



## Episode 6: Weird and Wonderful USA

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 some of the funny observations non-Americans have made about life in the United States. Just like anywhere else, the U.S. has its peculiarities, and it's fun to discuss what others find a bit strange about the way we do things here! We believe that each country's uniqueness and quirks are what make it special and wonderful. So today we are talking about what makes our country weird and wonderful!

<b>words to describe something unusual or out of the ordinary</b>	<p><b>often negative connotation:</b> bizarre, outlandish, freaky/freakish, kooky, nutty, flaky, odd, peculiar</p> <p><b>neutral or positive connotation:</b> remarkable, extraordinary, offbeat, curious, quirky, quaint, eccentric, unconventional</p> <p><b>can be negative or positive depending on context:</b> weird, funky</p>
<b>quirky (Adj.)</b>  <b>quirk (N.)</b>	<p>unusual, especially in an interesting or appealing way</p> <p>an unusual habit or way of behaving</p>
<b>weirdo</b>	<p>a strange or unusual person (mostly negative, but often can be used affectionately or humorously, especially when talking about oneself)</p>
<b>articles referenced in the conversation</b>	<p><a href="https://bestlifeonline.com/weird-american-culture/">https://bestlifeonline.com/weird-american-culture/</a>  <a href="https://www.german-way.com/weird-in-the-usa-things-that-foreigners-find-odd/">https://www.german-way.com/weird-in-the-usa-things-that-foreigners-find-odd/</a>  <a href="https://www.insider.com/things-normal-in-the-us-but-considered-weird-2018-8">https://www.insider.com/things-normal-in-the-us-but-considered-weird-2018-8</a></p> <p>Reading blog posts is a great way to build your vocabulary. It is especially useful when you are looking to learn more conversational or informal language because they are often written in a more casual style, very similar to the language of everyday speech.</p>

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



## Vocabulary: Words and Phrases Used in the Conversation

<b>preconceived</b> [notions, ideas, etc.)	formed before having actual knowledge of or experience with something <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Did you have any <u>preconceived</u> ideas about the U.S. before you arrived?</li> </ul>
<b>rip [someone] off</b>	to steal from someone or to cheat them (financially) <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>You probably thought they were <u>ripping you off</u>.</li> </ul>
<b>has a good ring to it</b>	has a pleasant or appealing sound “United Statesians” just doesn’t <u>have a good ring to it</u> .
<b>come across</b>	find something by chance <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>I <u>came across</u> an interesting article.</li> </ul>
<b>tone it down</b>	make something less extreme or intense. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>[about husband’s smiling] I told him to <u>tone it down</u> a bit.</li> </ul>
<b>might/may as well</b>	used to say that something else could have been done with the same result. You <u>might as well</u> put a big sign on your head that says, “I’m American.”
<b>banter</b>	friendly and humorous remarks between people
<b>subdivision</b>	an area of land that has been divided into smaller areas on which houses are built, often in a suburban area
<b>be up to no good</b>	doing or planning to do something bad
<b>blast [something]</b>	operate something at full power (Air conditioning (A/C), heat, music, etc.) <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Stores and restaurants <u>blast</u> the air conditioning.</li> </ul>
<b>How come ...?</b>	Informal: used to ask why something happened, especially to express curiosity or surprise. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>You grew up in a hot place; <u>how come</u> you can’t handle the heat now?</li> </ul>
<b>back in the day</b>	used for talking about a time in the past, especially when remembering something nice about that time. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>When I went to college parties <u>back in the day</u>...</li> </ul>
<b>draw attention to [something]</b>	to cause someone to notice or focus on something That red cup really <u>draws attention to</u> the fact there is alcohol in there.
<b>dorm</b>	short for dormitory: the building on a school campus where students live
<b>endorse</b>	give public or official support of something/someone
<b>condone</b>	to forgive, approve, or allow something that is considered wrong <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>[about drinking wine from a teacup during an online meeting] I’m not <u>endorsing</u> it; I’m not <u>condoning</u> it.</li> </ul>
<b>a sit-down-restaurant</b>	a way of emphasizing that it is a restaurant where you have a server take your order and bring the food, rather than ordering from a counter, as with fast food.
<b>serving platter</b>	a large plate that holds large quantities of food for serving everyone at the table.
<b>a stark difference</b>	a contrast that is very obvious and plain to see

