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TOP 10
SONGS FROM
THE BEATLES
TO LEARN ENGLISH

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Foto di copertina: The Beatles pose for a

portrait in Liverpool circa 1962. Left to right: Paul McCartney, John Lennon, George Harrison, Ringo Starr. © Michael Ochs Archives/Getty Images

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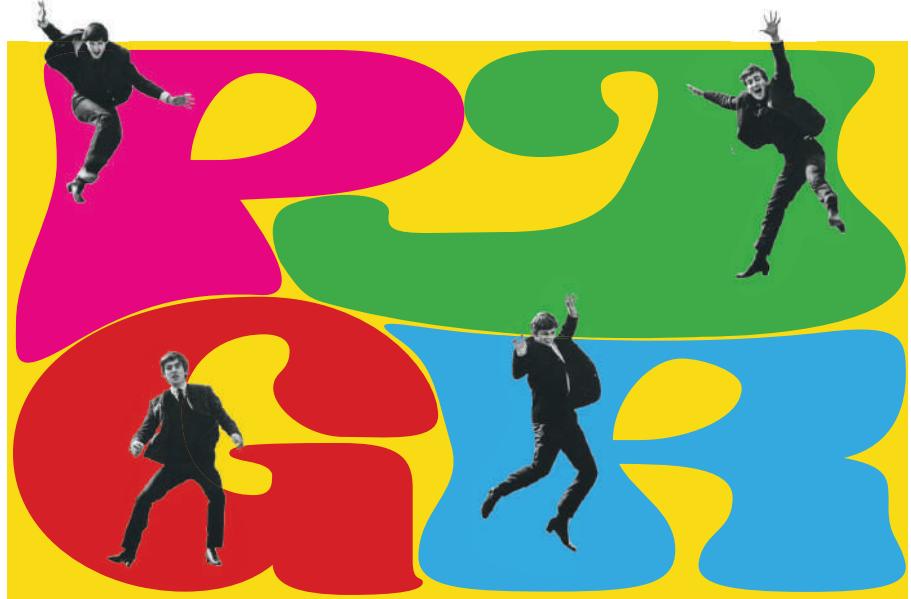
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The Beatles' Academy

Partiamo con la promessa di mantenere la seguente confessione fra di noi. Uno dei redattori di Speak Up proclama, quasi con orgoglio, che non apprezza i Beatles. Si considera, tra l'altro, un appassionato di musica (!) ed è responsabile di una delle gaffe più imbarazzanti della storia più recente della rivista: ha scambiato George Harrison per Ringo Starr nella didascalia di una foto; un'aberrazione che alcuni di voi —attenti lettori— si sono affrettati a farci notare. Vi ringraziamo sinceramente.

Eppure, sappiamo che anche questo personaggio dall'orecchio sprovvisto non può fare a meno di cantichiarare alcuni brani dei Fab Four. Infatti, per quanto dica di non amare la loro musica, sospettiamo che sia uno dei suoi piaceri più nascosti che è riluttante a riconoscere.

