

**Lesson 24**

**DOWN ON ONE'S LUCK**

*Steve runs into his old friend Carl and asks how he's doing. Carl tells him that he's lost his job and he's got no money. Steve offers him a short-term job at his company.*

*Steve:* Hi, Carl. **Long time no see.** How've you been?

*Carl:* **Down on my luck!** I got **laid off** six months ago, and now I'm **flat broke.**

*Steve:* Sorry to hear that. Is your wife still working?

*Carl:* Yes, but she's only making **minimum wage.**

*Steve:* It's hard to **get by** on that!

*Carl:* **Tell me about it!** We're so **cash-strapped,** we're going to need to sell our house.

*Steve:* What type of job are you looking for?

*Carl:* I'm **exploring all avenues.** Marketing, sales...

*Steve:* I wish you'd told me earlier. We just hired a new marketing manager!

*Carl:* I wish I'd known about that job.

*Steve:* We still need some help in our sales department. It would only be **short term,** but it would help you **get back on your feet.**

*Carl:* I'm definitely interested.

*Steve:* The job does involve a lot of **grunt work.**

*Carl:* That's fine. **Beggars can't be choosers.**

## IDIOMS & EXPRESSIONS

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**beggars can't be choosers** – you can't always get exactly what you want; when you need something badly, you're willing to take whatever you can get

- I know you don't like Al's Pizza, but it's the only place that's still open this late. **Beggars can't be choosers.**

**cash-strapped** – having very little money; not having enough money

- Joel has agreed to lend his **cash-strapped** son \$5,000 to cover his rent for the next few months.

**(to be) down on one's luck** – in a period of bad luck (especially regarding finances)

- After being **down on his luck** for months, Ken finally got a new job and has started dating a lovely woman.

**(to) explore all avenues** – to consider many possibilities

- Kyle just graduated from college and is now **exploring all avenues**, including jobs at banks and with the government.

**flat broke** – without any money; poor

- Dan would like to move out of his parent's house, but he can't afford to. He's **flat broke.**

**(to) get back on one's feet** – to recover; to have sufficient money

- You lost your job and are having trouble paying your rent? I hope you **get back on your feet** soon!

**(to) get by** – to survive; to live from

- Jay's wife Susan lost her job, but the family is able to **get by** on just his salary.

**(to) get laid off** – to lose one’s job; to get fired or let go from work

- After Scott **got laid off** from Ford, it took him six months to find a new job.

**grunt work** – work requiring little skill; menial work

- “Did Angela enjoy her summer internship at the bank?” — “No, she was stuck doing **grunt work** like making copies and getting coffee for the managers.”

**long time no see** – we haven’t seen each other in a long time

- Hi, Tracy. **Long time no see**. What have you been up to for the past couple of years?

**minimum wage** – the minimum amount an employer can pay an employee, according to U.S. law

- Right now Emily is making **minimum wage** at the fast food restaurant, but she’s hoping to get a raise soon.

**short term** – not permanent; for a certain period of time only

- Ryan’s company offered him a **short-term** assignment in Beijing. He’ll be there for six months.

**Tell me about it!** – I agree

- “The professor’s lecture sure was boring.” — “**Tell me about it!** I fell asleep after 10 minutes.”

## **Practice the Expressions**

**Fill in the blank with the missing word:**

1) Ashley isn’t sure what she wants to do when she graduates from college. She plans to explore all \_\_\_\_.

- a) avenues                      b) streets                      c) lanes

- 2) During his internship at the magazine, Justin got stuck doing lots of \_\_\_\_ work like making copies and buying supplies.  
a) slave                      b) groan                      c) grunt
- 3) Tim lost his job a few months ago at the auto plant, and now he's \_\_\_\_ broke.  
a) plain                      b) flat                      c) cash
- 4) After Hurricane Katrina, many families had trouble getting back on their \_\_\_\_.  
a) legs                      b) toes                      c) feet
- 5) During the marathon, somebody handed Jack a cup of warm water. He would've preferred cold water, but \_\_\_\_ can't be choosers.  
a) runners                      b) beggars                      c) vagrants
- 6) "This food is too spicy!" — " \_\_\_\_ me about it. My mouth is on fire!"  
a) Say                      b) Tell                      c) Talk to
- 7) When Emily told her father she was \_\_\_\_-strapped, he offered to lend her some money.  
a) dollar                      b) financial                      c) cash
- 8) It's hard to live in San Francisco and get \_\_\_\_ on a teacher's salary.  
a) around                      b) through                      c) by
- 9) Greg got laid \_\_\_\_, and he's now looking for a new job.  
a) off                      b) on                      c) through
- 10) Angela is only working as a waitress short \_\_\_\_\_. Next month, she's starting a new job in sales.  
a) time                      b) term                      c) period



## Language Lens: Wish statements

Use “wish” to say that you want a situation to be different than it is. You can use “wish” for situations in the present and in the past.

⇒ **Present: To talk about the present, use:  
wish + verb in the past tense**

*Examples:*

- I wish I had a summer house (I don't have one).
- I wish I spoke Chinese (I don't speak Chinese).
- I wish I were\* rich (I'm not rich).
- I wish you were\* a lawyer (You're not a lawyer).

\* After “wish” use “were” instead of “was”. This is the form of the verb “to be” that's used when situations are imagined or unreal. It's called the subjunctive.

**To say that you are not happy with the current situation and that you want somebody else to do something about it, use:  
wish + would (or the contraction 'd) + base form of the verb**

*Examples:*

- I wish you would lose a few pounds.
- I wish that guy I met at the bar would call me!
- I wish they'd stop talking during the movie.
- I wish it would stop snowing.\*

*\*In this case, you need Mother Nature to help you change the situation!*

⇒ **Past: To talk about situations in the past that you regret or are not happy about, use:  
wish + had (or 'd) / hadn't + verb in the past tense**

*Examples:*

- I wish I hadn't agreed to this.
- I wish I'd followed your directions.
- I wish I hadn't eaten that sushi.
- She wishes she'd gotten into the University of Pennsylvania.

## Quick Quiz

Fill in the blank with the missing word or words:

- 1) I can't sleep. I wish I \_\_\_\_ that scary movie before going to bed.  
a) hadn't watched    b) couldn't watch    c) don't watch
- 2) Greg is flat broke. I wish I \_\_\_\_ some money to lend him.  
a) have                      b) had                      c) am having
- 3) I love to swim. I wish I \_\_\_\_ a fish.  
a) would be                b) will be                c) were
- 4) I wish I \_\_\_\_ more than minimum wage.  
a) earn                      b) earned                c) am earning
- 5) Jim wishes he \_\_\_\_ a date for the school dance.  
a) has                      b) had                      c) would have
- 6) I wish you \_\_\_\_ your friends not to call so late.  
a) told                      b) tell                      c) would tell
- 7) Your hair looks messy. I wish you \_\_\_\_ a haircut.  
a) would get                b) got                      c) get
- 8) Spanish is so useful. I wish I \_\_\_\_ Spanish!  
a) speak                    b) spoke                    c) would speak
- 9) I wish my husband \_\_\_\_ riding a motorcycle. It's so dangerous!  
a) stopped                b) would stop            c) had stopped
- 10) Rick is not doing well in school. I wish he \_\_\_\_ more.  
a) would study            b) studies                c) will study