



ENGLISH CAFÉ – 59

TOPICS

Police in the U.S., The Simpsons, It's going down, QWERTY, can't help but, stolen glance, witchcraft

GLOSSARY

to arrest – to take someone who may have committed a crime to prison, usually done by the police

* After running for three years, the bank robber was found and arrested by the Belgium police.

police force – an organized group of police officers, usually belonging to a city or a state

* The city of Los Angeles is offering high salaries to recruit people to join their police force.

officer – an official person working for an organization or for the government; a policeman or policewoman

* Excuse me, officer. This boy is lost and needs help to find his parents.

state trooper – a police officer working for one of the US states

* I heard that just outside of the city, there are a lot of state troopers trying to catch people speeding along this freeway.

squad car – police car used for driving around the area that the officers are watching and trying to keep safe

* The neighbors saw a squad car pull up outside the house where a loud party had been going on for four hours.

precinct – a police station located in a neighborhood

* The police officer advised me to go to my local precinct to file a report about my stolen car.

animated – a way to film drawings to make them look like they are moving; a movie or TV show that is made with drawings instead of real people

* Some animated movies are now making more money than movies with famous movie stars!



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satire – using humor or jokes to make fun of other people’s beliefs or actions, sometimes done to cause or to prevent change

* This comedian is famous for his political satire about the president and his policies.

D’oh! – an exclamation made famous by Homer Simpson, a character on an American animated TV show called The Simpsons to express surprise or disappointment

* D’oh! I know I’m on a diet but do you have to take away my cookies, pizza, *and* potato chips?

Don’t have a cow! – don’t overreact; don’t have such a big reaction to a small thing

* Dr. McQuillan got upset when I borrowed his toothbrush to clean the floor, but I told him, “Don’t have a cow!”

it’s going down – it is happening now; it is proceeding, often used for illegal activities

* Did you hear about the car race? It’s going down right now in the center of town!

qwerty – the standard arrangement of an English-language keyboard with the letters q, w, e, r, t, and y as the first keys on the left side on the top row

* Until they come out with a cell phone with a qwerty keyboard that’s easier to use, I don’t plan to get a new phone.

can’t help but – have no choice except to do something; cannot control oneself to do anything differently than this

* I know that June is 18-years-old, but I can’t help but worry that she’ll get into trouble traveling to Australia by herself.

stolen glance – a quick look at someone or something taken so that others will not see it

* He didn’t want anyone to know that he was in love with Kerri, so during the ceremony, he only took a few stolen glances in her direction.

witchcraft – magic

* This book is about a period in American history when people suspected of using witchcraft were put in prison or killed.



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WHAT INSIDERS KNOW

Seinfeld: “Yada, yada, yada” and “Get out!”

One of the most popular TV shows in recent years was called Seinfeld. This show was on U.S. television from 1989 to 1998, and it is still shown in most American cities in “reruns,” when a show is shown again after it’s first broadcast. This show was a “sitcom,” or situation comedy that was 30 minutes long and was shown every week. The main character in the show, Jerry Seinfeld, was a “standup comedian,” or a person whose job it is to tell jokes in front of an audience, and the show was about him and his friends. The show was so popular that many of the sayings or “catchphrases” from the show has become part of the language that people use in everyday American life.

The phrase “Yada, yada, yada” was used on the show when the speaker wanted to “skip” or pass over something they didn’t want to talk about because it is too obvious or they don’t want to say aloud, sometimes for something that was embarrassing. It means the same as “and so forth” and “blah, blah, blah.” For example, you may use it when telling your friend about something that happened to you: “I was walking out of the store when the clerk stopped me and accused me of stealing. There were a lot of people around and they were all looking at me. The clerk took me into his office and yada, yada, yada. I didn’t leave the store for an hour!”

Another phrase used on the show Seinfeld that people still use today is, “Get out!” Normally, we use this phrase to tell someone to leave a place. However, it was used on the show to express surprise when someone heard some good news. One of the characters on the show, Elaine, would give the person telling her the good news a playful but powerful “shove” or push, and then yell, “Get out!” So, if someone tells you that you’ve won a trip around the world, you might say to them, “Get out!” You don’t want them to leave. You’re just expressing your surprise.



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COMPLETE TRANSCRIPT

You're listening to English as a Second Language Podcast's English Café number 59.

This is English as a Second Language Podcast's English Café episode number 59. I'm your host, Dr. Jeff McQuillan, coming to you from the Center for Educational Development in the beautiful City of Los Angeles, California.

On Today's Café, we're going to talk about the police in the United States, how they are organized. We are also going to talk about one of the most popular television shows of the last 15 years in the U.S., "The Simpsons." And, as usual, we'll answer some questions. Let's get started.

If you visit our website at eslpod.com, you will get a list of all of our previous podcasts. We have more than 250 podcasts for you to listen to, so be sure to go to our website. You can also get, on our website, a copy of the Learning Guide for this episode, which contains all of the words that we use, sample sentences, additional explanations and a complete transcript of this episode.

