





# STEAK TARTARE

1. Last year, my wife and I were invited to dinner by her new boss. She had just started working at a modern art gallery in London, and this was her chance to **make a good impression**. On the way there, she **pleaded** with me to **be on my best behaviour**. “These are **sophisticated** people,” she said. “Try to act like one of them.” I **scoffed**. “Don’t worry. I *am* sophisticated.”
2. Her boss lived with his husband in a beautiful flat in the expensive ‘**West End**’ of the city. The walls were filled with paintings, the furniture was **elegant**, and everything was perfectly clean and stylish.
3. At the beginning, things were going well. We had drinks, **chit-chatted** about art and travel, and everybody seemed to be **hitting it off**. I was **inquisitive** about their home decor, and made a few jokes about the art on display that made them laugh — the kind of polite, clever jokes I don’t usually make.
4. Then came the food. While we were **tucking into** the soup, the **host** asked, “Do you like steak tartare?”

**make a good impression:**  
(phrase) cause someone to admire you or think well of you

**pleaded:** made an urgent emotional request

**be on one’s best behaviour:** (idiom) acting politely and properly in a social situation

**sophisticated:** having refined tastes or cultural knowledge; worldly

**scoffed:** showed disrespect or disbelief through words or tone

**(The) West End:** Central London, known for theatres, shopping, and affluent neighbourhoods

**elegant:** graceful and attractive in appearance

**chit-chatted:** (informal) engaged in small talk

**hitting it off:** (idiom) getting along well immediately; socially compatible

**inquisitive:** curious; eager for knowledge

**tucking into (something):**  
(informal) start eating something eagerly

**host:** someone who has guests

5. “Of course,” I said, even though I had no idea what that meant. I imagined it being a French way to cook ‘steak’. But when the plate arrived, I froze. It looked like they’d forgotten to cook it. It was a piece of raw **ground** beef with a raw egg yolk sitting on top like a jewel. I smiled politely, but **inside** I was panicking.

**ground:** (past participle of grind) made into small pieces by pressing or cutting

**inside:** personal thoughts or feelings not expressed outwardly

**renaissance:** period of revival of classical art in 14th-16th century

**followed their lead:** took action based on another person’s example or guidance

**mushy:** wet and soft, like a thick paste in texture

**slimy:** wet and slippery, gooey in texture

**predicament:** a difficult situation that is hard to escape from

**get away with (something):** (phrasal verb) do something that is not allowed and not be punished

**briefly:** for a short time

**greasy:** containing a lot of oil or fat

**aimed:** pointed an object towards something

**judged (the angle):** decided how far away something was by using the eye

**arc:** curved path of an object thrown or moving through the air

**splat:** (onomatopoeia) sound of something soft and wet hitting a surface

6. Everyone else started eating and talking about **renaissance** painters. I sat there with my knife and fork, trying to decide what to do. I **followed their lead** and cut into the egg, letting it spread over the meat. I took a bite. It was awful. The meat was cold and **mushy**. The raw egg yolk made it feel **slimy** in my mouth. I smiled and nodded, pretending to like it, but my brain was screaming.

7. Now I had a major **predicament**: how could I **get away with** not eating this? I **briefly** considered claiming to be a vegetarian, but then remembered the oxtail soup I’d just had as a starter.

8. After a few minutes, both hosts went into the kitchen to prepare dessert. That’s when I noticed the open window next to me. I looked down at the **greasy** meat on my plate. I looked at the window — about three metres away — and my stomach **instinctively** decided for me.

9. I quickly rolled the meat into a tight ball, **aimed** carefully, and threw it. I **judged** the angle so well that the meat flew in a perfect **arc** straight through the centre of the window.

