

LEARN ENGLISH WITH MUSIC

Birds of a Feather

Billie Eilish

COMPLETE LEARNING WORKBOOK

Go beyond the song

Permanence, uncertainty and dark imagery inside a deceptively soft pop song.

20 verified learning cards / Level B1-B2 / guided practice

SECTION 00

Your learning journey

Watch first, explore second, practise from memory and finish with the complete card library.

1 WATCH	Follow the official lyric video and synced cards.
2 EXPLORE	Study language, extended vocabulary, culture and sound.
3 PRACTISE	Complete the guided challenges without looking back.
4 REVIEW	Use the final 20-card library by category.

Three sources of value

Song language gives you patterns to reuse. **Extended vocabulary** helps you discuss the themes and music. **Context** helps you understand cultural references and form your own interpretation.

Official lyrics

[Open the official lyric video](#)

Listen, read and return to the workbook whenever you want to explore a language point in greater depth.

SECTION 01

Map the song

Observe the tension between absolute commitment and modal uncertainty: forever coexists with might, would and if.

STAGE	LEARNING LENS
Opening vow	Desire and extreme permanence
Proverb hook	Similarity becomes romantic identity
Doubt	Belief and uncertainty collide
Later verse	Compliments, control and imagined lives

Listening challenge

For each stage, write one word for the sound and one for the speaker's emotional position. Then explain which language choice helped create that impression.

SECTION 02

Language Lab

Move beyond the quick cards: compare structures, notice register and learn how to avoid common mistakes.

LANGUAGE POINT	GO DEEPER	USE IT WELL
want someone to do something	The object identifies who performs the following action. Compare this with <i>want something</i> .	<i>I want you to stay. I want some time.</i>
till, until and by	<i>Till</i> and <i>until</i> mark a continuing end point. <i>By</i> means no later than a deadline.	<i>Stay until six. Finish it by six.</i>
rot, decay and fade	All describe deterioration, but <i>rot</i> is physical and graphic, <i>decay</i> is more neutral or technical, and <i>fade</i> suggests gradual loss of strength.	Choose according to image and emotional force.
birds of a feather	The proverb describes similar people who naturally associate. It can be affectionate, neutral or critical.	Use it for friends, colleagues or people who share habits - not only couples.
thought I knew	The past form presents an earlier belief that later evidence has weakened.	Compare <i>I knew</i> with <i>I thought I knew</i> : the second leaves room for correction.
might and would	<i>Might</i> marks uncertain possibility. <i>Would</i> often gives an imagined result or reaction.	<i>It might change. You would be surprised.</i>
look at, look to, look like	<i>Look at</i> directs the eyes; <i>look to</i> can indicate perspective or reliance; <i>look like</i> describes resemblance.	The small preposition changes the structure and meaning.
what I am crying for	Here <i>what</i> means <i>the thing that</i> . This fused relative construction needs no separate noun before it.	Compare <i>what I need</i> with <i>the thing that I need</i> .
real conditionals	Present forms can appear in both clauses when reasoning from a real or accepted condition.	Do not automatically add <i>will</i> after every <i>if</i> .

SECTION 03

Extended vocabulary: go beyond the lyrics

This bonus language expands what you can say about the narrative, emotion, performance and production.

devotion	noun	Deep love and loyalty to someone, often shown through consistent actions over time. <i>Her devotion to her ageing parents meant she called every single day.</i>
inseparable	adjective	So closely connected that two people are almost always together. <i>Since university, the two friends have been inseparable.</i>
flock	noun / verb	A group of birds that moves and feeds together; also, to gather in a group. <i>Starlings flock together at dusk, forming huge shifting shapes in the sky.</i>
bond	noun	A strong emotional connection between two people. <i>The years they spent travelling created an unbreakable bond.</i>
to cling to	phrasal verb	To hold onto someone or something tightly, often out of fear of losing it. <i>After the accident, he clung to his daughter's hand and wouldn't let go.</i>
loyalty	noun	The quality of staying faithful and committed to a person or cause. <i>Twenty years at the same company says a lot about her loyalty.</i>
infatuation	noun	An intense but often short-lived passion for someone. <i>Their teenage infatuation faded within a few months.</i>
longing	noun	A strong, often painful desire for someone or something that is absent. <i>He wrote letters home full of longing for his family.</i>
unconditional	adjective	Given without limits or conditions, especially when talking about love. <i>Grandparents are famous for their unconditional love.</i>
to intertwine	verb	To twist or link closely together, so that separating becomes difficult. <i>Their lives became so intertwined that friends couldn't imagine one without the other.</i>
soulmate	noun	A person who feels perfectly suited to another, especially in a romantic sense. <i>She always said she'd know her soulmate the moment she met him.</i>
attachment	noun	An emotional connection that makes it hard to let go of someone or something. <i>He developed a deep attachment to the old family house.</i>

