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**Pre-Intermediate**  
**Learning new words and expressions**  
**Episode 6 - Nearly Headless Nick.**



Listen to the dialogue once:

*Dialogue:*

"Hello, Nick," said Harry.

"Hello, hello," said Nearly Headless Nick.

"You look troubled, young Potter," said Nick, folding a transparent letter.

"So do you," said Harry.

"Ah," Nearly Headless Nick waved an elegant hand, "a matter of no importance. . . . It's not as though I really wanted to join. . . . Thought I'd apply, but apparently I 'don't fulfill requirements' -"

"But you would think, wouldn't you," he said suddenly, "that getting hit forty-five times in the neck with a blunt axe would qualify you to join the Headless Hunt?"

"Oh - yes," said Harry, surprised.

"I mean, nobody wishes more that my head had come off properly, I mean, it would have saved me a great deal of pain and ridicule. However -" Nearly Headless Nick shook his letter open and read furiously: "'We can only accept huntsmen whose heads have parted company with their bodies. It is with the greatest regret, therefore, that I must inform you that you do not fulfill our requirements. With very best wishes, Sir Patrick Delaney-Podmore.'"

Nearly Headless Nick took several deep breaths and then said, in a far calmer tone, "So - what's bothering you? Anything I can do?"

As always let's take a look at some interesting expressions:

**nearly** - almost, not quite: We lived in that city for nearly 2 years. Nearly all of us liked opera, only my brother hated it.

**troubled** - somebody who is worried or has many problems: She seemed troubled about something. 1990s were troubled times in Russia. Mary was a troubled girl - she didn't get on well with her family and friends.

You can also say that someone is in trouble, meaning he has problems: When the police officer approached me I knew I was in trouble.

**a matter of no importance** - something not important: What's wrong, Charles? - Ah, a matter of no importance. What other people think is a matter of no importance for me. His decision to move to America was a matter of a very big importance for his family and friends.

**as though** - as if: She was so pale it looked as though she was going to fall. He didn't even notice me, it was as if he didn't know I existed. It seemed as if the day would never end.

**to apply** - to ask formally for something (for example, job, admission, a loan in a bank etc) usually in writing: Stop being a couch potato. You should pull yourself together, do sports, and apply for a job.

Last time we spoke about “**pull oneself together**” (he pulled himself together and got back to work). There are also some synonyms:

- **to get it together**: Stop acting like a little girl. Get it together, man.
- **to get one's act together**: Despite all the problems you must get your act together!
- **to get a grip on oneself**: Stop crying. Get a grip!

**apparently** - it seems, it appears that, as far as we know: Apparently her husband didn't know that the cake was for the party next day, and that's why he ate a piece of it.

**to fulfill requirements** - to meet the requirements: If you apply to a modeling school and you are not tall enough, you will not fulfill the requirements.

**surprised** - there are some synonyms for this word:

- **amazed** has a more positive meaning: I am amazed how fast children grow up.
- **astonished**: “Luke, I am your father,” said Darth Vader, Luke looked astonished.
- **astounded**
- **dumbfounded** are pretty much the same.
- **flabbergasted** and **thunderstruck** are two funny words that mean “surprised”. When Darth Vader said he was Luke's father, Luke stood there thunderstruck.

**properly** - correctly, suitably, the way it has to be: You have to behave properly when you are surrounded by people. The television does not work properly. Dress properly for the interview. The same goes with “proper”: You must connect the device to the proper cable. It can also be used to intensify something: I felt a proper fool. She was a proper actress.

**a great deal of** - means a lot of. In the Japanese cuisine there is a great deal of seafood. Actually there are different ways of saying “a lot of”.

- lots of - the same as a lot of: We order lots of food when we eat out.
- plenty of - used with uncountable nouns: He puts plenty of sugar in his coffee.
- a great number of - We were flabbergasted by a great number of people on the streets.
- mountains of - At the Asian market we saw mountains of spices, fruit and vegetables.

**ridicule** - is when somebody makes fun of somebody else, laughs at him, or mocks him. What is interesting for us here is an adjective “ridiculous”. It means absurd, laughable or foolish. The idea you came up with is ridiculous! He said his father used to be a spy! This is ridiculous. His father was always just a regular teacher.

**to part company with** - a funny expressions which means “to leave somebody, to go away from somebody, to separate from somebody or something”. In our dialogue Headless Nick hasn't parted company with his head, that's why he didn't fulfill the requirements of the Headless Hunt. Other examples maybe: We used to be good friends but after a big argument we decided to part company. James parted company with his partners because he didn't trust them.

**to regret** - to feel sorry or upset about something that happened: After my grandfather died I regretted not saying him I loved him. I regret that I didn't live up to my parents' expectations. I regret saying to him what I meant. He got really offended.

**several** - is the same as some: I know several cats who like watching TV. There is a great deal of people who say they can sing. And only several of them can sing properly.

**bother** - to put a person into a state of worry, to trouble somebody: It bothers me when you don't call me - I start to worry! It bothers me when people speak on their phones in the cinema or in the theatre. You said you wanted to leave me - and this really bothers me. Another way of saying it is "It bugs me", you use it to show irritation or annoyance: It bugs me when people throw trash on the ground. It bugs me when young women smoke.

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