



Episode 11: New Year's Traditions

Hi! If this is your first time listening to our podcast, this is an opportunity for upper level English learners to practice listening skills and learn new vocabulary by listening to authentic conversations. For more information about ways to use this podcast, download notes for [students](#) or [teachers](#).

In today's episode Donielle and Khrystyna discuss activities and traditions for the New Year, including ringing in the new year and making new year's resolutions.

Here are a few words and phrases about the topic that you may find useful:

New Year's Eve	December 31 – <u>eve</u> means “evening” but refers generally to the day before the main holiday. It is also used for Christmas Eve (December 24)
ring in the new year	have celebrations to welcome in the new year (e.g. We're ringing in the new year with a big party with all our friends.)
bubbly	informal way to refer to champagne (e.g. We need to buy some bubbly for the party.)
toast/make a toast	raise your glass (of champagne in the case of New Year's Eve), and inviting others to do so as well, and take a drink in honor of a person or an event. On New Year's Eve, people traditionally make a toast to the new year at midnight as a wish for a happy and prosperous new year. <i>Ex.</i> "Here's to a happy and healthy new year surrounded by friends." (Note that toasts generally begin with: <i>here's to...</i>)
Auld Lang Syne	Pronounced “old lang zyne.” Famous song that is often played <u>at the stroke of midnight</u> * to say farewell to the old year. It is written in a Scottish dialect, so most English speakers have trouble understanding some of the words. The theme of the song is generally about remembering old times and reconnecting with old friends.
new year's resolution	from the verb <u>resolve</u> with the meaning: <i>to make a definite and serious decision to do something</i> , it's kind of a promise to yourself to do something different in the new year
make a fresh start	Said when there is an opportunity to do something again in a new and completely different way, especially if you have not been successful before. A new year is often a good time to make a fresh start.

See the following pages for vocabulary and language focus from this episode.



Vocabulary: Words and Phrases Used in the Conversation

off the wall	unusual or strange, but in an amusing or interesting way <ul style="list-style-type: none"> When she's tired, she gets a little <u>off the wall</u>
slap happy	in a humorous mood as a result of fatigue; silly from being tired. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> When she gets really tired, she gets a bit <u>slap happy</u>.
stay up	continue to be awake past the time when one usually goes to bed <ul style="list-style-type: none"> I usually go to bed around 10 p.m., but I always <u>stay up</u> on New Year's Eve.
rigid	not easily changed; strict <ul style="list-style-type: none"> There aren't many <u>rigid</u> traditions for this holiday.
prosperity	the state of being successful usually by making a lot of money <ul style="list-style-type: none"> a new year's wish for luck and <u>prosperity</u>
[something] will do	[something] is enough or is appropriate for a particular purpose <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Does that mean that any kind of pork <u>will do</u>? (<i>for the New Year's pork/cabbage tradition</i>)
braise	cook (food) slowly in fat and a small amount of liquid in a covered pot
bonfire	a large outdoor fire that is made for a specific purpose, such as for a celebration
strike (of a clock)	the time is on a specific hour; e.g. when the clock strikes 12 (it's exactly 12:00) *Related expression: <i>at the stroke of midnight</i>
polka dot	one of a number of large round dots repeated to form a regular pattern on fabric (e.g. a polka dot shirt) <i>Note: the L is silent (PO-ka dot)</i>
bonk*	(US informal) to hit (someone or something) * <i>Note: do not use in British English</i> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> They <u>bonk</u> them on the head with an onion.
broke (adj.)	(informal) having no money <ul style="list-style-type: none"> If you get the completely peeled potato, it means you'll be <u>broke</u> all year.
sprouts	very young plants that come from bean seeds and that are used as a vegetable <ul style="list-style-type: none"> They cook the wheat <u>sprouts</u> for about 24 hours until it becomes a thick, sweet substance
take turns	do something one after another in regular succession in order to share the responsibility or opportunity of doing it <ul style="list-style-type: none"> All the neighbors get together and <u>take turns</u> stirring the pot
get in shape	take steps to get into good physical condition (eat healthy food, exercise, etc.) <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Many people make new year's resolutions to <u>get in shape</u>.
knit/crochet	hand make clothing from yarn (knitting uses 2 needles/crocheting uses one, so it's a bit easier. (Note: crochet is pronounced: <i>cro-SHAY</i>)
sew	to make or repair something (such as a piece of clothing) by using a needle and thread (Note: sew is pronounced like the word <i>SO</i>)

Vocabulary: Words and Phrases Used in the Conversation

TMI	Slang/abbreviation: too much information – Used to say that there is an overload of details – more than what the listener wants to hear or is needed for the story. Or it's unpleasant information or inappropriate disclosure of personal information, etc. (e.g. I know this is TMI, but...)
set [oneself] up [for something]	To put oneself in a situation so a particular outcome is likely guaranteed. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> I don't want to <u>set myself up</u> for failure.
on [one's] own	unaccompanied by others; alone or unaided. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> I'll have to do this <u>on my own</u>.
cooped up	kept inside a building or in a small space especially for a long period of time <ul style="list-style-type: none"> We were so restless after being <u>cooped up</u> in the house during Covid.
glance (V.) glance (N.)	look at something very quickly (e.g. I <u>glanced</u> at the list.) (e.g. At first <u>glance</u> , it looks difficult, but it's really not.)
plug (an event or product, etc.)	advertise a product, event, etc. by talking about it or praising it, especially in a public way, such as on radio or television. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> I'm going to go ahead and <u>plug</u> a book now because I think it's really good.

