

Say That You Don't Know Something

In this lesson, we're going to look at some different ways in which you can say 'I don't know'. So we'll give you 10 ways to say I don't know in English.

Of course, you can just shrug your shoulders and that often works.

But there are times when you need to use more words and phrases. And perhaps you can't shrug your shoulders when you're talking to your boss.

The first one you can say is:

I Have No Idea

Examples:

I have no idea where your order is. I need to go and check.

I have absolutely no idea what you're talking about!

I have no idea where you left your wallet.

The second option we have for you is:

I Haven't the Foggiest (British English)

Meaning you don't know, you can't see the solution in front of you.

It's an unusual word and there are many of you out there that have never heard of the word 'foggiest'. But we are sure you heard of the word 'fog'. In October and November, we get warm days and cold nights and when you wake up in the morning, you've got some fog that you can't really see through. So this is what we mean when you haven't the foggiest.

Examples:

I haven't the foggiest what to do for my husband's 30s. He doesn't want a party.

Emma's got skis and not the foggiest what to do with them!

To be honest with you, I haven't really got the foggiest of what to do next.

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10 WAYS TO SAY I DON'T KNOW

I have no idea
I have no idea where your wallet is.

I haven't the foggiest
To be honest, I haven't really got the foggiest what to do next.
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I haven't a clue/I'm clueless
I haven't a clue what to give my mother for her birthday.
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It beats me
It beats me how she got this promotion.
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Your guess is as good as mine
He told me 2 o'clock, but your guess is as good as mine.
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Who knows?/How would I know?
A: Is the market open in the morning?
B: How would I know?
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The third choice is connected with the word clue. And we can use this in different ways. We can say:

I Have No Clue/ I Haven't a Clue Or I'm Clueless

They really all mean the same thing.

Examples:

I have no clue what to do with this order, we somehow need to sort out this mess.

I'm absolutely clueless about what to give my mother for Christmas.

I haven't a clue where your keys are.

And the next one we have for you is:

Your Guess is as Good as Mine

We will use it in a more informal way.

Example:

- Daniel is really struggling with math. We don't seem to be able to help him.*
- Oh, your guess is as good as mine. What can we do? We've tried everything.*

The next expression we use is:

It Beats Me

Meaning I am really struggling to find an answer to it.

Examples:

It really beats me how she got this promotion.

It beats me how this program works.

Number six on the list is:

Don't Ask Me

This is informal and quite funny way to say 'I don't know'.

Example:

Don't ask me, I haven't seen Jack since March.

Number seven on the list is:

I'm Not Sure

This is the best answer to give in a situation when you have some idea but not 100% sure.

Example:

-What do you think of Mark's report?

-Well, I'm not sure, I don't know whether that what's the boss wants to see.

Number eight is:

That's A Good Question

This is a perfect way to say 'I don't know' when you don't want to say that you really don't know the answer. If you ever see politicians interviewed, this is the answer they use when they're stuck.

Example:

- When will the hospital be finished?

-That's a good question.

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Ways to say I don't know

- **I have no idea**
I have absolutely no idea what's going on.
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- **It beats me**
It beats me how this programme works.
- **Who knows?**
Since she hasn't studied at all I don't think she'll pass the test, but who knows?
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- **I haven't the foggiest (idea)**
I haven't the foggiest idea where Sarah lives. We haven't been in touch for many years.
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- **Your guess is as good as mine**
*- Where is Jim?
- Your guess is as good as mine. He didn't say anything to me.*
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- **I have no clue / I'm clueless**
I'm sorry, I have no clue where the supermarket is.



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Number nine is very formal:

I'll Look into It and Get Back to You

We use this expression when we really don't want the other person to know that we have no clue what they're talking about.

Example:

-What is the sales figure for the month?

-I'll look into it and get back to you.

And the last one, number ten is:

Who Knows / How Would I Know

This slightly rhetorical way to say 'I don't know' in English.

Example:

Since she hasn't studied at all I don't think she'll pass the test, but who knows?

Who knows? They never tell me anything. They were here earlier. How would I know?

So these are all the ways to say I don't know:

- I have no idea.
- I haven't the foggiest.
- I haven't a clue/I'm clueless/I have no clue.
- Your guess is as good as mine.
- It beats me.
- Don't ask me.
- I'm not sure.
- That's a good question.
- I'll look into it and get back to you.
- Who knows? How would I know?

Reference:

Britannia English Academy (2025). Understanding the Art of Expressing Surprise and Disbelief. Retrieved from: <https://britannia-school.com/expressing-surprise-and-disbelief>