The What If Table — Episode Practice: Why This Proud Woodworker Almost Lost His Biggest Order

Level: A2-B1 transition to B1

Estimated time: 10 to 15 minutes

Activity 1: Listening for Key Information

Before you listen, read each question and try to remember what happened in the story. Then play the episode from the indicated timestamp to verify your answer. Write a short answer.

1. Listen from 01:06. What order did the local baker offer to Martin, and what was the deadline?

Your answer:

2. Listen from 03:20. When Calvin walked into Martin's shop and found him beside the broken machine, how many cabinets were finished, and what did Martin finally admit?

Your answer:

Activity 2: Listening for Exact Words

Listen to Calvin describe what he told Martin in the workshop. Fill in each gap with the exact word you hear in the audio.

Listen from 03:53.

3. I told him that real craftsmen survive through community, not by grinding themselves to (missing word) alone.

4. Good woodworkers share tools and (missing word) when the load gets too heavy.

Activity 3: Speaking Practice with Transfer

In this activity, you will practice a useful spoken phrase about asking for support when a situation becomes difficult.

Listen from 03:53.

Target sentence: Good woodworkers share tools and knowledge when the load gets too heavy.

What to observe: Notice how Calvin pauses slightly after the word knowledge. Notice also the natural rhythm of the phrase when the load gets too heavy (quando o fardo fica pesado demais, ou seja, quando uma tarefa fica difícil demais para fazer sozinho).

Practice steps:

• Listen to Calvin say this sentence at 03:53.

• Repeat the sentence aloud two times, matching his natural rhythm. You can also try shadowing (speaking at the same time as the audio).

• Now, personalize the phrase. Complete the sentence starter below with your own situation at work, study, or home. Say your complete sentence aloud.

5. Sentence starter: In my daily life, I ask for help when the load gets too heavy because...

Self-check checklist:

• Did you complete the sentence with your own honest reason or situation?

• Did you include the phrase when the load gets too heavy?

• Did you say the full sentence aloud in English?

Activity 4: Vocabulary in Context and Daily Routine

Listen to how Martin changed his routine after finishing the cabinets.

In English, to power down means to turn off a machine, but people also use it informally to mean disconnecting and relaxing after work (desconectar, desacelerar ao fim do dia).

Listen from 06:12.

6. What does Martin do every day at five o'clock sharp now, and what does this show about his new life?

Your answer:

7. Now think about your own daily routine. Complete the sentence starter below with an action that helps you stop working and relax at the end of the day.

Sentence starter: At the end of a busy day, I like to power down by...

Self-check checklist:

• Did you describe an activity that helps you rest and disconnect from work?

• Did you write or speak a complete sentence in English?

Answer key

1. The baker offered him four thousand eight hundred dollars for thirty solid oak cabinets, tied to a four-week deadline.

Valid alternative: 30 solid oak cabinets in 4 weeks (for $4,800).

2. Only twelve cabinets were finished. Martin finally admitted that he could not do this alone.

Valid alternative: 12 cabinets finished; he admitted he could not do the work alone and needed help.

3. dust

Explanation: Calvin says not by grinding themselves to dust alone, which describes working to the point of complete physical and mental exhaustion.

4. knowledge

Explanation: Calvin explains that good woodworkers share both physical tools and their personal knowledge.

5. Possible answer: In my daily life, I ask for help when the load gets too heavy because trying to solve every problem alone causes too much stress and leads to mistakes.

6. Martin powers down the dust collector at five o'clock sharp instead of working all night. He leaves his shop doors open, brings hot coffee outside, and plays dominoes with his neighbors. This shows that he no longer lives in solitary exhaustion and now enjoys rest, balance, and community.

Valid alternative: He turns off his machines at five sharp and plays dominoes with friends, showing that he found work-life balance and stopped isolating himself.

7. Possible answer: At the end of a busy day, I like to power down by closing my laptop, making a cup of tea, and listening to quiet music.