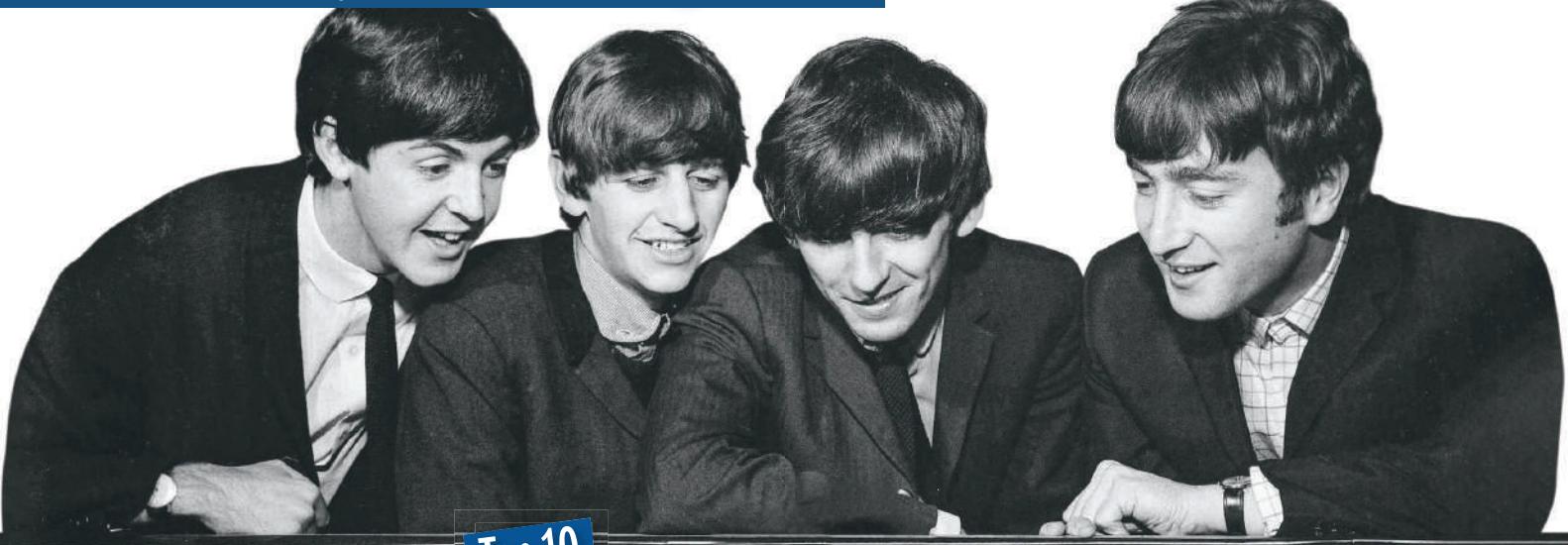
Oltre a essere il gruppo di maggior successo nella storia, i Beatles rappresentano anche il linguaggio universale della musica; la band ha definito la struttura elementare della canzone pop e ha promosso il fenomeno dei fan, che è alla base dell'industria dell'intrattenimento. I Beatles equivalgono per la cultura popolare, per così dire, a ciò che l'inglese rappresenta per la comunicazione globale.

La popolarità di un artista — o di un "prodotto culturale", come viene definito nel settore — non è una misura esatta delle sue qualità, ma è altrettanto indiscutibile che è difficile vendere 600 milioni di dischi e mantenere il primo posto in classifica (in venti occasioni!) se non si fanno le cose molto bene. Tra le 188 canzoni pubblicate da Paul,

I BEATLES SONO IL LINGUAGGIO UNIVERSALE DELLA MUSICA, IL GRUPPO CHE HA STABILITO LE BASI DEL POP

John, George e Ringo nei sette anni, sette mesi e ventiquattro giorni in cui hanno lavorato insieme (un dato che ha sorpreso anche noi) c'è una grande varietà di testi che riflettono l'uso dell'inglese quotidiano. Se la loro musica è allo stesso tempo semplice e complessa, sperimentale e classica, emotiva e allegra, anche i loro testi racchiudono, in piccole e deliziose dosi, quasi tutto l'inglese che è necessario padroneggiare.

E dato che anche il musicomane più snob conosce i loro ritornelli e non può fare a meno di cantichiarli in continuazione, costituiscono il modo migliore e più divertente per avvicinarsi alla lingua.