Links to resources discussed in this episode:

[Popular New Year's Resolutions](#)

Get extra reading and vocabulary practice with this blog post. You may also like to use it as a discussion starter about new year's resolutions.

[Atomic Habits by James Clear](#)

This is the book Donielle mentioned toward the end of the episode. It has a lot of great tips for making new habits and getting them to stick! The vocabulary and language used in the book is not overly complicated, so it's a great choice if you want to get more practice with reading English.

Teachers: for related resources about forming new habits, you may like this [ESL Lesson](#) based on the TED Talk, *The 1-Minute Secret to Forming a New Habit*.

Phrasal Verbs and Related Word Forms

In this episode, we discussed the New Year's Eve tradition of watching the countdown on TV. The noun *countdown* is actually derived from the phrasal verb: *to count down* (10, 9, 8, 7, etc.) Quite often, a noun form is created from the phrasal verb, and that is what happens here.

Phrasal verb: to count down
Noun: countdown

You may notice that when the noun form is created, the two words from the phrasal verb are combined into one. This is a common pattern with nouns that are created from phrasal verbs.

Another phrasal verb that was discussed in the conversation was **to set up**. This phrasal verb can also have the meaning: *to get ready or prepare for use*. This is another phrasal verb that also has a noun counterpart. See the following examples.

I need to set up my new computer. (V.)

The setup for the computer is quite easy; it should only take a few minutes. (N.)

There are quite a few other phrasal verb/noun pairs that work in a similar manner. Some examples:

I need to work out more often. I got a good workout today.

The teacher will hand out the tests. She gave us a handout to study for the test.

He didn't want to let down his fans. The much-anticipated movie was a big letdown.

Join the Conversation

- How do you generally ring in the new year? Do you get together with friends and family? Do you go out somewhere special?
- Are there any specific New Year's Eve or New Year's Day traditions that you follow? Are there any traditional foods that you eat during this time?
- Do you ever make new year's resolutions? If so, what kinds of resolutions do you tend to make and are they usually successful? Why do you think resolutions are hard to keep? Take a look at [this list of resolution ideas](#), or just search for common new year's resolutions. Are there any you would like to make? What can you do to make them succeed?
- As we approach a new year, sometimes we reflect on the past year. For example, we think about happy memories, accomplishments, people we've met, experiences we've had, etc. What thoughts do you have about the past year?
- Getting a fresh start with the new year often means trying something new. Another popular activity is to give yourself a challenge to practice a new activity for 30 days. This can often seem more realistic than trying to come up with a broad goal for the whole year. You can watch a [TED Talk](#) about how this works, and then get [more inspiration](#) for a challenge you might like to try. Discuss a couple activities you think you might like to try if you decided to take on this challenge.

Thanks for checking out our podcast!

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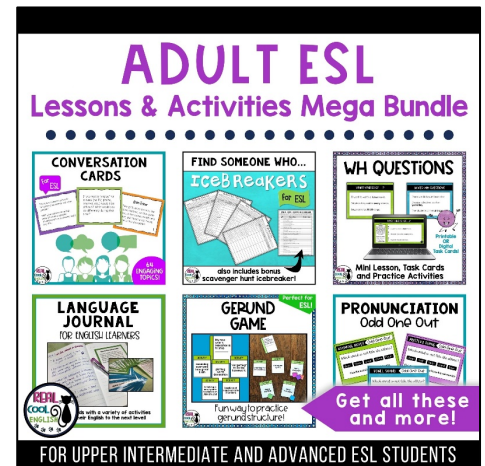
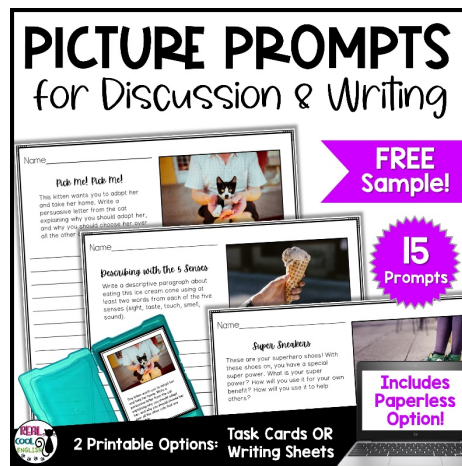
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