SECTION 04

Idioms and expressive English

Use these additional expressions to discuss the song's situations and themes in natural English.

birds of a feather flock together	extension	People with similar personalities, tastes or backgrounds naturally spend time together. <i>The two lawyers became best friends within a week - birds of a feather, as they say.</i>
to fall head over heels	extension	To fall suddenly and completely in love with someone. <i>He fell head over heels for her the moment they met at the party.</i>
till death do us part	extension	A traditional promise to stay together for life, taken from wedding vows. <i>They joked that their business partnership would last till death do them part.</i>
to be joined at the hip	extension	To be extremely close to someone and rarely apart from them. <i>Since primary school, the twins have been joined at the hip.</i>
for better or worse	extension	Accepting both the good and the bad sides of a commitment. <i>For better or worse, they decided to raise the children in the countryside.</i>

Make the language yours

Complete the exercises later in the workbook to check meaning, structure and register.

SECTION 05

Pronunciation as performance

A sung voice is not a neutral accent sample. Listen for concrete features, then compare theatrical delivery with everyday speech.

The breathy 'whisper-pop' delivery	Eilish sings much of the song in a close-mic'd near-whisper, barely above speaking volume, with soft or dropped final consonants - a world away from the belted power notes of classic pop vocals. Listen for how little air she pushes through each word.
The American flap T	Words like 'little', 'pretty' and 'water' turn the middle T into a quick, soft D-like tap in casual American speech. Eilish's laid-back delivery makes this softening even more noticeable than in careful, formal speech.
California vowels: the cot-caught merger	Eilish, raised in Los Angeles, doesn't distinguish the vowel sound in words like 'caught' and 'cot' - both come out with the same open back vowel, a hallmark of West Coast American English.
Legato linking, not staccato biting	Rather than punching each consonant, she glides from one syllable straight into the next so phrases blur into a single melodic line. Train your ear to hear words as chains of sound, not separate blocks.

Three-pass shadowing

1. Tap only the stressed beats.
2. Reproduce the phrase slowly and clearly.
3. Contrast a natural spoken version with the musical performance.

SECTION 06

Context and creative choices

Discover the cultural and creative decisions that shaped the song, then listen again with this context in mind.

"Birds of a Feather" arrived on 17 May 2024 as part of Billie Eilish's third studio album, *Hit Me Hard and Soft*, released through Darkroom and Interscope Records. Unlike most modern pop rollouts, Eilish and her brother and co-writer Finneas O'Connell released the whole record with no advance singles, so listeners discovered the song the same day as the rest of the album. It became *Hit Me Hard and Soft*'s second official single when it went to US radio on 2 July 2024.

The song's simplicity is part of its story. Finneas has explained that the entire chord progression rests on just four chords - D, B minor, E minor and A - in the key of D major, and that the core elements (drums, tambourine and the track's memorable synth line) came together in five to ten minutes at his home studio in Los Angeles. Reaching the finished version, however, took about eleven months of second-guessing and refining.

Commercially, it became one of the defining hits of 2024. It topped the Billboard Global 200 and reached number one in multiple countries, including Australia and New Zealand. In the US it built momentum slowly: it entered the Billboard Hot 100 at number 13 the week the album dropped, then climbed all the way to number two after the music video's release - Eilish's best Hot 100 placement since 'Therefore I Am' in 2020 - and went on to spend more than a year on the chart, overtaking 'Bad Guy' as her longest-running Hot 100 entry.

The streaming numbers were even more striking. Spotify named it the most-streamed song of 2024 worldwide, with 1.775 billion streams that year alone, edging out Sabrina Carpenter's 'Espresso' for the title. It later became the fastest track in Spotify's history to pass three billion total streams, reaching that mark in 422 days.

At the 2025 Grammy Awards, the song picked up nominations in all three top categories - Record of the Year, Song of the Year and Best Pop Solo Performance - and Eilish performed it live with Finneas that night. It did not win any of the three: Kendrick Lamar's 'Not Like Us' took both Record and Song of the Year, while Carpenter's 'Espresso' won Best Pop Solo Performance. The official music video, directed by Aidan Zamiri, shows Eilish being pulled through an abandoned office building by an invisible force - a visual echo of the song's theme of being swept along by devotion.

For English learners, 'Birds of a Feather' is a useful example of current American pop production: an understated vocal sits over a simple, hook-driven melody while the language moves between absolute devotion and uncertainty. Listen for how the restrained delivery changes the force of the darker images.

SECTION 07

Practice zone

Complete every activity without looking back, then use the answer key to correct your work independently.

