

English Vocabulary – Binomials

English, like many languages, has many small, fixed expressions which can be used as an alternative to a single word. Their use demonstrates a good vocabulary and can make your English seem fluent. They are called 'binomials' because they are usually formed by a pair of words joined by a smaller word. They can represent nouns, verbs, adjectives or adverbs. They are often used by natives, because they use simple words which are clear, short and understood by all. Often, binomials use rhyming words or alliterations. Here are some examples:

<u>Binomial</u>	<u>Meaning</u>	<u>Grammar type</u>
• first and foremost	the most important thing	adverb
• time and time again	very often	adverb
• loud and clear	easily understood	adjective
• part and parcel	an essential part	noun
• sooner or later	at some time in the future	adverb
• little by little	gradually	adverb
• step by step	gradually	adverb
• in drips and drabs	gradually	adverb
• good and proper	very well	adverb
• the nitty gritty	the most important part	noun
• give or take	approximately	adverb
• short and sweet	brief but important	adjective
• hustle and bustle	agitation	noun
• now or never	now is your only chance	adverb
• take it or leave it	final offer, non-negotiable	expression
• rise and shine	to get up	verb
• flesh and blood	relative/family	noun
• sink or swim	to fail or succeed, when you are alone	verb
• sick and tired	fed up	adjective
• mumbo jumbo	nonsense	noun
• culture vulture	somebody who loves culture	noun
• wine and dine	to provide food and drinks	verb
• live and learn	to learn something new	verb
• from rags to riches	from poverty to wealth	adverb
• tried and tested	proven to be effective/reliable	adjective
• time after time	repeatedly	adverb
• let bygones be bygones	forget the past and reconcile	expression
• all in all	with all things considered	adverb
• spick and span	very clean and tidy	adjective
• by hook or by crook	by any way possible	adverb
• by and large	generally	adverb
• safe and sound	not in danger	adjective
• ups and downs	good times and bad times	noun (plural)
• pure and simple	no explanation required	adjective
• pride and joy	the great thing in your life	noun
• now and then	occasionally	adverb
• back and forth	in one direction, then another, repeatedly (also: <i>to and fro</i>) (similarly: <i>up and down, in and out</i>)	adverb adverb adverbs
• wear and tear	damage from frequent use	noun
• down and out	without money and home (destitute)	adjective
• tooth and nail	intensively	adverb
• high and dry	in a difficult situation without resolution	adjective
• law and order	rules of society	noun

• odds and ends	some different tasks to do (also: some small objects)	noun (plural) noun (plural)
• song and dance	drama	noun
• an arm and a leg	a lot of money	noun
• tit for tat	revenge (also: <i>an eye for an eye</i>)	noun expression
• black and white	easy to understand, no grey areas (also: clearly written)	adjective adjective
• done and dusted	completely finished	adjective
• far and wide	covering a large area	adverb
• pros and cons	advantages and disadvantages	noun (plural)
• ifs and buts	excuses	noun (plural)
• born and bred	born and raised	adjective
• rough and ready	crude but effective	adjective
• (through) thick and thin	(during) good times and bad times	adverb
• this and that	various things (abstract)	noun/expression
• more or less	approximately	adverb
• on and off	intermittently	adverb
• six or half a dozen	the same	expression
• (whole) kit and caboodle	everything	noun/expression

Source: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=j_mMowcNOFs

Example sentences:

1. Father: "Did you understand what I said?" Son: "Yes, father. **Loud and clear.**"
2. **Sooner or later** we need to look for another apartment. This one is just too small.
3. The package will arrive in 5 days, **give or take**.
4. I'll give you \$500 for your car. **Take it or leave it.**
5. My new car is my **pride and joy**, but it cost **an arm and a leg**.
6. I'm **sick and tired** of being woken up by our neighbour's dog.
7. I've told you, **time after time**, that my name is not Mick! It's Nick!
8. **All in all**, this phone is the best on the market.
9. **By and large**, my job is going well.
10. Due to **wear and tear**, you should replace your tyres every 30,000 kilometres.
11. My assistant hasn't arrived, and has left me **high and dry**. I don't know what I'm going to do.
12. Now the deal is **done and dusted**, we can go out and celebrate!

Trinomials also exist. Here are some examples:

- beg, steal or borrow to do what is necessary to achieve a result
- Tom, Dick and Harry any person
- way, shape or form an emphasis of "way"
- tall, dark and handsome used to describe a classically good-looking man

Exercise. Complete using a binomial:

1. I understand nothing. It's all _____ to me.
2. I didn't know that! That's amazing! You _____.
3. I'm so glad you're home. I was so worried. You're _____.
4. Our little Johnny is our _____!
5. Our dog runs _____ to the shed all the time, and he never tires of it.
6. It's not easy to decide what to do. The situation is not _____.
7. Good morning, John. _____! It's 9 o'clock already!
8. I miss the _____ of the city. I shouldn't have moved to the country.
9. Our Susie loves museums! She's a real _____!
10. The deal is _____. There are no more options for renegotiations.