



WORDS AND THEIR STORIES

'All Thumbs'

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And now, *Words and Their Stories* from VOA Learning English.

On this show we explore words and expressions a little more deeply. We give you synonyms – words that mean close to the same thing. And we use the expressions in a conversation.

Today we talk about our hands – more specifically our thumbs.

Most of us have one thumb and four fingers on each hand. Our thumbs let us perform certain tasks. But what if all our fingers were replaced with thumbs? Those tasks we normally perform with ease would become much more difficult.

In fact, we would lose the ability to do many things with our hands. Our movements would become careless and **clumsy**. We would drop things all the time.

And that is what the saying to be all thumbs means. If I am all thumbs, I lack grace with my hands. I am **klutzy**. So, people might call me a klutz.

They might also call me butterfingers. Imagine your fingers are coated in butter. They would be very **slippery**. And it would hard to pick things up.

Now, let's hear the expression “to be all thumbs” in a conversation between two friends.

A: Hey, I'm planning a surprise party for Nicholas. I'm bringing the food and ice. And Cassidy is bringing the drinks – about 50 bottles of wine and lemonade. Can you bring the cake?

B: I have a better idea. I'll pick up the drinks. Why don't you ask Cassidy to bring the cake?

A: *Why?*

B: *Cassidy is all thumbs. She'll end up dropping everything and then we won't have drinks at the party.*

A: *Good call. She is pretty clumsy. Actually, at the last party she dropped the cake. On second thought ... I'll have her bring the ice. If she drops the bags of ice, it'll only help break it up.*

B: *Very smart.*

And that's all the time we have for this *Words and Their Stories*. Until next time ... I'm Anna Matteo.

Anna Matteo wrote this story for VOA Learning English.

Words in This Story

clumsy – *adj.* lacking skill or grace in movement

klutzy – *adj.* to be careless in movement : **klutz** – *n.* a clumsy person

slippery – *adj.* causing or tending to cause something to slide or fall

We want to hear from you. Do you have a similar expression in your language? In the Comments section, you can also practice using any of the expressions from the story.

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