SONGS TO LEARN ENGLISH ACCORDING TO YOUR LEVEL

The Beatles' English Course



SCAN, READ
& LISTEN
12

UPPER INTERMEDIATE **B2**

GLOSSARY

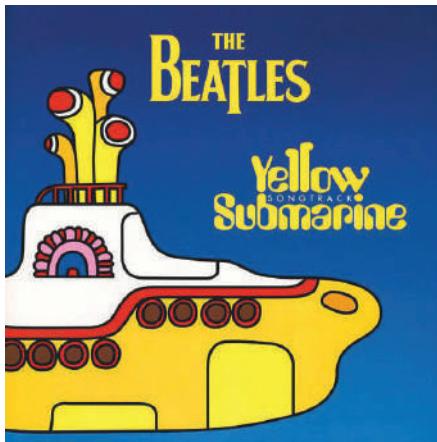
- 1 **survey**: sondaggio
- 2 **catchy tunes**: brani coinvolgenti
- 3 **a wide range**: una vasta scelta
- 4 **cartoon**: cartoni animati
- 5 **largely**: per lo più
- 6 **to sail**: navigare
- 7 **throwaway**: disinteressato
- 8 **drummer**: batterista
- 9 **log**: tronco
- 10 **plea**: supplica
- 11 **pronouns**: pronomi
- 12 **self-assured**: sicuro di sé
- 13 **to feel down**: sentirsi triste

Uno dei modi più divertenti ed efficaci per imparare una lingua è aggiungere ritmo e melodia. Ti proponiamo un breve corso di inglese composto da alcune delle canzoni più conosciute dei Beatles: non riuscirai a smettere di canticchiarle!

According to a 2014 survey¹, The Beatles are the very best band to help you learn English. This isn't surprising, given their catchy tunes² and their easy-to-follow lyrics. There are examples of all uses of grammar and a wide range³ of vocabulary included in the more than two hundred songs that the band recorded in less than a decade. Below, we have listed twelve of their best-known and most accessible songs, although even their more complex songs

have some language in them that is easy to understand.





A2 - Pre-Intermediate: Yellow Submarine

A children's favourite, the theme from the 1967 cartoon⁴ of the same name is largely⁵ in the past simple, using common regular and irregular verbs. The opening line has an important phrase for this level: "I was born".

*In the town where I was born
Lived a man who sailed⁶ to sea
And he told us of his life
In the land of submarines
So we sailed on to the sun
'Til we found a sea of green
And we lived beneath the waves
In our yellow submarine
We all live in a yellow submarine
Yellow submarine, yellow submarine
We all live in a yellow submarine
Yellow submarine, yellow submarine*



A2 - Pre-Intermediate: Here Comes the Sun

George Harrison's 1969 song of hope has just thirty-six distinct words and is largely in the present simple, with some examples of the present perfect. It also features other important aspects of English grammar, such as adjectives and word order.

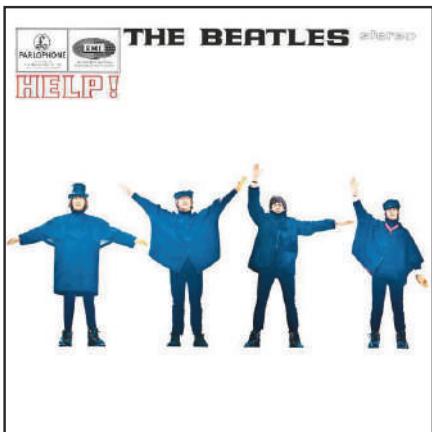
*Here comes the sun,
doo-doo-doo-doo
Here comes the sun, and I say
It's alright
Little darlin', it's been a long,
cold, lonely winter
Little darlin', it feels like years since
it's been here*



B1 - Lower Intermediate: A Hard Day's Night

Inspired by a throwaway⁷ comment by drummer⁸ Ringo Starr, this 1964 song was written for the first Beatles film. It is an ideal introduction to the present perfect (both simple and continuous forms) and present continuous with the modal 'should' and the idioms "working like a dog" and "sleeping like a log⁹".

*It's been a hard day's night
And I've been workin' like a dog
It's been a hard day's night
I should be sleepin' like a log
But when I get home to you
I find the things that you do
Will make me feel alright*

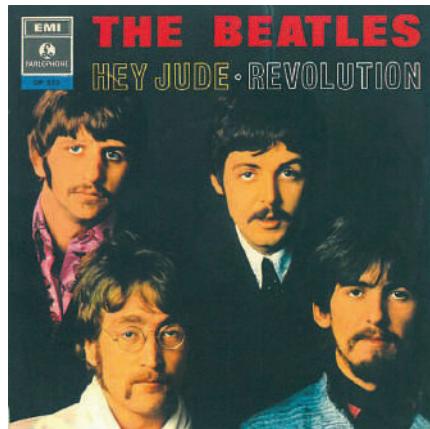


B1 - Lower Intermediate: Help!

