EVERYDAY ENGLISH MINI SERIES

MAKE or DO?

Stop guessing. Learn the combinations that English speakers actually use.

ENGLISH-ONLY INTERNATIONAL EDITION | A2–B1

A free eight-page learning sample

By Marshall Appoh • Everyday English Centre

LEARN IT • PRACTISE IT • USE IT

A practical introduction to two of the most easily confused verbs in everyday English.

In this sample you will: recognise useful patterns, avoid common learner mistakes, practise everyday expressions and check your answers.

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1 Before you begin

English uses MAKE and DO in many common expressions. They are not interchangeable. First, see what you already know.

Diagnostic quiz

Complete with the correct form of MAKE or DO. Do not look at the explanations yet.

1. I need to _____ a decision today.

2. Have you _____ your homework?

3. She _____ a serious mistake yesterday.

4. Could you _____ me a favour?

5. We are _____ good progress.

6. Just _____ your best.

Your score before studying: _____ / 6

The central question

Do you sometimes say make your homework or do a mistake? These combinations sound logical, but they are not natural English. This short lesson will help.

Our goal is not to memorise a perfect rule. There is no perfect rule. Our goal is to recognise the combinations English actually uses.

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2 The useful difference

DO	MAKE
Often describes performing an activity, task or work.	Often describes creating, producing or causing a result.
do your homework — a task you complete	make a cake — something you create
do the housework — routine tasks	make a plan — something you prepare
do the shopping — a regular activity	make a decision — reaching a result
do your best — a fixed expression	make an effort — a fixed expression

Remember: a guide, not a law

The activity/result distinction helps, but many expressions are fixed combinations. We say do your best and make friends. Learn each expression as a complete phrase.

Golden rule: LEARN THE WHOLE EXPRESSION, NOT JUST THE VERB.

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3 Expressions worth knowing

With DO	With MAKE
do business — work with customers	make money — earn or gain money
do research — investigate a topic	make progress — improve over time
do someone a favour — help someone	make a promise — commit to something
do the washing-up — clean dishes (UK)	make a complaint — express dissatisfaction
do exercise — physical activity	make a difference — have an impact

Three mini-conversations

A: Have you done your homework? B: Not yet. I'll do it tonight.

A: Have you made a decision? B: Yes, I'm going to take the course.

A: How is your English? B: I'm making progress, but I still make mistakes.

Notice that the verb changes with tense: do → did → done; make → made → made.

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4 Common learner traps

Sometimes neither MAKE nor DO is the right verb. Natural English often uses TAKE, ASK or HAVE instead.

Common mistake	Natural English
make a photo	take a photo
make a question	ask a question
make a party	have a party
make an exam	do / take an exam

Correct these common mistakes

1. I have to make my homework tonight.

2. She did a terrible mistake.

3. Can I make you a question?

4. We made a party on Saturday.

5. He makes exercise three times a week.

6. I need to do a decision.

Tip: Some corrections require a verb other than MAKE or DO.

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5 Put it into practice

A. Complete each sentence with the correct form of MAKE or DO

1. They're _____ plans for the weekend.

2. Who _____ the washing-up in your house?

3. The company _____ a profit last year.

4. I usually _____ the shopping on Saturday.

5. You need to _____ more of an effort.

6. She has _____ a lot of progress.

B. Complete the mini-dialogues naturally

7. A: Have you finished your homework? B: Not yet. I need to _____ it.

8. A: Have you decided? B: Yes, we have _____ a decision.

9. A: Could you help me? B: Of course. What favour can I _____ you?

10. A: Was the report perfect? B: No, I _____ a mistake.

Use the correct form of MAKE or DO in each reply.

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6 Final challenge

Choose the most natural answer. There may be more than one possible wording in real English; select the best answer given.

1. We need to (make / do) a decision.

2. She always (makes / does) her best.

3. He (made / did) a serious mistake.

4. Could I (make / ask) a question?

5. We (made / did) a lot of research.

6. I want to (make / do) progress.

7. She (made / did) an effort.

8. They (made / had) a party.

Reflection

Which three expressions were new to you? Write them down and create one original sentence for each.

1. _____

2. _____

3. _____

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7 Answer key & next steps

Diagnostic quiz (page 2)

1 make; 2 done; 3 made; 4 do; 5 making; 6 do.

Common learner traps (page 5)

1 do my homework; 2 made a terrible mistake; 3 ask you a question; 4 had a party; 5 does exercise; 6 make a decision.

Practice A (page 6)

1 making; 2 does; 3 made; 4 do; 5 make; 6 made.

Practice B (page 6)

7 do; 8 made; 9 do; 10 made.

Final challenge (page 7)

1 make; 2 does; 3 made; 4 ask; 5 did; 6 make; 7 made; 8 had.

Keep learning

You have practised some of the most useful MAKE and DO combinations. The planned full workbook will offer more guided practice, real-life contexts, mini-tests and a complete answer key.

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