10. **SPLAT!**

11. Until it hit against the cleanest window pane you've ever seen in your life!!
12. The window wasn't open. Raw meat and egg yolk slowly slid down the smooth glass and dropped onto the cream-coloured carpet.
13. My wife, who had been happily eating her food, turned her head. Her face changed from surprise to complete **rage**. She stared at me like I had destroyed her entire career in one second.
14. Then the hosts returned. They stopped and looked: the **stain** on the window, the meat on the floor, my empty plate, my wife's **horrified** face.
15. "What happened?" one of them asked politely.
16. I **froze**. Then, with the confidence of a man who has no way out, I felt like my only option was to **deny** throwing it **deliberately**. I said, "I... I'm really sorry. I was cutting the meat... and it slipped... I'm such a **clumsy** person... right, darling?"
17. No answer.
18. The men and my wife continued staring at me like I had escaped from the mental hospital, as I **scooped** the steak tartare up with my hands and **plopped** it back on my plate. Then I **smeared** grease and egg yolk around the glass window with my **napkin**, making it look much worse, while I continued to **mumble** the same **pathetic**, **incoherent** excuse again and again. No

**rage:** extreme anger

**stain:** a dirty mark that is difficult to remove

**horrified:** very shocked

**froze:** suddenly stopped moving, often from shock or fear

**deny:** say that something is not true

**deliberately:** intentionally

**clumsy:** causing physical accidents by not moving in a careful, controlled way

**scooped:** picked up something with a sweeping motion (e.g., with a spoon)

**plopped:** (onomatopoeia) put something down that makes a soft sound

**smeared:** spread a substance messily over a surface

**napkin:** a piece of cloth or paper used while eating

**mumble:** speak quietly and unclearly, often from embarrassment or nerves

**pathetic:** unsuccessful so that people feel no respect

**incoherent:** unable to express one's thoughts in a clear manner

**sheepishly:** in a self-conscious, embarrassed way

**revolting:** causing disgust

**nevertheless:** despite what has just been said; (used to introduce a contrast or an unexpected result)

**deserved:** something you are given because of your behaviour

**sensed:** noticed or became aware of (often by intuition)

one believed me.

19. I sat back down **sheepishly** and picked up my knife and fork. It was **revolting**. **Nevertheless**, eating it felt like a **deserved** punishment. Conversation returned to art history, but I **sensed** their eyes watching me as I fought to finish every last bite of that disgusting raw meat and egg.

20. We haven't been invited back.





## (A) Gerund or 'To + Infinitive'?

Is the verb that follows these verbs in its '-ing', or 'to' + infinitive form?

Example: my wife begged me to behave myself.

	'-ing' form of verb	'to' + infinitive
beg (par. 1)		✓
get away with (par. 7)		
invite (par. 1)		
continue (par. 19)		
pretend (par. 6)		
seem (par. 3)		
imagine (par. 5)		
claim (par. 8)		
consider (par. 8)		
deny (par. 17)		



## (B) Vocabulary Definition Match

word / phrase	definition
scoff	1) <del>very strong anger</del>
arc	2. talked informally about unimportant things.
chit-chatted	3. to show disrespect or disbelief through words or tone.
hit it off	4. avoid punishment for wrongdoing.
mushy	5. became immediately friendly with someone.
get away with	6. the path something follows as it moves through the air
rage	7. soft and wet in texture, often unpleasantly so
trajectory	8. A curved line or shape



Match these words and phrases to the correct definitions

## (C) Vocabulary Gap Fill

Add the words to the story

sheepishly · inquisitive · predicament · mumbled · incoherent · smeared

Oh dear, what a (1)\_\_\_\_\_ I found myself in yesterday! My (2)\_\_\_\_\_ nephew, Leo, was so curious about watching me paint the garden fence that he insisted on helping. He's only four and a sweet boy, but his understanding of "helping" is... well, let's just say it involves paint ending up on a lot more things than the fence.

So, there I was, explaining the technique of applying a smooth, even coat, only to turn around and find Leo had (3)\_\_\_\_\_ bright blue paint all over himself. His face, his hair, his clothes. Even his little shoes!

I asked him why he'd done it, but he (4)\_\_\_\_\_ something (5)\_\_\_\_\_ that I couldn't understand. Honestly, the sight was so absurd, it was hard to be cross with him.

Eventually, I managed to clean him up, and when his mum asked what we'd been up to, I (6)\_\_\_\_\_ confessed to her that Leo's clothes were ruined. Thankfully, she found it funny, especially when I showed her the photo of her son looking like a space alien!