John Lennon's 1965 plea¹⁰ for assistance, from the Beatles' second film, has examples of the present simple and present continuous, the past simple and present perfect. It also uses the indefinite pronouns¹¹ 'somebody' and 'anybody' as well as the comparative form of the adjective 'young'.

*(Help!) I need somebody
(Help!) not just anybody
(Help!) you know I need someone,
help*

*When I was younger
So much younger than today
I never needed anybody's help
in any way
But now these days are gone
I'm not so self-assured¹²
Now I find I've changed my mind
And opened up the doors
Help me if you can, I'm feeling
down¹³
And I do appreciate you being 'round
Help me get my feet back
on the ground
Won't you please, please help me?*



B1 - Lower Intermediate: *Yesterday*

Essentially a Paul McCartney solo song (the other Beatles are not on the track), this 1965 song opens with a comparison between the past and the present. It uses the adverb 'suddenly'¹⁴ and the phrases 'to look as though', meaning to seem, and 'to long for (something)', meaning to wish for something.

*Yesterday all my troubles seemed
so far away.
Now it looks as though they're
here to stay.
Oh, I believe in yesterday.*

*Suddenly, I'm not half the man
I used to be.
There's a shadow hanging over me.
Oh, yesterday came suddenly.*

*Why she had to go,
I don't know, she wouldn't say.
I said something wrong,
Now I long for yesterday.*

B2 - Upper Intermediate: *Hey Jude*

Paul McCartney's song of encouragement¹⁵ to John Lennon's son is ideal for practising imperatives, both positive and negative. It uses the narrative style, the comparative, the passive, and the confusable phrase. "You were made to" here means 'you were created' (do something) rather than 'to be forced'.

*Hey Jude, don't make it bad.
Take a sad song and make it better.
Remember to let her into¹⁶ your heart,
Then you can start to make it better.
Hey Jude, don't be afraid.
You were made to go out and get her.
The minute you let her
under your skin,
Then you begin to make it better.*



B2 - Upper Intermediate: *Let It Be*

The Beatles' final single (while still together) begins with a narrative tense, used for storytelling. This aside, it is a very simple song using the present simple, present continuous and the imperative.

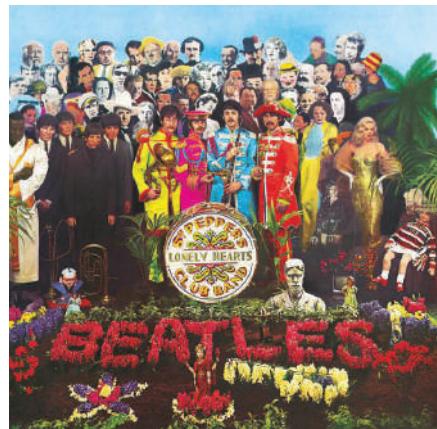
*When I find myself in times of trouble
Mother Mary comes to me
Speaking words of wisdom¹⁷
Let it be
And in my hour of darkness
She is standing right in front of me
Speaking words of wisdom
Let it be*

GLOSSARY

- 14 suddenly:** improvvisamente
- 15 encouragement:** sostegno
- 16 let her into:** lasciala entrare
- 17 wisdom:** saggezza
- 18 to stall:** fermarsi
- 19 mac:** impermeabile
- 20 pouring rain:** pioggia torrenziale
- 21 loneliness:** solitudine
- 22 jar:** barattolo
- 23 to belong:** appartenere
- 24 to cover:** fare una cover
- 25 chorus:** ritornello
- 26 to get by:** tiare avanti
- 27 to get high:** sballarsi
- 28 out of tune:** in modo stonato
- 29 walk out on me:** abbandonarmi
- 30 out of key:** senza musicalità
- 31 on your own:** da solo

