



# Learn English Through Stories

E Series

E3

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# Doctor, Doctor

By Sudha Murty



One day, the children asked, “Grandma, how do you know so many stories?”

Grandma smiled and answered, “My grandmother told me many stories. Some I read in books. A few I learnt from youngsters like you, and the rest from your Granddad.” Then Grandma paused and said, “I see all of you have grown a lot since the last time I saw you. So before I start telling any stories, I want to know what each of you wants to be when you grow up.”

Raghu, who was eleven years old, and the oldest of all, said immediately, “I want to be an environment scientist.” Meenu, who was nine, said, “I have not decided, maybe a computer person like my dad.” Anand, who was ten, said, “I want to be an astronaut,” and his twin sister Krishna firmly said, “I want to become a fashion designer.” Grandma smiled. “I am glad all of you have thought about this. We should always have some aim in life which we must try to achieve while being of help to others. Now let me tell you a story of a person who learnt just such a lesson.”

Shall we, too, join Grandma and her gang of young friends and hear the story?

On a blazing hot summer afternoon, an old man came walking down a narrow village path. He was tired and thirsty. Right by the road, he spotted a tiny grocery store. It had a tin roof and mud walls. The shopkeeper sat inside fanning himself and shooing away the flies that were buzzing around in the stifling heat. There was a little bench in front of the store where the villagers met when evening came and the land had cooled down. The old man flopped down on the bench. He was so tired that for a while he could not speak. Finally, he opened his mouth and uttered one word, “Water!”

Now, this village had been facing a horrible problem for a long time. It was near a great desert and the rains came only once a year to fill its ponds and wells. But the rains had disappeared for the last two years, and the villagers had been making do with water from a faraway stream.

Every morning groups of men and women walked a long distance, filled their pots from the little stream and used that the whole day. Naturally, no one wanted to waste even a drop of this precious water.

Yet how do you say no to a thirsty, tired old man when he asks for water? Without a second thought, the shopkeeper, Ravi, who was very kind-hearted, poured out a tumbler of water from his pot and gave it to the old man. The man drank it up greedily. Then he said one more word: "More!" And without waiting for Ravi to give it to him, he lunged for the pot, picked it up and lifting it to his lips drank up Ravi's entire day's supply of water!

Poor Ravi, what could he do? He just stared in dismay. Then he told himself, "Never mind. After all, I did help someone in need."

The stranger, meanwhile, now seemed to feel better. He handed the pot back to Ravi, gave a smile that filled Ravi's heart with warmth and said, "My son, always be kind like this. Help everyone who comes to you like you helped me, and you will be blessed." Then he picked up his stick and slowly hobbled down the road. Ravi watched the strange old man disappear into the distance, then returned to his shop.

The afternoon heat grew worse. After a while, Ravi felt his head was about to burst with a headache. His lips were parched and his throat hurt, it was so dry. He really needed a drink of water. But the visitor had finished it all up! Hoping to coax a drop or two out of the pot, Ravi lifted it to his lips and tilted it. Imagine his surprise when a gush of water ran down his face! It was sweet, refreshing water which not only quenched his thirst, but wiped out his headache too.

Ravi was staring at the water pot, trying to figure out what had just happened, when Karim limped into his shop. Karim was a young man who had hurt his leg in an accident many years ago which had left him with a limp. When he was unwell or tired, his limp became worse. Karim, too, flopped down on the bench in front of the store and caught his breath, like the old man. Then he fished out a shopping list from his pocket and handed it to Ravi. As Ravi started packing up the items listed on the paper, Karim opened a little bundle of food and ate his lunch sitting on the bench. Finally, he wiped his mouth on his scarf and pointed to Ravi's pot of water. "Mind if I take a little sip? It is so hot after all."

Ravi was busy measuring out some dal. He said without looking up, "I would be happy to offer you some, but someone's already had most of it. Then I was feeling unwell and I think I finished the last of it."

"What are you saying, my friend? I can clearly see the pot brimming with water!"

Ravi looked up and stared in disbelief. In front of his eyes, Karim poured out a glass of water and drank it. Then he paid for all his groceries and left the store.

