a phrasal verb. It is one of the hundreds of phrasal verbs in English, and I know you love phrasal verbs! Like most of the other English phrasal verbs, there is no easy way to remember what "to run out of" means. You just have to learn!

Of course, sometimes when we say "run out of" we mean the words [literally](#). For example, at the end of the school day, the children run out of school. They, literally, run out of the school gates. It is freedom time - no more school, time to go home to have something to eat, time to watch television, time to go to the park to play football. The children run out of school.

But imagine this situation. Every morning at about this time I make myself a cup of coffee, and I have a biscuit with my coffee. But today, I cannot find any biscuits. The biscuit tin is empty. I have eaten all the biscuits (or my children have eaten them, perhaps.) There are no biscuits left. I have run out of biscuits.

Kevin and Joanne are going to the supermarket. Kevin is writing a shopping list, and Joanne is telling him what they need to buy. "We have run out of sugar," says Joanne. "And we have nearly run out of eggs," she adds, looking in the fridge, "yes, there is only one egg left. And butter, we have used up all the butter which I bought on Wednesday."

Kevin writes "sugar, eggs, butter" on the list. But he has thought of something much more important. "Pizza," he says. "We have no pizza left. And beer. We have run out of beer."

At the supermarket, Kevin and Joanne push the shopping trolley along the [aisles](#), and find all the things on their shopping list. Except the apples - there are no apples in the shop. The shop assistant says, "Sorry, we ran out of apples yesterday. There will be a new [delivery](#) this afternoon."

At the checkout, Joanne pays for the shopping with her [debit card](#). Then she remembers that she has run out of cash - she has no coins or banknotes in her purse. She asks the assistant at the checkout for Â£20 [cashback](#) -

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that means, the assistant adds £20 to the bill which Joanne pays with her debit card, and then gives Joanne two £10 notes.

On the way home, Kevin and Joanne stop at the [DIY](#) shop. Kevin is painting the bathroom, and he has run out of paint.

Then, disaster! Kevin returns to the car with the can of paint and tries to start the car engine. The engine will not start. "Look at the fuel [gauge](#)," says Joanne, "the car has run out of petrol."

So Joanne goes and sits in a cafe with a nice cup of hot chocolate and a newspaper, while Kevin walks a kilometer to the nearest petrol station. After about 30 minutes, he returns with a can of petrol. He puts the petrol in the car, and the engine starts.

"Can we stop at the Post Office on the way home", says Joanne. "I have run out of stamps for the Christmas cards." But it is getting late, and Joanne's mother is coming to lunch. They have run out of time. The stamps for the Christmas cards will have to wait until tomorrow.

This is the text of the podcast at <http://www.listen-to-english.com/index.php?id=497>,