## (D) Vocabulary Word Search

Find words related to the vocabulary from exercises B and C from their definitions:

D	T	N	E	M	A	C	I	D	E	R	P
Y	E	V	I	T	I	S	I	U	Q	N	I
Y	Y	O	D	X	I	C	B	V	O	P	T
H	Y	L	N	M	U	M	B	L	E	M	A
I	A	V	G	A	I	B	X	Q	S	U	H
T	R	K	H	L	G	L	X	U	E	S	C
I	N	C	O	H	E	R	E	N	T	H	T
T	H	S	I	P	E	E	H	S	R	Y	I
O	F	G	C	S	J	R	T	G	A	W	H
F	X	R	S	C	O	F	F	L	G	T	C
F	A	M	W	T	M	I	R	A	E	M	S

1. self-conscious, embarrassed
2. speak quietly and unclearly, often from embarrassment or nerves
3. extreme anger
4. curious, eager for knowledge
5. unable to express one's thoughts in a clear manner
6. a difficult situation that is hard to escape from
7. wet and soft, like a thick paste in texture
8. a curved trajectory; the path of an object moving through the air
9. engage in small talk
10. show disrespect or disbelief through words or tone
11. get along well immediately, socially compatible
12. spread a substance messily over a surface

## (E) Speaking Practice

### *The Walk Home*

*Scenario: After the disastrous dinner party, the couple walks home. The wife is furious and wants to know why her husband embarrassed her in front of her boss. The husband is apologetic, trying to explain his behaviour, calm her down, and repair their relationship.*

#### ◆ Option A – In Class (Pair or Small Group Practice)

Work in pairs.

- **Role A – Wife**

- Express anger and demand explanations.
- Show concern for your career and reputation.

#### **Useful sentence starters:**

- “Do you realise how this made me...”
- “What were you thinking when you...”
- “I told you to... but instead you...”

- **Role B – Husband**

- Apologise sincerely, try to calm your wife.
- Show regret but also try to justify your actions.

#### **Useful sentence starters:**

- “Please believe me, I never meant to...”
- “The truth is, I was only trying to...”
- “I know it looked bad, but I just...”



*Extension: Switch roles and repeat with a different emotional balance — one version calm and forgiving, another heated and argumentative.*

## ◆ Option B – Self-Study (Solo Practice)

If you're studying alone, choose one of these versions:

1. **Record yourself** performing both roles — exaggerate tone and emotion to practise stress and intonation.
2. **Monologue version:** Speak as either the wife or the husband describing the incident to a friend — explain what happened, how you felt, and what you learned.

 *Tip:* Focus on emotional control — try one recording where the argument escalates and another where it resolves peacefully.

## (F) Discussion (Pair or Solo Practice)

 *In Class: Discuss your ideas with a partner or group.*

 *Self-Study: Record or write your own answers using the prompts below.*

1. What would you have done in this situation?
  
  
  
2. Is it polite to eat food you dislike, or is it better to be honest with the host?
  
  
  
3. How important is it to “act sophisticated” when meeting new people?
  
  
  
4. Have you ever pretended to like something to avoid offending someone?
  
  
  
5. What should the wife say to her boss the next day?
  
  
  
6. How would you feel if your partner embarrassed you in front of your boss?
  
  
  
7. What is the funniest or most awkward situation you’ve experienced at a dinner?
  
  
  
8. What cultural differences about food or dining etiquette have you experienced?
  
  
  
9. Is honesty or politeness more important when interacting with new people?
  
  
  
10. If this story were told from the hosts’ perspective, how might it be different?



## Answer key

### ***Steak Tartare***

A: -ING form of verb: get away with; continue\*; imagine; consider; deny;

(\*continue can be followed by 'to + infinitive' too)

TO + INFINITIVE: invite; continue; pretend; seem; claim

B: scoff-3; arc-8; chit-chatted-2; hit it off-5; mushy-7; get away with-4; rage-1; trajectory-6

C: 1-predicament; 2-inquisitive; 3-smeared; 4-muttered; 5-incoherent; 6-sheepishly

D: 1-sheepish; 2-mutter; 3-rage; 4-inquisitive; 5-incoherent; 6-predicament; 7-mushy; 8-arc; 9-chit chat; 10-scoff; 11-hit it off; 12-smear