Did his limp look as if it was nearly gone? Ravi watched him for a while trying to figure it out, then decided the heat was playing tricks on his mind and went back into the cool comfort of his shop and dozed off.

He woke with a start as someone was calling his name urgently. He opened his eyes to find Karim back. This time he was holding by the hand his little sister Fatima. "Brother, wake up. We need your help," Karim urged.

"What-what? Is something wrong?"

"Fatima is burning up with fever!"

"Then go to a doctor, why have you got her to a grocery shop?"

Karim stared at him and said, "You mean you don't know how you just helped me? My leg, which has been troubling me for the last many years, healed up on its own as soon as I drank the water from your magic pitcher! Give Fatima a drink from it, too. I am sure her fever will disappear in no time."

Ravi was astounded. Magic pitcher? Healing water? What was Karim going on about? Nonetheless, he passed the pot to Fatima. She drank a bit, then sat down to rest. Within minutes she lifted her head and said, "It is true, brothers! I am indeed cured of the fever!"

Soon the news spread in the village like wildfire. Ravi, the quiet, kind grocery storekeeper, was now the owner of a magic pitcher, the waters from which could heal anyone of any disease. Every night Ravi left the pitcher in the store, and in the morning it would be filled to the brim with sweet, cool water. Daily, a queue of sick people and their relatives collected in front of his shop. To each one Ravi gave a drink of the water, and they went away saying they were now better. The pot was never empty. Ravi realized the old man he had helped must have given him this gift in gratitude. Ravi understood what a great gift it was and thanked him daily in his mind.

Soon his little store turned into a hospital. Ravi did not charge a penny for the water. People would leave some money, and some gifts for him, and others did not pay him anything but he was still happy with that.

One day, a rich landlord's servant appeared at his doorstep and said, "My master is unwell. Come with me and give him a drink of your water."

Ravi replied, "See the crowd of people behind you, waiting for their turn. How can I leave without helping them and go to your master? Do you think these sick people can stand in the sun for long? Tell your master to come to me instead and I will give him the water here."

The servant said, "Ravi, what will you get by helping these poor people? A few rupees! Some rice and dal! Come to my master's house. He will shower you with money and gifts. Your worries about making ends meet will be over for at least a month."

Ravi was tempted. It was true, why not cure one rich man and get some help in buying his daily needs? Ravi told the people waiting outside to come back the next day and went with the servant to the landlord.

Slowly, in this way, Ravi changed. Where once he could not bear to see the pain and sadness of the sick and poor people, he now started each day hoping he would get one rich patient at least, who would pay him handsomely.

Days passed thus. Seasons changed and it was summer once more. Ravi was in his old store, writing up his accounts, when the voice of an old man quavered in his ear, "Son, water!"

Startled, he looked up. Was it the same old man who had given him the gift of the magic pitcher? But right behind the visitor was none other than the king's messenger. "Come quickly!" the messenger shouted. "The queen has been bitten by a mosquito!"

"Water!" the old man repeated.

"The queen is unwell!" the messenger shouted again.

Ravi looked from one to the other. One was a grubby old man who may or may not be the same person who gave him the pitcher. On the other side a messenger from the king himself! He pictured the gold coins showering down on him once his healing water soothed the queen's mosquito bites. The choice was clear.

He picked up his pitcher and said to the stranger, "Wait right here, Uncle, I'll be back soon."

The king's swift-footed horses took him to the palace. There he rushed to the queen who was staring in dismay at the mosquito bites on her arm. He tilted the pitcher to pour some water into a glass, but none came out! Again and again, he tilted the pitcher. He turned it upside down and stared into its depths. It was dry as a bone.

"You cheat!" the king roared. "So this is how you have been fooling the people of my kingdom! Get out, and never let me hear that you have acquired magical healing powers. If you claim such a thing again I will banish you forever from the village." Then he turned to comfort his queen who was splashing tears on the bump on her arm.

Ravi slowly walked back to his village. He went to his shop. No one was there. He searched for the old man who had asked for water. He was nowhere to be seen. He called out, "Uncle, I am sorry. I made a mistake. Please do come. I will give you water." But there was no reply. Now he realized this was the same old man whom he met a year back.

