

## Complaining: Feelings and Prepositions

Now you know what it means to be **furious**. And you can remember a time when you were **humiliated**. But there's more to using these words than saying "I was humiliated." There are a lot of words and phrases you can use in connection with the words we learned yesterday. But there are some that you can't use.

Today, we're going to take yesterday's vocabulary one step further. Today we're going to look at some of the words we can use with the vocabulary we already know. We're going to talk about *prepositions*. Prepositions are words that we use to explain how one word is related to the next. In the sentence "My computer is at home," the word 'at' is a preposition: it makes the connection between 'computer' and 'home.' After all, if I use the words 'near' or 'under' the meaning changes. "My computer is near my home" or "My computer is under my home" have very different meanings!

I want to say right now that prepositions are a pretty tricky thing to master in English. I have been teaching for two years, and I haven't found an easy, fast way to explain prepositions. Some of them are pretty clear: on, under, near. But others are harder to understand.

Today, we're going to talk about a few prepositions we can use in connection with the vocabulary we learned yesterday.

### The Preposition 'By'

When you want to say that something has made you frustrated, or humiliated, you can use the preposition 'by.' As a *very* loose rule, you can use this with most of the adjectives that end with -ed and come from a verb.

- I was disappointed by the service in your restaurant.
- He was **enraged** by the quality of the food.
- I was humiliated by the way your employee treated me.
- I was **pissed off** by the attitude of my waiter.
- My wife was embarrassed by the way she was treated.
- We were **disappointed** by the hotel.

The list goes on and on. Clever English learners might have recognized that all of those sentences are all in the passive voice. They are. Each of those sentences is nothing but a passive-voice sentence. But, when you're starting with the adjective and not the verb, it can be difficult to

remember the word 'by.'

### **The Preposition 'To'**

Another thing you can notice about the above sentences is that the cause is always a noun, a person or a thing. Sometimes, though, it's an action you do that is the cause. Say that you're disappointed when you walk into your hotel room and find it hasn't been cleaned. You can say that with the preposition 'to,' as in these examples:

- I was disappointed to walk into my room and see that it hadn't been cleaned.
- She was enraged to have to wait over an hour on the phone.
- We were embarrassed to see our photos in the Internet.

Because I already gave you one loose rule, let me give you another: we often use the preposition 'to' to show the purpose of something. (Re-read the last sentence and you'll see a great example. The purpose of using the word 'to' is showing purpose. . . So, we use the word 'to' to show purpose.) We do this only with verbs, and only in the infinitive (normal) form. Here are some more examples:

- I make this website to help you learn English.
- My wife bought the product to clean our kitchen.
- He sold it to me to make some extra money.
- I play the piano to relax.

What comes after the word 'to' in each of the examples explains the purpose of everything that comes before the word 'to.' It's not too hard. After all, I do everything I can to help you learn. (That true, but it's also another example!)

### **Our Last Preposition: 'That'**

We're going to finish up today with a pretty strong, general-purpose preposition: 'that.' Of course, grammar nuts will point out that 'that' isn't a preposition, it's a conjunction. But, we use it just like we used the prepositions above, and there's a reason why grammar nuts don't have many friends. When 'by' and 'to' don't fit for what you want to say, you can probably show the cause of something using the word 'that.'

The reason I'm confident that you can show causes with 'that' is because what follows the word 'that' isn't *just* a noun. Or *just* a verb. You have to basically form a whole other sentence. Maybe you're angry. And the reason is this: you ordered one kind of food, and you got another. It's

a hard thought to say using 'by' or 'to,' but you can do it with that very easily:

- I'm angry that you couldn't bring the food that I ordered.

Pretty easy, right? Just notice that there's a subject and verb in front of the word 'that,' and after it.

Here are a few other examples:

- The President was enraged that the car wasn't ready for him.
- Johnny was disappointed that the second book wasn't as good as the first.
- I was humiliated that the waiter said I was stupid in front of my friends.
- They were frustrated that nobody seemed to be able to help them.

### **Now It's Time To Practice**

None of this is super-hard. But the trick to making it 'stick' in your brain is simple: *practice!*

Take a moment and think of some strong feelings you've had lately. . . or some complaints you want to make. Then write them down the different ways that we learned to use today. If you write them here, as comments, I'll be glad to correct what you've written and give you some pointers. After all, that's my job: I'm an English teacher.