

LEARN ENGLISH WITH MUSIC

Should I Stay or Should I Go

The Clash

COMPLETE LEARNING WORKBOOK

Go beyond the song

Advice, conditions and bilingual punk directness.

15 verified learning cards / Level B1 / 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 15-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.

Lyrics on video

[Open the lyric video used for this lesson](#)

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

SECTION 01

Map the song

Use the repeated dilemma to compare obligation, expectation and real choices.

STAGE	LEARNING LENS
Opening	Identify the speaker, situation and first useful pattern.
Development	Track the main contrast, image or relationship problem.
Hook	Notice how repetition changes emphasis and memory.
Late return	Retrieve earlier language under new vocal or narrative pressure.

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
should, must and have got to	Should advises; must and have got to express stronger necessity. Have got to is especially conversational.	Choose strength according to whether the speaker recommends or requires.
let, allow and make	Let + object + base verb; allow + object + to-infinitive; make + object + base verb.	Let me leave. Allow me to leave. Do not make me leave.
supposed to	Be supposed to can describe expectation, duty, intended design or reported belief.	The surrounding question reveals which meaning is active.
set free, release and let go	Set someone free is vivid; release is neutral/formal; let go may be physical or emotional.	Pronouns go between let and go: let me go.

SECTION 03

Extended vocabulary: go beyond the lyrics

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

indecisive	adjective	Unable to make a decision quickly or confidently. <i>He's so indecisive that choosing a restaurant takes twenty minutes.</i>
to make up your mind	expression	To finally reach a decision after a period of hesitation. <i>You've been staring at both jackets for an hour - make up your mind!</i>
ultimatum	noun	A final demand or statement of terms, often with a threat attached if it's rejected. <i>Her landlord gave her an ultimatum: pay by Friday or move out.</i>
restless	adjective	Unable to stay still or relaxed, full of nervous or impatient energy. <i>The dog got restless the moment it heard the thunder outside.</i>
to bicker	verb	To argue repeatedly about small, unimportant things. <i>The siblings bickered over the remote control the entire car ride.</i>
torn	adjective	Unable to choose because you feel pulled strongly in two opposite directions. <i>She was torn between taking the safe job and chasing her dream.</i>
to linger	verb	To stay in a place longer than necessary, often out of reluctance to leave. <i>We lingered at the door, neither of us wanting to say goodbye.</i>
on-again, off-again	adjective phrase	Describing a relationship or arrangement that repeatedly starts, ends, and starts again. <i>Their on-again, off-again romance confused everyone at the office.</i>
to walk out on someone	phrasal verb	To leave someone suddenly and often permanently, especially ending a relationship. <i>He walked out on the band right before their biggest tour.</i>
trouble	noun	Difficulty, conflict, or problems, often caused by tension between people. <i>There's trouble brewing between the two co-founders over money.</i>
double-edged	adjective	Having two contradictory effects or interpretations at the same time. <i>Fame is double-edged - it brings money but also loses you your privacy.</i>
to snap	verb	To suddenly lose patience and react sharply after a long build-up of tension. <i>After months of biting his tongue, he finally snapped at the meeting.</i>

SECTION 04

Idioms and expressive English

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

to blow hot and cold	extension	To keep changing your feelings or attitude towards someone or something, one moment enthusiastic and the next indifferent. <i>He's been blowing hot and cold about the move - one day excited, the next dreading it.</i>
to be in two minds	extension	A British expression for being unable to decide between two options. <i>I'm in two minds about accepting the transfer to the Berlin office.</i>
to jump ship	extension	To leave a situation, project or relationship suddenly, especially when it starts to look difficult. <i>Half the sales team jumped ship as soon as the rumours of layoffs started.</i>
to have the last word	extension	To make the final comment or decision in an argument or disagreement. <i>In their house, Grandma always had the last word on Sunday dinner.</i>
if it's not one thing, it's another	extension	Said when problems or difficulties keep happening, one after the other, without a break. <i>First the car broke down, now the boiler - if it's not one thing, it's another.</i>
to be at each other's throats	extension	To argue fiercely and constantly with someone. <i>By the third hour of the road trip, the two brothers were at each other's throats.</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.

Cockney-flavoured glottal stops	Mick Jones and Joe Strummer both came up through London's punk scene, and their delivery carries the working-class London habit of swallowing a mid-word or final -t into a clipped glottal stop instead of pronouncing it fully - a trait you'll hear across Combat Rock, not just here.
Punk's percussive final consonants	Rather than a smooth pop legato, the vocal attacks final -k and -t sounds hard and cuts them off abruptly. It's a shouted, almost spat delivery that matches the song's nervous, argumentative energy.
Non-rhotic R, even at speed	Despite the brisk, driving tempo, British R-dropping still survives: r sounds at the end of a syllable soften into the vowel rather than being pronounced - a useful contrast with the harder American R you'd hear in a US garage-rock band covering the same riff.
The famous mock-Spanish bridge	The middle-eight backing vocals abandon English pronunciation altogether: Strummer and a guest singer perform a phonetically approximated Latin American Spanish translation of the chorus, learned by ear over the phone rather than from any formal training - a rare case where the 'accent' itself becomes the song's signature hook.

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.

Should I Stay or Should I Go comes from *Combat Rock*, The Clash's fifth studio album, released on 14 May 1982 through CBS Records. In the band's usual songwriting practice, the track is credited jointly to the group, though guitarist and co-vocalist Mick Jones is widely understood to be its principal author. Its lyrics have long been linked to Jones's on-off relationship with the American singer Ellen Foley, a reading Jones himself has downplayed, insisting in a 1991 interview that the song 'wasn't about anybody specific' and was simply the band's own attempt at writing a classic rock song.

