

How are you doing?

Youtube: <https://youtu.be/8biVkJQ94AU>

Today's vocabulary is: *How are you doing?*

I wanted to make this video because I've noticed students often get confused when I use this phrase. If I meet a student for the first time, I might say "Oh, hey, how are you doing?" And then the student will often panic and not know how to answer, and they may say something-- they may say something like "I'm talking to you" or "I'm studying English". Quite often the students are unfamiliar with the phrase "*How are you doing?*" and they think it means "*What are you doing?*" But it doesn't mean "*What are you doing?*" "*How are you doing?*" is the same as "*How are you?*" The grammar is a little bit different, but the meaning is the same, and it's used in the same situation.

Now I've discovered this problem in many different countries I have been teaching in: in Japan, in Cambodia, in Vietnam. And I believe the problem is the students, when they study English in school, they only learn: "*How are you?*" But actually, in real conversation, we have a lot of different phrases which have the same meaning, and in fact "*How are you?*" is not used so often in natural conversation. It sounds a little bit stiff, a little bit formal. People will often use more conversational expressions, for example:

"How are you doing?"

"How's it going?"

"How have you been?" and

"What's up?"

There are others, of course, but these are some of the more common ones you will hear instead of "*How are you?*" They all have the same meaning and the answer to all of these can be the same. You can just say, "*I'm fine*".

Now, if you want to get technical, the grammar could be a little bit different. For example:

"How are you doing?" "I'm doing fine."

"How's it going?" "It's going fine."

"How have you been?" "I've been fine."

"What's up?" ...I don't know. "*I'm fine.*" "*What's up?*" is a strange one.

But the answer is usually just, "*I'm fine*". So technically the grammar could be different, but in real conversation this is one of those cases where nobody cares too much about the grammar. In this case. So the answer to all of these could just be: "*I'm fine*".

"How are you doing?" "I'm fine."

"How's it going?" "I'm fine."

"How have you been?" "I'm fine."

It's okay.

It's also useful to remember that in English, this is just used as a greeting. It's most often used as a greeting. So the person asking you is usually not really concerned with how you're really feeling. They just want to say hello. So the appropriate answer is usually "*I'm fine*". Even if you're not fine, it's probably best just to say "*I'm fine*". Unless this is a real close friend who really cares about your feelings.

I've noticed that often students will give honest answers to this question, for example:
"How are you doing?" "Oh I'm sad because my grandfather died."

Now I've been teaching English for a long time, so if a student says this to me I don't get annoyed, I don't get upset. I understand that the student has misunderstood the question. But it is useful to remember if you're going to an English speaking country, or if you have a lot of English speaking friends, that most commonly, this is just used as a way to say hello, and the person asking you just expects you to say "*I'm fine*". And then the conversation can move on after that. If you have any problems you want to talk about, those usually will come up later in the conversation.

So, to sum up, if somebody says to you, "*How are you doing?*", don't panic. It means the same as "*How are you?*"