Grow Your Vocab
by English Digital Academy

## Understanding and Using the Verb "To Downplay"

Click here to review the lesson

**Definition of "To Downplay"**
The core definition of "to downplay" is to make something seem less important, serious, or impressive than it actually is.

**Motivations for Downplaying:**
The lesson identifies several reasons why people might downplay things:

- **Humility:** To stay modest and avoid appearing boastful, as seen in example 1 ("Sometimes we downplay our success to stay modest.").

- **Avoiding Drama:** To prevent unnecessary attention or conflict by minimising issues.

- **Steering Attention Elsewhere:** To direct focus away from something that might be uncomfortable or undesirable.

- **Hiding Emotions:** To conceal true feelings by making them seem less intense.

**Examples and Contexts of "To Downplay":**
The lesson provides five distinct examples to show the versatility of the verb:

**Downplaying Achievements:** Individuals may minimise their successes to avoid bragging, like Louisa in the example who "kept telling everyone she'd done it just for fun" after winning a marathon.

**Downplaying Trouble:** Someone might minimise the severity of a problem, as in the example where a person describes a collapsed ceiling as "just a bit of water" after heavy rain, "sometimes to avoid alarming others."

**Downplaying Feelings:** This involves concealing emotions by making them appear less significant, like in the example where the subject acts as if they're not upset about a breakup but in reality they are "downplaying how much it hurt."

**Downplaying Risks:** In this case, negative aspects are minimized while positive ones are emphasized. The ad example showed that the company "downplayed the side effects of the medicine, focusing instead on how it could improve your energy."

**Downplaying Excitement:** People may attempt to hide their enthusiasm, even when it's apparent, like in the example where the subject "tried to downplay her excitement about the surprise party, but her grin gave her away."

**Key Takeaways and Implications:**

**Common Usage:** The lesson demonstrates that "to downplay" is a frequently used verb in everyday conversation and written language.

**Context Matters:** The examples highlight how the motivation and intent behind downplaying can vary significantly.

**Subtlety:** Downplaying is not always successful, for example in the example of downplaying excitement, the subject's grin gave away their true emotion.

**Practical Application:** The lesson encourages active learning and engagement by asking readers to "think of a situation where someone might downplay something" and share their examples in the comments, highlighting the practical application of vocabulary building.

📝 **Grow Your Vocab – Glossary of Terms**

Here are some key words from this week's post

**1. Look-see (noun, informal)**
💡 Meaning: A quick look or inspection.

➡️ Example: "Let's take a look-see at the menu before we order."

### 2. Shrug (verb & noun)
💡 Meaning: To raise and lower your shoulders to show that you don't know something or don't care.
➡️ Example: When I asked if he did his homework, he just shrugged and said, "Maybe."

### 3. Steer (verb)
💡 Meaning: To guide or direct something, like a vehicle—or even a conversation!
➡️ Example: She tried to steer the conversation away from politics.

### 4. Brag (verb)
💡 Meaning: To talk about your achievements in a way that sounds proud or boastful.
➡️ Example: He couldn't stop bragging about his new sports car.

### About Grow Your Vocab
These mini-lessons aim to expand your advanced English vocabulary by focusing on a single word each time. By providing a clear definition and numerous relatable examples, the lessons help learners understand the nuances of the word and how to use it appropriately in different contexts. It encourages active learning by prompting readers to use the new word in sentences of their own. The approach makes vocabulary learning practical and engaging.

### [Find these lessons and more on the blog!](#)

### Disclaimer
The content in Grow Your Vocab is created for educational purposes only and is intended to help learners expand their advanced English vocabulary in a useful and engaging way. While every effort is made to ensure accuracy, language evolves, and usage may vary depending on context, region, and formality.

English Digital Academy is not responsible for any misunderstandings or misinterpretations arising from the use of the words discussed. Always consider the tone and setting before using new vocabulary in real-life situations.

Happy learning, and use your words wisely! 😊