A. Complete the sentences

1. I want you ____ stay. (to / for)
2. Wait here ____ six o'clock. (until / by)
3. Finish the report ____ six o'clock. (until / by)
4. I thought I ____ him, but I was wrong. (know / knew)

B. Choose the best meaning

5. Similar people: **birds of a feather / change the weather**
6. An uncertain possibility: **might / would**
7. Direct your eyes: **look at / look to**
8. The thing that I need: **what I need / that what I need**

C. Correct the error

9. I want that you stay.
10. Stay here by I return.
11. Look to the picture.
12. If it will rain, we stay home.

SECTION 08

Answer key

Check each answer and return to the Language Lab when a form or distinction is still unclear.

1. 1. to
2. 2. until
3. 3. by
4. 4. knew
5. 5. birds of a feather
6. 6. might
7. 7. look at
8. 8. what I need
9. 9. I want you to stay
10. 10. Stay here until I return
11. 11. Look at the picture
12. 12. If it rains, we stay home

Review again

Cover the answers and repeat the activities after a few days. A delayed second attempt is a better test of learning than immediate rereading.

SECTION 09

Complete 20-card library

Use this compact summary for quick revision or return to the video cue when you want to hear a point again.

Vocabulary / 3 cards

VOCABULARY / VIDEO 0:12

rot: strong physical imagery

Rot means decay gradually. Applied to a body, it creates deliberately graphic imagery and intensifies the contrast between a soft melody and extreme devotion.

VOCABULARY / VIDEO 2:04

a polluted mind: metaphor

Polluted literally describes air, water or land made dirty or harmful. Applied to a mind, it metaphorically suggests thoughts distorted by negativity or harmful ideas.

VOCABULARY / VIDEO 0:56

last forever

Last means continue for a period of time. Forever supplies an absolute duration, producing the language of idealised permanence.

Grammar / 11 cards

GRAMMAR / VIDEO 0:04

want + object + to-infinitive

Want can be followed by a person and a to-infinitive: want someone to stay. This pattern identifies who is expected or desired to perform the action.

GRAMMAR / VIDEO 0:28

It was you: a cleft-like focus

The pattern it was + focused element identifies one person or thing as especially important. It gives stronger emphasis than a neutral statement.

GRAMMAR / VIDEO 0:44

I thought I knew vs I know

The simple past can mark an earlier belief that is now questioned. Contrasting it with the present creates uncertainty about whether the speaker truly understands the other person.

GRAMMAR / VIDEO 0:48

might not be: cautious uncertainty

Might presents a possibility with limited confidence. Adding not makes the negative possibility explicit without treating it as certain.

GRAMMAR / VIDEO 1:08

till the day that...: a time boundary

Till introduces the end point of an action or state. The relative clause defines the particular day and creates a solemn long-term promise.

GRAMMAR / VIDEO 1:40

How you look to me

Look + adjective describes appearance, while look to someone can describe appearance from that person's perspective. This is different from look at someone.

GRAMMAR / VIDEO 1:44

wouldn't believe: imagined reaction

Would can describe an imagined reaction rather than a past habit. The negative contraction suggests that the information would seem surprising or difficult to accept.

GRAMMAR / VIDEO 2:16

what I'm crying for

What can introduce a fused relative construction meaning the thing that. Cry for may mean request emotionally or identify the cause behind tears, depending on context.

GRAMMAR / VIDEO 2:32

should: expectation, not only advice

Should can express advice, duty or an expected state of affairs. Context determines whether it means ought to or is likely to.

GRAMMAR / VIDEO 2:44

If it is forever, it is...

This real conditional uses present forms in both clauses to reason from an assumed condition. It presents the conclusion as logically connected to the premise.

GRAMMAR / VIDEO 2:52

another life: hypothetical identity

Another life imagines an alternative existence. The phrase often appears in speculative or romantic language without committing to a literal belief in reincarnation.

Idioms / 5 cards

IDIOM / VIDEO 0:08

in the grave

The grave is literally a burial place. References to being in the grave are also conventional ways of talking about death and permanent commitment.

IDIOM / VIDEO 0:36

birds of a feather

Birds of a feather describes people with similar personalities, interests or behaviour. The longer proverb adds that similar people tend to associate with each other.

IDIOM / VIDEO 1:48

keep the compliments

Telling someone to keep something can mean they should not give or say it. With compliments, the phrase rejects praise rather than asking the listener to store it.

IDIOM / VIDEO 2:40

change the weather

Nobody can literally control the weather, so the image represents accepting forces outside personal control. It is a metaphorical statement, not a fixed everyday idiom.

IDIOM / VIDEO 3:00

look someone in the eyes

Look someone in the eyes means make direct eye contact, often when honesty or emotional courage matters. English uses in, not to, in this expression.

Culture / 1 cards

CULTURE / VIDEO 3:18

The soft ending does not soften the imagery

The gentle final sound keeps contrasting with the song's extreme promises and dark images. Musical mood and literal language can point in different emotional directions.

Keep learning

[Return to the synced learning experience.](#)