

Lesson 22**MAKING EXCUSES**

Mary and her husband Jake are supposed to go to Erica's for dinner tomorrow night. But then Mary remembers that Jake told her they were going to his boss's house for a party at the same time. Mary apologizes to Erica for backing out of the dinner.

Mary: Erica, I hate to **back out at the eleventh hour**, but Jake and I aren't going to be able to **make it** to your **dinner party** tomorrow night.

Erica: **What a shame! Did something come up?**

Mary: Yes, we have to go to a party at Jake's boss's house. Jake had told me about it a couple of weeks ago, but **it slipped my mind**.

Erica: You're going to be **missing out on** a great meal. I'm making duck with olives and couscous. I already bought the duck.

Mary: You better freeze some of it! I **feel awful**. You must think I'm the biggest **flake**!

Erica: **Don't sweat it. These things happen.**

Mary: Let me **make it up** to you. I'd like you and Alex to come to dinner at our place next Saturday.

Erica: Okay, **that sounds good** ... oh, I just remembered. Alex's parents are visiting for the weekend.

Mary: Bring them along too. **The more the merrier!**

Erica: I'd better check with Alex. I'll call you later today to *confirm*.

IDIOMS & EXPRESSIONS

at the eleventh hour – at the last minute

- Ken and Dana were supposed to get married on Saturday, but he got nervous **at the eleventh hour** and canceled the wedding.

(to) back out – to break an engagement, appointment, promise, or agreement

- I know I promised to drive you to the airport on Friday, but now I'm going to have to **back out**.

NOTE: "back out" is often followed by "of": Kathy agreed to host an exchange student, but now she's trying to back out of it.

Did something come up? – Did something unexpected happen?

- "I'm sorry I won't be able to make it to your party on Friday."
— "**Did something come up?**"

dinner party – a social event at someone's house in which dinner is served

- I'm having a **dinner party** on Saturday, and I'm calling to see if you're free.

Don't sweat it – don't worry about it

- "I'm really sorry, but I can't pick you up from the airport on Saturday." — "**Don't sweat it.**"

flake – an unreliable person; someone you can't count on

- Cindy asked me to call her at 8 o'clock last night and when I called, her husband said she was out with a friend. What a **flake**!

NOTE: The adjective form is "flaky."

I feel awful – I'm sorry about the situation (often said to express that you know you've done something wrong)

- You got sick from the tuna salad I made? **I feel awful!**

it slipped my mind – I forgot

- I'm sorry I forgot to mail the package. **It slipped my mind.**

(to) make it – to come; to be present

- I'm not sure if I'll be able to **make it** to the staff meeting on Wednesday morning.

(to) make it up to someone – to do something nice for someone (after you've done something that was not so nice, such as canceling on someone)

- I'm sorry I forgot your birthday. Let me **make it up to** you and take you out for a drink tonight.

(to) miss out (on) – see Lesson 3

that sounds good – I like your suggestion

- "We're planning to bring a bottle of wine when we come to your house for dinner on Saturday." — "**That sounds good.**"

NOTE: You can say this to answer positively when you are offered something or asked your opinion.

the more the merrier – the more people who participate in an event or activity, the more fun it'll be for everyone (often said to encourage somebody to participate)

- We already have 15 people in our book club, but you should join too. **The more the merrier.**

these things happen – sometimes things happen that you can't control

- You forgot your wallet? Don't worry about it. **These things happen.** I'll pay for lunch today.

What a shame! – that's too bad; how unfortunate

- "Scott broke his leg, so he won't be able to go on the class ski trip." — "**What a shame!**"

Practice the Expressions

Fill in the blanks using the following expressions:

slipped her mind what a shame make it
at the eleventh hour these things happen
did something come up make it up to us
the more the merrier dinner party flake

Erica: Bad news. Jake and Mary can't (1) tomorrow night.

Alex: (2)! I was really looking forward to having them at the (3).

Erica: I know, but what can we do? (4).

Alex: Why can't they make it? (5)?

Erica: Yes. It turns out they have a dinner at Jake's boss's house tomorrow night.

Alex: I can't believe they're canceling (6). Didn't she know about the other dinner before?

Erica: Yes, Jake had told her about it, but it (7).

Alex: What a (8)!

Erica: She was very apologetic. She wants to (9) by having us over next week.

Alex: My parents are going to be here, remember?

Erica: Mary said we should bring them too. "(10)," she said.



Language Lens: “had better”

Use “had better” to offer **advice** or **suggestions** or to say what one **should do** in a certain situation — in other words, what the sensible or smart thing to do would be. To say what one should not do, use “had better not.”

Form it like this:

had (or 'd) + better + base form of verb

had (or 'd) + better not + base form of verb

The contractions (you’d better leave / I’d better leave) are much more common than the full forms (you had better leave / I had better leave).

Examples:

- You’d better finish your homework before going out tonight.
- You’d better not drive if it’s snowing heavily.
- You’d better not ask your father for any more money.
- We’d better check the weather before we leave on our ski trip.
- I’d better call my wife so she knows I’ll be home late.
- I’d better let you move the couch. I don’t want to hurt my back.
- I’m on a diet. I’d better not have another cookie.
- It’s already midnight? I’d better go to bed!

When speaking, people often leave out the word “had” (or the 'd):

Examples:

- You better turn down that music!
- You better go to sleep now.
- You better start paying attention in class.
- We better buy your plane tickets today.

Quick Quiz

Complete the sentences with the verbs indicated below. Use the contraction for had better ('d better):

Example:

You ____ a gym and start exercising! (join)

Answer: You'd better join a gym and start exercising!

- 1) If you've got to be at work by 9, you ____ now! (leave)
- 2) You ____ all night surfing the Internet again! (not stay up)
- 3) If you want to lose 25 pounds, you ____ eating so much junk food. (stop)
- 4) We ____ a light on in the house when we go on vacation. (leave)
- 5) You ____ that video on YouTube for the whole world to see! (not post)
- 6) You ____ those mushrooms you picked are edible! (make sure)
- 7) We ____ the gas tank before leaving on our road trip. (fill up)
- 8) You're worried about getting lost? You ____ me! (follow)
- 9) You ____ with Chris before borrowing his iPod. (check)
- 10) You ____ on another date with that guy! (not go)