The recording carries one of the band's most-told studio stories. Joe Strummer decided, on the spur of the moment, to sing the backing vocals in Spanish rather than English. Nobody in the room spoke the language fluently, so the tape operator, Eddie Garcia, phoned his mother in Brooklyn Heights and had her translate the lyrics over the phone - since the Garcia family was Ecuadorian, the Spanish that ended up on the record reflects that particular accent. Strummer was joined on those backing vocals by the visiting Texan singer Joe Ely, and a shouted 'Split!' audible partway through the track came from Jones being startled when Strummer and Ely crept up behind his vocal booth mid-take.

Released that September as a double A-side single with *Straight to Hell*, the song had a modest first run: it peaked at number 17 on the UK Singles Chart and number 45 on the US Billboard Hot 100, well behind the album itself, which reached number 2 in the UK and number 7 in the US.

Its real chart triumph came almost a decade later. After Mick Jones agreed to let Levi's use the track in a 1991 jeans commercial, CBS reissued the single, and it climbed to number one on the UK Singles Chart in March 1991 - five years after the band itself had split up, and the only UK number one The Clash ever had.

The song's afterlife has kept building since. It was ranked number 228 on Rolling Stone's 2004 list of the '500 Greatest Songs of All Time,' and in 2016 it found a new generation of fans when it played a pivotal emotional role in a widely discussed scene of the Netflix series *Stranger Things*. Between the punk snarl of the verses and that unmistakable multilingual chorus, it remains one of the most instantly recognisable rock singles to come out of Britain.

SECTION 07

Practice zone

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

A. Extended vocabulary in context

1. Choose the best term for this meaning: *Unable to make a decision quickly or confidently.*
indecisive / to make up your mind
2. Choose the best term for this meaning: *To finally reach a decision after a period of hesitation.*
to make up your mind / ultimatum
3. Choose the best term for this meaning: *A final demand or statement of terms, often with a threat attached if it's rejected.*
ultimatum / restless
4. Choose the best term for this meaning: *Unable to stay still or relaxed, full of nervous or impatient energy.*
restless / to bicker
5. Choose the best term for this meaning: *To argue repeatedly about small, unimportant things.*
to bicker / torn
6. Choose the best term for this meaning: *Unable to choose because you feel pulled strongly in two opposite directions.*
torn / indecisive

B. Retrieve the expression

7. Which expression matches this meaning: *To keep changing your feelings or attitude towards someone or something, one moment enthusiastic and the next indifferent.?*
8. Which expression matches this meaning: *A British expression for being unable to decide between two options.?*
9. Which expression matches this meaning: *To leave a situation, project or relationship suddenly, especially when it starts to look difficult.?*
10. Which expression matches this meaning: *To make the final comment or decision in an argument or disagreement.?*

C. Accuracy check

11. Correct the form: **I listened the song carefully.**
12. Choose the careful form: **The contrast lead to a new meaning / leads to a new meaning.**

SECTION 08

Answer key

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

1. indecisive
2. to make up your mind
3. ultimatum
4. restless
5. to bicker
6. torn
7. to blow hot and cold
8. to be in two minds
9. to jump ship
10. to have the last word
11. I listened to the song carefully
12. The contrast leads to a new meaning

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 15-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 0:48

till the end of time

Till and until mark an end point. The exaggerated phrase means forever and belongs to dramatic romantic language.

VOCABULARY / VIDEO 1:00

tease

Tease can mean playfully provoke or repeatedly frustrate someone. Tone and relationship decide whether it is affectionate or cruel.

VOCABULARY / VIDEO 1:18

indecision

Indecision is inability to choose. The suffix -ion turns the adjective indecisive into a noun.

Grammar / 5 cards

GRAMMAR / VIDEO 0:18

should I...? asking for advice

Should + subject + base verb forms a question about the best action. It asks for judgment, not factual prediction.

GRAMMAR / VIDEO 0:27

you have got to let me know

Have got to expresses strong necessity. Let + object + base verb gives let me know, not let me to know.

GRAMMAR / VIDEO 0:36

if you say that you are mine

A present form in the if-clause can set a real condition. Mine is a possessive pronoun standing without a noun.

GRAMMAR / VIDEO 1:30

if you do not want me, set me free

The imperative set me free gives the requested result of a real condition. Set remains unchanged in past and participle forms.

GRAMMAR / VIDEO 2:30

if I go / if I stay

Parallel if-clauses balance the two options. Repeating the same structure highlights that both choices have consequences.

Idioms / 3 cards

IDIOM / VIDEO 1:09

on my knees

Being on your knees can be literal or can signal pleading, defeat or desperation.

IDIOM / VIDEO 1:42

who am I supposed to be?

Be supposed to can express expectation or intended identity. The question challenges inconsistent demands.

IDIOM / VIDEO 2:18

double trouble

Double trouble means two problems together or a problem intensified. The rhyme makes the warning playful and memorable.

Culture / 2 cards

CULTURE / VIDEO 1:54

Spanish response lines

The Spanish backing lines translate or echo the English dilemma, adding call-and-response and a bilingual layer to punk performance.

CULTURE / VIDEO 2:57

late call-and-response

The final exchanges turn private indecision into a crowd-ready chant, a hallmark of the song's punk directness.

Pronunciation / 2 cards

PHONETICS / VIDEO 2:06

should I: consonant and vowel link

The final /d/ of should links into I. In rapid singing the two words form one smooth rhythmic unit.

PHONETICS / VIDEO 2:42

gonna: spoken reduction

Gonna represents going to before a verb in informal speech. It is common in lyrics but not suitable for formal writing.

Keep learning

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