SPEAK UP Explains

Double A-side. Quando la musica veniva consumata principalmente in formato fisico, gli artisti erano soliti promuovere alcune canzoni dei loro album in formato singolo. Il brano scelto occupava il lato A dell'album, mentre il lato B era riservato a un brano di ripiego o inedito. In un singolo 'doppio lato A', entrambe le canzoni avevano la stessa importanza per il gruppo e venivano promosse in maniera paritaria.



B2 - Upper Intermediate: *Penny Lane*

A reminiscence of the Liverpool of The Beatles' youth, this 1967 single (a double A-side with *Strawberry Fields Forever*) famously did not hit the top spot in the UK, stalling¹⁸ at number 2. It has examples of 'there is', a lexical set of jobs and occupations.

*In Penny Lane there is a barber
showing photographs
Of every head he's had the pleasure
to have known
And all the people that come and go
Stop and say hello*

*On the corner is a banker
with a motorcar
The little children laugh at him
behind his back
And the banker never wears a mac¹⁹
In the pouring rain²⁰, very strange*

*Penny Lane is in my ears
and in my eyes
There beneath the blue
suburban skies I sit
and meanwhile though...*



C1 - Advanced: *Eleanor Rigby*

This 1966 song is the story of two fictional characters, both suffering from loneliness²¹. It is almost completely in the present simple, and analysing the imagery and metaphors used is a good exercise for advanced learners.

*Eleanor Rigby picks up the rice in the
church where a wedding has been
Lives in a dream
Waits at the window, wearing the face
that she keeps in a jar²² by the door
Who is it for?*

*All the lonely people
Where do they all come from?
All the lonely people
Where do they all belong²³?*

C1 - Advanced: With a Little Help from my Friends

Famously covered²⁴ by Joe Cocker, this song begins with a perfect example of the second conditional and also features the zero conditional ("What do I do when my love is away?" can be rewritten as "When my love is away, what do I do?") The chorus²⁵ uses the phrasal verb 'get by'²⁶, the idiom 'get high'²⁷ and the future 'going to' (here in the colloquial form 'gonna') for an intention.

*What would you think if
I sang out of tune²⁸?
Would you stand up
and walk out on me²⁹?
Lend me your ears and
I'll sing you a song
And I'll try not to sing out of key³⁰
What do I do when my love is away?
Does it worry you to be alone?
How do I feel by the end of the day?
Are you sad because you're
on your own³¹?
Oh, I get by with a little help
from my friends
Mm, I get high with a little help
from my friends
Mm, gonna try with a little help
from my friends ☺*

A1

Hello Goodbye

The Fab Four's simplest song is the 1967 Number One 'Hello Goodbye', which consists of a list of easy words like 'yes', 'stop' and 'high', paired with their opposites. It uses just two verbs, 'say' and 'know', in the first and second person Present Simple.

You say, "Yes", I say, "No"
You say, "Stop" and I say, "Go, go, go"
Oh, no!

I say, "High", you say, "Low"
You say, "Why?"
And I say, "I don't know"
Oh, no!

You say, "Goodbye" and I say, "Hello, hello, hello"
I don't know why you say, "Goodbye", I say, "Hello, hello, hello"
I don't know why you say, "Goodbye", I say, "Hello"

A2

I Want To Hold Your Hand

The Beatles' first American Number One (of a record 20!) features the Present Simple, Future Simple (will) and the modal verb 'can'.

Oh, yeah, I'll tell you somethin'
I think you'll understand
When I say that somethin'
I want to hold your hand
I want to hold your hand
I want to hold your hand

Oh, please, say to me
You'll let me be your man
And please, say to me
You'll let me hold your hand
You'll let me hold your hand
I want to hold your hand

And when I touch you
I feel happy inside
It's such a feelin' that my love
I can't hide
I can't hide
I can't hide