

How to Break Up at C1/C2 Level

It is time to gather your thoughts and steady your heart because we are venturing into the delicate territory of ending relationships using advanced C1/C2 level English. We'll unravel clichés, translate indirect phrases and learn how to express advanced phrases with clarity. I am going to help you navigate the tricky waters of breaking things off with honesty and sensitivity. So, brace yourself for an emotional yet enlightening English journey.

Clichéd Breakup Lines

Before I get into the speeches that I've created to break up with someone, I want to talk about a few **clichés** that you might have heard in films or on TV or read in books (or maybe you've heard them in real life, though I hope not).

- **cliché** /'kli:ʃeɪ/ - a phrase or an opinion that has been used so many times that it is not interesting and doesn't have much meaning any more

These are phrases people often say to end a relationship, but they don't usually express what the speaker really means. So I'm going to translate them for you.

It's not you. It's me.



Translation: It's you.

I love you. I'm just not in love with you.



Translation: I see you as a friend.

I need space.



Translation: I need space away from you.

You deserve better.



Translation: I can't think of anything else to say.



I don't think they're good ways to break up with someone. It's much better to **be direct**. Here is a very basic way to break up with someone:

Level 1

I'm not happy. This isn't working. We need to break up.

Now, I'm going to take that as a baseline for my super advanced ways to break up with someone.

Before I start, I need to add my disclaimer, as I have done before almost all of these C1/C2 videos.

The following texts are not realistic. These texts are just fun ways for me to teach you some useful advanced vocabulary and grammatical structures in a memorable way.

Level 2

You're a fantastic person, and I've treasured the moments we've shared. But I've been reflecting a lot lately, and it's become clear that we're as different as chalk and cheese. Let's call a spade a spade — our paths are heading in completely different directions. The odds are that we're just going to make each other miserable in the future. This has been as good a relationship as I've ever had, but I think we have to acknowledge reality and go our separate ways.



● Vocabulary

That's a fairly advanced text, and there's a lot to unpack there. First, there were two idioms that I want to point out.

The first is '**chalk and cheese**', which means **completely different**. We can say people or things '**are like chalk and cheese**' or '**are as different as chalk and cheese**'.

Notice the pronunciation of '**and**' - in this phrase, I drop the /d/ sound and say /ən/ - /tʃɔ:k ən tʃi:z/.

We call 'chalk and cheese' a **binomial**. In a binomial, there are two words separated by a conjunction. The conjunction is often '**and**'. The word order is usually fixed; it's always **chalk and cheese**, never cheese and chalk.

Chalk and cheese is an **alliterative** phrase, meaning the two words start with the same sound: /tʃ/ /tʃ/. There are lots of other binomials in English, and they are not always idioms like in this case.

They include ones that use -

- **synonyms** — pride and joy /praɪd ən dʒɔɪ/
- **opposites** — ups and downs /ʌps ən daʊnz/

1. **chalk and cheese** /tʃɔ:k ən tʃi:z/ - completely different

- Even though they are twins, Max and Charlie are like **chalk and cheese**.

The other idiom I want to talk about is **to call a spade a spade**.

2. **to call a spade a spade** /kɔ:l ə speɪd ə speɪd/ - to tell the truth and say exactly what you think, even if it's not polite

- Let's **call a spade a spade**, this cake is burnt.



Here are some additional advanced words and phrases from the text.

- **to treasure** /'trezə/ - highly valued or important
 - He lost his **treasured** necklace while swimming in the ocean.
- **to go one's separate ways** /tə ɡəʊ wʌnz 'seprət weɪz/ - to start moving or acting independently of each other; to part company
 - After graduation, the friends promised to keep in touch even as they **went their separate ways**.

● Grammar & Structure

- **the odds are** - /ði: (j) ɒdz ɑ:/

The first structure I want to touch on is '**the odds are**'. This is a phrase we use to say how likely it is that something will happen.

You saw this phrase in the sentence, 'The odds are that we're just going to make each other miserable in the future', meaning it's likely that this will happen.

- **The odds are** that Jane and Ellie will break up soon.

- **Comparative**

The second phrase is an advanced comparative: '**as good a relationship as**'.

You saw this in the sentence, 'This has been as good a relationship as I've ever had.'

This means that the relationship was **as good as** or **equally as good as** any other relationship the person has had.



The structure is -

as + adjective + a/an + noun + as

- You're as patient a partner as I could wish for.
- You're as perfect a match as I could ever hope for.

Level 3

Our relationship has experienced its share of waxing and waning. You know that I've always had a jealous streak, but lately, I've been feeling like there's a lack of trust between us. It's been an honour to have been part of your life, and I've cherished our time together. However, given that trust is fundamental, we would be better off parting ways.

● Vocabulary

OK, now let's look at some of the vocabulary in that text.

The first one I want to mention is **to wax and wane**, which you saw in the text as 'waxing and waning'. This is another binomial with two words with opposite meanings.

To wax means to grow stronger, and **to wane** means to grow weaker. It comes from the phases of the moon - when the moon is getting bigger, it's **waxing**; when it's getting smaller, it's **waning**.



3. **to wax and wane** /wæks ən weɪn/ - to increase and then decrease in strength or importance
- The popularity of the television show tended **to wax and wane** over the years.

Next, I want to point out a strong collocation: a **jealous streak**. A 'streak' is a **characteristic**, often an unpleasant one. If someone has a jealous streak, they have a tendency to be jealous. Other strong collocations include -

- a stubborn streak
 - a vicious streak
 - an independent streak (this one can be used positively or negatively.)
4. **a jealous streak** /ə 'dʒeləs stri:k/ - a tendency to feel envious or resentful
- You've been having quite the **jealous streak** since Chelsea has been spending more time with her coworkers.