## Vocabulary: Words and Phrases Used in the Conversation

<b>over the top</b>	to an excessive or exaggerated degree; more than what is needed or appropriate <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Some of the state fair foods are <u>over the top</u>.</li> </ul>
<b>batter</b>	a mixture of ingredients such as flour, sugar, etc. that is cooked and eaten (such as pancakes) or used to coat a food before frying
<b>dough</b>	a mixture of flour, water, and other ingredients that is baked to make bread, cookies, etc. The main difference between batter and dough is the consistency: batter is more of a liquid form, and a dough is thicker and can be worked with the hands.
<b>gooey</b>	wet and sticky or runny; [in a pleasant way when talking about chocolate, cookies, etc.]
<b>glob</b>	a large, round drop of something soft or wet
<b>pet peeve</b>	something that a particular person finds especially annoying One of my biggest <u>pet peeves</u> is littering.
<b>escapee</b>	a person who has escaped from somewhere (prison, hospital, etc.)
<b>I digress</b>	a phrase that a person uses in a discussion or speech when realizing that they have started going off the main topic
<b>bills</b>	paper money <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>I don't have any coins, just <u>bills</u>.</li> </ul>
<b>denominations</b>	the value of a series of coins or bills (pennies, nickels, dimes, quarters ones/singles, fives, tens, twenties, etc.)
<b>generic</b>	not sold or made under a particular brand name (e.g. a generic antibiotic)
<b>be prone to</b> [something/doing something]	likely to do, have, or suffer from something. (e.g. sinus infections, making mistakes, etc.)
<b>knock on wood</b>	American; (in UK, the expression is "touch wood") said after a confident or positive statement as a way to express hope for continued good luck
<b>call in</b> [a prescription] (Ph. Verb)	when a doctor's office contacts a pharmacy directly on the patient's behalf to order a prescription, so as not to require the patient to come in for a visit <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>I needed a refill on my prescription, so I asked my doctor to <u>call it in</u>.</li> </ul>
<b>abroad</b>	outside of one's own country (often used with live, study, travel, etc.)

## Cultural Notes: American State Fairs



In the conversation, you heard about some over-the-top foods that are often featured at state fairs. If you're not familiar with state fairs, they are popular events that happen all over the country, usually in late summer or early fall. They are competitive and recreational gatherings that feature carnival games, rides, and food. You can read more about state fairs [HERE](#) and see some examples of the types of foods you might find [HERE](#). You can also see a list of some of the best and most popular state fairs in the country [HERE](#).

### Join the Conversation

- What were some of the unusual and quirky things about the United States that you heard in the conversation? What are your thoughts on each, either from personal experience or from movies and TV, etc.? Do those things seem strange to you? Was there anything you heard that was surprising to you?
- Based on your own personal experience (or what you have seen on TV, read, etc.), what other things could you add to this list? If you need some inspiration, see the links on the first page.
- In the conversation, you heard about the following foods that were deep fried: pizza, Oreo cookies, Coca Cola, Snickers candy bars, pickles, and butter. What do you think of these foods? Have you tried or would you try any of them? See the link above for more examples of fair food. Which ones would you try? Which ones would you be least likely to try?
- What are some habits or activities that are common in your home country but that tourists might find unusual or quirky?
- What do you think are the most difficult things about living abroad? What are the best things about living or traveling abroad?

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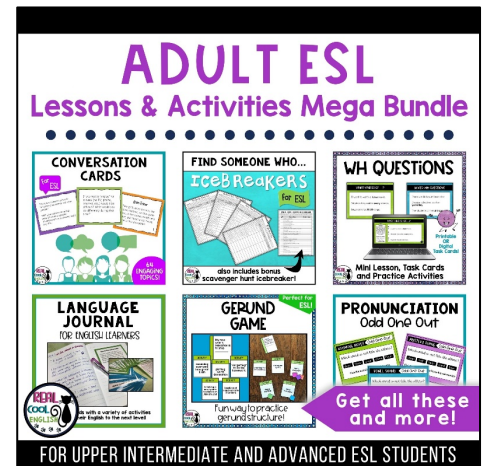
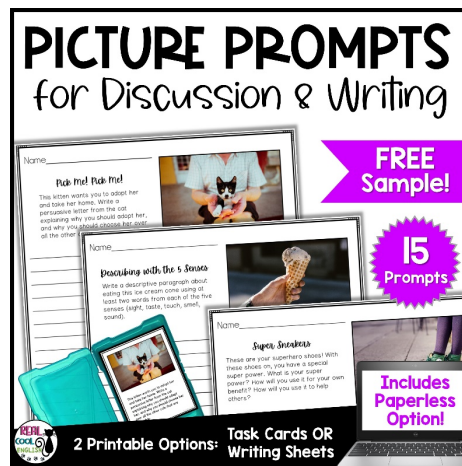
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