Do & make[1]

The general-purpose verb *do* has several uses, and can sometimes be confused with *make*.

Do for indefinite activities

We use *do* when we do not say exactly what activity we are talking about-for example with words like *thing, something, nothing, anything, everything, what.*

Do for work

We use *do* when we talk about work and jobs.

- *I'm not going to do any work today.*
- *It's time to do the accounts.*
- *Could you do the shopping for me?*
- *I wouldn't like to do your job.*
- *Has Ben done his homework?*
- *Could you do the ironing first, and then do the windows if you've got the time?*

Make for constructing, creating, etc.

We often use *make* to talk about constructing, building, creating, etc.

- *I've just made a cake.*
- *Let's make a plan.*
- *My father and I once made a boat.*

Common fixed expressions

DO	MAKE	
…good	…a journey	…war
…harm	…an offer	…the bed
…business	…arrangements	…a fire
…one's best	…a suggestion	…progress
…a favor	…a decision	…breakfast
…sport	…an attempt	…lunch
…exercise	…an effort	…dinner
…one's hair	…an excuse	
…one's teeth	…an exception	
…one's duty	…a mistake	
…50 mph	…a noise	
…the dishes	…a phone call	
…the laundry	…money	
…the shopping	…a profit	
…the housework	…a fortune	
…the washing up	…love	
…the homework	…peace	

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[1] Adapted from: Swan, M. (1995). Practical English Usage. Oxford: Oxford University Press.