

Are you in dire straits?

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A “strait” (estrecho) is something that is narrow, and usually refers to a narrow channel of water that connects to larger seas.

So mortals speak about the “straits of Dover” (el estrecho de Dover) or the “Gibraltar straits” (el estrecho de Gibraltar). An example:

- Ships have to navigate the Gibraltar straits (...tiene que navegar por el estrecho uno por uno) one at a time.

“Straits” has another (figurative) meaning. It refers to a very difficult situation. Examine these:

- The Venezuelan economy is in dire straits (...en un gran apuro).
- In Spain we find ourselves in dire economic straits (un apuro económico en que nos encontramos...) with very high rates of unemployment.

A person can be in dire straits, that is, a very difficult situation (una situación apurada). So what about you? Are you in dire straits or just chugging along? Click [here](#) to read about “chugging along”