Our first topic today is going to be the police. The police, "police," is a general term that we give to people who work for the government and are involved in what we would call law enforcement. To enforce, "enforce," means to make someone do something, to force someone to do something. So, when we say law enforcement, we mean that these are people who get people to follow the law, follow the legal restrictions, the legal rules of the state or of the country.

The U.S. has lots of different police structures, lots of different types of police. In some countries, the police is all part of one big organization. But in the United States, because we have a tradition of each state having some independence from the other states, there are several different levels of police officers. There are federal police, although we don't normally call them police. We would say federal law enforcement, and these would include people like the Federal Bureau of Investigation, or the FBI. The FBI is famous in the movies, if you watch American movies. These are the government police officers, sometimes called the G-men. The G, as in the letter G, men, which refers to government, the G of government. So, these are the government police officers, they're the federal government police officers. So, they are in charge of certain types of crimes that are on a national level.



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There are many other types of law enforcement officers at the national level. There are the people who guard the border, the Border Patrol they are called. The people who enforce drug laws. There's a special police force called the Drug Enforcement Agency. And these are all groups that can arrest people, and that's really what a police officers is - someone who can arrest you and put you in jail. To arrest, "arrest," means to put someone in jail, to say that they have done something wrong. I've been using this term officer, "officer." That's just a word we use to describe a man or a woman who works, usually, for a police organization.

Each state also has its own, what we would call, police force. A police force, "force," is a noun, which means the group of police officers, the group of law enforcement people. Many states have their own police force. Sometimes these are called state troopers, "troopers." A state trooper is a police officer who works for the state police force.

We also have county police officers in the United States. Every state is divided into smaller areas, smaller regions, which we call counties in most states. In Louisiana, the counties are called parishes, but in all of the other states, we call them counties. And, the county has its own police force, and if there are cities inside the county, many times the individual city will have its own police force. So, you could have a state police officer, a county police officer and a city police officer, and each of those different levels is responsible for different areas and for different things.

There even more police forces in certain areas. In California, for example, the airport has its own police force. The universities, the public universities, have their own police force. The transportation system here in Los Angeles has its own police force.

If you watch American television and movies, you will often see certain terms used in describing the police. The most common informal term is cops, "cops." A cop is a police officer. It's an informal term. There's actually a popular television show about police officers called, "Cops." Another term that you will hear is a squad car. A squad, "squad," car, "car," two words, is the car that the police officer, the regular police officers in a city or in a county drive. These are sometimes called black and whites, black and whites, because the additional color for these cars is black and white. So, a squad car is a car that the police use.



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Each police force in a city, like Los Angeles or New York City, is broken down into what are called precincts, “precincts.” That’s just a smaller part of the city that you have one police officer station or building that’s responsible for that area.

Finally, one thing that you will often hear in American movies and TV shows is something that is called the Miranda warning. The Miranda, “Miranda,” warning - Miranda was the name of a court case – and, this warning is what police officers have to give people that they arrest before they arrest them, and it is essentially telling you what your legal rights are. The standard Miranda warning is: “You have a right to remain silent,” meaning you have a right not to talk, “You have a right to remain silent. Anything you say can and will be used against you in a court of law.” So, anything that you say to the police officer like, “I’m guilty,” or “I did it,” that can be used in your trial. Your trial, “trial,” is when you go before the judge in the court.

The Miranda warning typically continues, “You have the right to speak to an attorney.” An attorney is a lawyer. So, you have a right to speak to an attorney and to “have an attorney present during any questioning.” This means that if the police are asking you questions, and you are being arrested, you can say, “I want a lawyer,” and they cannot ask you any more questions until they get you a lawyer. The warning finishes by saying, “If you cannot afford a lawyer,” if you don’t have money for a lawyer, “one will be provided for you at government expense.” In other words, if you are poor and you do not have money for your own lawyer, the government will give you a lawyer for free. Those lawyers are called public defenders, lawyers that try to help people who are arrested who don’t have money for their own lawyer. So, that’s a Miranda warning, and you’ll see it in lots of different shows and movies. “You have a right to remain silent,” is how it begins, and that’s the most famous line from the Miranda warning.

Well, our second topic has nothing to do with the police. It is the most popular or one of the most popular television programs of the last fifteen years in the United States. You may have seen it or heard of it. It’s called The Simpsons and The Simpsons is an animated series. Animated, “animated,” is the same as a cartoon. So The Simpsons is a cartoon. It’s a cartoon that many adults like to watch; both children and adults like to watch this cartoon. Some of the jokes are very simple that children can understand, and some of the jokes are more complicated, are a little higher, and those are ones that adults would enjoy.



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The Simpsons is what we would call a satire. A satire, “satire,” is when you use jokes, when you use humor to criticize something or to show the problems with something. Satire is often political. Political satire is when you use jokes or humor to criticize a politician or the government, but satire can also be, what we would say, social. Social satire would be criticizing the way people live or the way people act. And, The Simpsons is a satire on sort of a typical American family, what some people might describe as Middle America. Middle, here, means typical or average.

