

## Lesson Plan: Proverbs, sayings, and their use in context

<b>Level</b>	Advanced (C1–C2)
<b>Time</b>	60–90 minutes
<b>Skills</b>	Vocabulary, speaking, culture
<b>Focus</b>	Common English proverbs; meaning and origin; when to use and when NOT to; cultural comparison

### OBJECTIVES

By the end of the lesson, students will be able to:

- Understand and use 20+ common English proverbs accurately
- Understand the cultural context behind key proverbs
- Know when proverbs are appropriate and when they sound patronising or forced
- Use proverbs to add weight and colour to arguments and conversation

### TARGET LANGUAGE & EXAMPLES

#### *Proverbs: action and patience*

- Actions speak louder than words. — what you do matters more than what you say
- A stitch in time saves nine. — deal with problems early before they get bigger
- Slow and steady wins the race. — consistency beats speed
- Don't put all your eggs in one basket. — spread your risk

#### *Proverbs: knowledge and experience*

- You can't judge a book by its cover. — appearances are deceptive
- Hindsight is 20/20. — it's easy to understand something after it's happened
- Every cloud has a silver lining. — even bad situations have a positive side
- Necessity is the mother of invention. — problems lead to creative solutions

#### *Proverbs: human nature*

- The grass is always greener on the other side.
- Two wrongs don't make a right.
- Don't bite the hand that feeds you. — don't turn against those who help you
- It takes two to tango. — both parties are responsible for a situation

#### *When to use — and when not to*

- ✓ In conversation when the proverb exactly fits the situation
- ✗ In formal academic writing — too informal and imprecise
- ✗ When forced or when it sounds patronising — especially after someone's failure

#### *Meaning & Nuance*

Proverb	Core meaning	When to use	When NOT to use
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Actions speak louder than words.	Do, don't just say.	When someone makes big promises	When someone is genuinely trying their best
Every cloud has a silver lining.	Find the positive.	When offering comfort after difficulty	Immediately after a serious tragedy — too glib
Don't put all your eggs in one basket.	Diversify your risk.	Business, investment, life choices	After someone has already failed — feels judgmental
Hindsight is 20/20.	Easy to judge past decisions.	Defending a past decision	When someone is still making the same mistake

## LESSON PROCEDURE

### 1. Warm-up: Complete the proverb (10 min)

**Task:** First half of 8 proverbs. Students complete them from memory or guess.

- 'Actions speak louder than \_\_\_\_.' / 'Don't put all your \_\_\_\_ in one basket.'

→ Reveals prior knowledge and creates curiosity.

### 2. Presentation (15 min)

**Task:** Proverbs by theme: action, knowledge, human nature.

- When to use and when NOT to: pragmatic awareness is key.
- Cultural note: many proverbs exist across languages with slight differences — discuss.

### 3. Appropriate or not? Task (15 min)

**Task:** 8 scenarios. Students decide: which proverb fits? Would it be appropriate to use?

- 'Your colleague just lost an important client.' — 'Every cloud has a silver lining' — appropriate?
- Discuss: why can proverbs sometimes sound patronising?

### 4. Discussion: Proverbs and values (30 min)

**Task:** Do proverbs reflect cultural values? Do they still apply today?

- 'The grass is always greener' — does social media make this worse?
- 'Necessity is the mother of invention' — give examples from history and today.

→ Rich discussion developing cultural and critical awareness.

## TEACHER NOTES

- Pragmatic appropriateness is what makes this more than a vocabulary lesson — proverbs used wrongly can cause offence.
- Cultural comparison is a natural extension — learners often know the equivalent in their L1.

## EXTENSION / HOMEWORK

Choose one or more:

1. Learn 5 proverbs not covered in class and write context sentences for each.
2. Compare 5 English proverbs with their equivalents in your first language — are the meanings the same?
3. Write a short paragraph arguing for or against a proverb — is it still relevant today?