Here are a few more additional terms I think you should know.

- **to cherish** /tʃerɪʃ/ - to feel or show great love for something; to value highly
 - She cherishes the time spent with her family above all else.
- **to be better off** /bi 'betər ɒf/ - to be in a more favourable or advantageous position
 - He realised he was better off working as a freelancer than in his previous job.
- **to part ways** /pɑ:t weɪz/ - to end a relationship or association, typically by mutual agreement
 - After the project was complete, the team members parted ways, each moving on to different ventures.

● Grammar & Structure

• Conditionals

Finally, I want to touch on an **advanced conditional sentence** from the text. You saw, 'Given that trust is fundamental, we would be better off parting ways.'

'**Given that**' means when you consider that...

- **Given that** Helen is in love with you, she will be devastated when you break it off.

Level 4

It seems that our paths in life are diverging. We've indisputably had some incredible moments together, but it's imperative that I be true to myself. Recently, it's become apparent to me that variety is the spice of life, and I feel a powerful need to explore diverse relationships. This decision hasn't been taken lightly, but it's essential for both of us to prioritise our individual happiness and fulfilment.

● Vocabulary

Good riddance! What a horrible speech for a break-up. Horribly advanced, too. Let's take a look at some of the vocabulary and structures I used in that text.



First, I want to highlight the verb **'to seem'**. This isn't an advanced verb, so you may already know that it means to appear.

One common use of this verb is to make what we are saying less forceful, often when we are not sure whether what we're saying is true or if we want to be polite. This is a skill we call **hedging**.

You often see 'to seem' in the structure **It seems that...** or **It seems to me that...**

5. **to seem** /si:m/ - to appear

- It **seems** to me she's not entirely happy in her relationship these days.

The next word I want to draw your attention to is **'indisputably'**.

The adverb 'indisputably' emphasises or boosts what we are saying. Other similar adverbs include **undeniably** /ˌʌndɪˈnaɪəbli/ and **unquestionably** /ʌnˈkwestʃənəbli/.

Hedging and boosting are important skills to learn when you reach an advanced level in English and in academic writing. We cover them in my C1 programme.

6. **indisputably** /ˌɪndɪˈspju:təbli/ - in a way that is true or cannot be disagreed with

- It is **indisputably** true that regular exercise benefits overall health.

Now, I want to talk about the phrase **'variety is the spice of life'**. It's a **proverb** and is probably one of the worst things you can say during a break-up.



7. **variety is the spice of life** /və'raɪəti (j) ɪz ðə spaɪs əv laɪf/ - new things and changes make life more interesting

- Val loves to travel to new countries because, as they say, **variety is the spice of life**.

Here's an additional term from our text.

- **to diverge** /daɪ'vɜ:dʒ/ - to go in separate directions
 - The conversation started about movies but quickly **diverged** into a discussion about politics.

● Grammar & Structure

• The Subjunctive

There are two grammatical structures I want to cover now. The first was in this sentence: **It's imperative that I be true to myself.**

You can see **I be** instead of the more usual **I am**. This is an example of the **subjunctive mood**, which we use to **express possibilities and wishes**.

If we use the subjunctive mood in the present tense with the verb 'to be', we **use 'be' for all subjects**.

I be	you be	she be	he be	it be	we be	they be
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For all other verbs, we use the base form with all subjects, so instead of **she goes**, the subjunctive is **she go**. Here are a couple more examples:

- I propose that **you be** completely honest about the reasons you want to break up.
- It's my recommendation that **she end** the relationship immediately.



The subjunctive mood is **formal and impersonal**. In modern usage, it's not particularly common, and people will often say, 'It's imperative that I am true to myself', for example. But this video is all about advanced English, and the subjunctive is super advanced!

- **The Passive Voice**

Finally, I want to look at **the passive voice**. You saw it in this sentence: This decision hasn't been taken lightly.

'Hasn't been made' is an example of the present perfect simple passive voice:

has [not] been + past participle

In this case, the passive voice makes the sentence **very impersonal** by not naming the person who made the decision. It's more commonly heard from leaders, like politicians or people in business, who don't want to take responsibility for something. I really hope you don't ever hear this used when someone is breaking up with you!

QUIZ!

Choose the correct answer for each question.

- 1) 'The odds are' is a phrase used to:
 - a. place a bet
 - b. indicate likelihood
 - c. show certainty
- 2) The passive voice is typically used to:
 - a. highlight the subject of the action
 - b. make the statement more direct
 - c. remove emphasis from the subject of the action
- 3) Our interests are as different as _____ .
 - a. chalk and cheese
 - b. night and day
 - c. salt and pepper
- 4) I've come to realise that _____ , and I need new experiences.
 - a. spice is the best teacher
 - b. journey is like life
 - c. variety is the spice of life
- 5) Your argument is _____ true.
 - a. indirectly
 - b. indisputably
 - c. indubitably
- 6) In the sentence 'It's imperative that I be true to myself,' the phrase 'I be' is an example of:
 - a. incorrect grammar
 - b. subjunctive mood
 - c. the future tense
- 7) 'To wax and wane' generally refers to:
 - a. changing in intensity
 - b. polishing and cleaning
 - c. working hard and relaxing
- 8) Which of these is a common cliché for ending a relationship?
 - a. "Let's have dinner sometime."
 - b. "It's not you. It's me."
 - c. "I think we're too similar."
- 9) While we have had our good times, it seems that _____.
 - a. we are the same as before
 - b. we are closer than ever
 - c. our paths are diverging
- 10) Let's _____ and admit we are not compatible anymore.
 - a. call a spade a spade
 - b. beat around the bush
 - c. make a scene

The End!

1) b 2) c 3) a 4) c 5) b 6) b 7) a 8) b 9) c 10) a