The Simpsons are a family that live in a town, a made-up town, a fictional town, called Springfield. Springfield is actually a very popular name for towns in the United States. At least 30 states have a city or town named Springfield. Springfield, Illinois, is perhaps the most popular and that is the capitol of the state of Illinois. So, Springfield is not a real place. It's considered a typical American town, and the whole show is about the life of this family. And it is, again, a traditional family. There's a mother and a father; there are three children. The father's name is Homer, “Homer,” which is also the name of the famous Greek poet that, we think, wrote the great poems of ancient Greece: “The Iliad” and “The Odyssey.” But, Homer is not as smart as the ancient Greek Homer. Homer is not very smart. He's a nice guy, but he's not very intelligent. He works at a nuclear power plant. A plant is, in this case, a building that makes power, generates, we would say, power by using nuclear energy, and so there are lots of jokes about his job. His wife is a typical housewife. She doesn't have a job outside the home. Normally, she works at home. Then there is the most famous character, Bart. And Bart is a ten-year-old boy who gets into lots of different types of trouble. So, if you have a chance to see The Simpsons, it's a very funny show.

There are several phrases and expressions from the show that have become popular in regular conversation. The most famous one is an expression that Homer uses. He's the father of the family. When he makes a mistake or does something stupid, he'll hit himself on his head with his hand and say, “D'oh!” We spell this either “d'oh” or just “doh.” And so, that is a famous expression now in English. A couple of other expressions that are also from this program that are popular. One - which is kind of old now, but it was popular in the 90's - was an expression that Bart used, “Don't have a cow.” “Don't have a cow, man.” The expression, don't have a cow, is an old one, and it means don't get upset, don't get excited, don't get angry. Usually you say that to somebody who is getting angry or getting excited about something more than you should. It's an informal



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expression; you would not want to say that to your boss. “Don't have a cow, man.” That may get you a new job!

Now let's answer a few questions. Our first question today comes from Atsushi, “Atsushi,” in Japan. The question...first question is the meaning of the expression, “it's going down.” What does “it's going down” mean? Normally that's an expression that you would use when you were describing or talking about something that is illegal, something that is against the law, like buying drugs, for example, illegal drugs. When that event is happening, when that something that is going to happen, you will...you could say, “It's going down,” or “It's going to go down” in the future. Here, going down means happening, but usually something that is illegal, something that is against the law - a crime.

The other expression Atsushi has a question about is a word, kind of a(n) odd word, but one that you will see now, and it is QWERTY, “QWERTY.” QWERTY is not exactly a common word. It's a word that we use now because it describes the keyboard; the letters and numbers that you use to type on your computer is called a keyboard. It describes a kind of keyboard, in English, that is a complete keyboard. On many small cell phones, you don't have a complete keyboard. You have only a certain number of buttons, and each button, or each key, has two or three letters and you have to press them until you get the right letter. A QWERTY keyboard is a complete keyboard.

One of the more popular types of personal phones that people have is called a Blackberry. And, a Blackberry is a company that makes a little phone that you can send and receive email on, and the phone has a complete keyboard on the bottom. And, it's called a QWERTY keyboard because the keyboard in English, the first five...or sorry, the first six letters are Q W E R T Y for the top row on the left hand side. It's a word that describes a complete keyboard that you would find, for example, on a small phone, like a Blackberry phone.

Our next question comes from Alexandre, “Alexandre,” in France. The question is about the expression “can't help but.” For example, if someone says, “I can't help but laugh when I see The Simpsons,” when I watch The Simpsons. “I can't help but” means it is impossible for me not to do something. I have to do it. I cannot stop myself from doing it. Usually we use this expression when you don't want to do something, or perhaps you shouldn't do something, but you do it anyway because it is impossible for you to stop. It is impossible for you to resist.



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You see somebody fall on the street. You may say, “I couldn't help but laugh when he fell.” So, that would be a use of that particular expression.

Our final question comes from Jihai, “Jihai.” I'm not sure if I'm pronouncing that correctly, I apologize, from Japan. And the question - two questions really - one has to do with the expression “a stolen glance.” A stolen, “stolen,” glance, “glance,” two words. A glance is when you look at something very quickly. Stolen comes from the verb to steal, which means to take something from someone that doesn't belong to you. To steal someone else's thing is to take it from them. The expression, “a stolen glance,” means that you look at something quickly, but you are probably not supposed to look at it, or you don't have permission to look at it. It's very similar to the verb to peek, “peek.” To peek means to look at something quickly; stolen glance is a similar expression.

Our last term is witchcraft, “witchcraft.” Witchcraft, all one word, has to do with magic. A witch is a woman who performs magic. If you think of the movie, “Harry Potter,” there are witches in the movie. And witchcraft is just another word for magic, the kind of magic that a witch would do.

Well, we hope that we have done some magic for you today. If you have a question about an expression, you can email us at eslpod@eslpod.com, and we'll try to answer it.

From Los Angeles, California, I'm Jeff McQuillan. Thanks for listening. We'll see you next time on the English Café.

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