He remembered the people he had healed once out of kindness and compassion and how much they had blessed and loved him in return. He remembered their little acts of generosity, sparing him a few coins, and a bundle of vegetables from their garden in return for the water. When did he become so selfish and greedy that he would neglect the people who needed him the most? The old man had taken back his powers when he sensed Ravi had misused the gift.

Never mind, Ravi smiled to himself. He would use the money he had received for the water to help bring a real doctor to the village, someone who would help the people with his knowledge of medicines and diseases, so that they need not wait for a magician to cure them of their illnesses.

From that day onwards Ravi filled his pitcher with ordinary water from the stream and carried it back carefully to his little store and waited for the old man. Maybe one day he would be back, but till then, Ravi was determined to bring a real medicine man to his village.

Grandma finished her story and looked around at the four little faces around her. Raghu was deep in thought. Grandma smiled at him. Then the children shouted, "Grandma, tell one more story!"

"Ah ha," Grandma said, "too many stories a day are not good either. One laddoo is very sweet, very delicious but if you eat laddoos all the time it's no fun. Go and play outside. Tomorrow I will tell you another story." With that, she got up and went to the kitchen to prepare the dinner.



## 2. Grammar Page

Many nouns that end in f are made plural by changing the f to v and adding es.

singular	plural
half	halves
leaf	leaves
shelf	shelves
wolf	wolves
thief	thieves



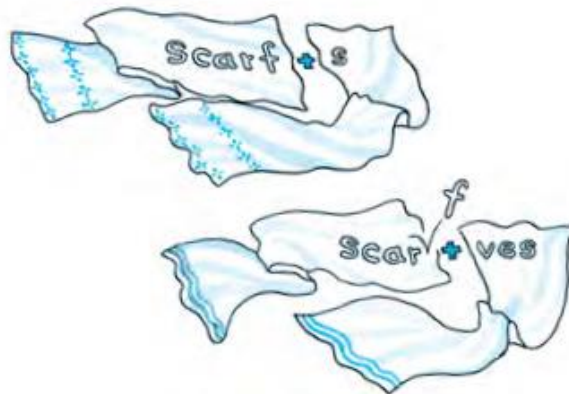
But some nouns that end in f are made plural simply by adding s.

singular	plural
chief	chiefs
roof	roofs
handkerchief	handkerchiefs
cliff	cliffs
puff	puffs



Some nouns that end in f can be made plural in two ways.

singular	plural
scarf	scarfs or scarves
hoof	hoofs or hooves
dwarf	dwarfs or dwarves
wharf	wharfs or wharves



Most nouns that end in fe are made plural by changing the f to v and adding s.

singular	plural
knife	knives
wife	wives
life	lives
midwife	midwives



Most nouns that end in o are made plural by adding s.

singular	plural
video	videos
hippo	hippos
zoo	zoos
kangaroo	kangaroos

But other nouns that end in o are made plural by adding es.

singular	plural
tomato	tomatoes
potato	potatoes
hero	heroes



Some nouns change spelling from the singular form to the plural.

singular	plural
man	men
woman	women
child	children
person	people
mouse	mice
tooth	teeth
foot	feet
goose	geese

### Notes

What's the plural of the kind of **mouse** that you use with a computer? The plural is either **mice** or **mouses**.



The plural form of some nouns is the same as the singular form.

singular	plural
sheep	sheep ( <i>not</i> sheeps)
deer	deer ( <i>not</i> deers)
fish	fish ( <i>not</i> fishes)
aircraft	aircraft ( <i>not</i> aircrafts)
salmon	salmon ( <i>not</i> salmons)

### Notes

When you are talking about different kinds of **fish**, the plural can be **fishes**, for example:

the various fishes of the Indian Ocean

Some nouns are *always* plural.

trousers	glasses
shorts	spectacles
jeans	goggles
pants	scissors
tights	binoculars
pajamas	pliers

Some nouns are *usually* plural.

shoes	chopsticks
sandals	gloves
slippers	clogs
boots	socks

## Notes

You can use **a pair of** with these plural nouns. For example:

- a pair of** trousers
- a pair of** pants
- a pair of** glasses
- a pair of** scissors
- a pair of** chopsticks
- a pair of** sandals
- a pair of** gloves

