



Episode 37: Weird & Fun Facts

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.

In today's episode Donielle and Khrystyna discuss a few fun and interesting facts and stories with a surprising twist.

Here are some vocabulary words and explanations to help understand the stories that are being discussed. Links to the articles and news stories we discussed are also included so you can read them if you wish.

[Play and Repeat: Why We Watch the Same Shows Over and Over](#)
[The Curious Case of Nigel, the African Gray Parrot](#)
[The Hipster Who Thought He Saw Himself](#)
[An Unusual Catfish Story](#)
[Why Not Whynot?](#)

Hipster: A hipster is someone whose fashion choices and music interests fall outside the mainstream. Instead of following popular trends, hipsters generally favor alternative lifestyles, progressive politics, and quirky clothing.

Catfishing: when a person takes information and images, typically from other people, and uses them to create a new identity for themselves, with a goal of tricking them into having a romantic relationship or to scam them out of money.

Vocabulary for making suggestions: We often give suggestions by presenting them as questions. Some examples:

What if ...?	What if we meet at the library to study?
Why don't ...?	Why don't you pick up some takeout on your way home?
How about...?	A: Where should we go for dinner? B: How about the new Cuban place?
Why not...?	Why not take a break and work on the project later?

You can also read the [transcript](#) for this episode.

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



Vocabulary: Words and Phrases Used in the Conversation

Debbie Downer	<p>based on a popular SNL skit, a person who frequently expresses negative or pessimistic views, especially in situations where others are trying to be positive.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>Everyone was excited about the trip, but Jason kept complaining about the weather—what a <u>Debbie Downer</u>!</i>
upbeat	<p>cheerful, positive, and optimistic in mood or attitude.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>Even on stressful days, she manages to stay <u>upbeat</u> and keep everyone smiling.</i>
a twist	<p>an unexpected change in the direction or outcome of a story or situation.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>The movie had <u>a twist</u> at the end that no one saw coming.</i>
set [someone] up	<p>intentionally lead someone to believe something that turns out to be false or misleading, often for dramatic or humorous effect.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>The show <u>set us up</u> to think the villain was obvious, but it turned out to be someone else.</i>
a dozen	<p>a group of twelve. In casual conversation, it can also mean a general sense of "many" or "multiple." Note: we also say "dozens" of something to indicate a large, unspecified quantity. (e.g. Dozens of protesters were outside the building.)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>I've watched that movie <u>a dozen</u> times and still love it.</i>
rom-com	<p>short for "romantic comedy," a movie or show that combines romance and humor.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>Bridget Jones's Diary is one of my favorite <u>rom-coms</u>—light and funny with a sweet love story.</i>
on any given day	<p>on a normal or typical day; at any random time.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i><u>On any given day</u>, I'd probably choose a comedy over a thriller.</i>
Hallmark Channel	<p>a U.S. television network known for feel-good, family-friendly movies—especially romance and holiday-themed films.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>During the holidays, my mom watches the <u>Hallmark Channel</u> nonstop.</i>
mindless	<p>requiring little thought or mental effort; often used for entertainment that is simple and easy to watch.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>Sometimes I just want to watch a <u>mindless</u> movie and relax after a long day.</i>
take [something] the wrong way	<p>misunderstand the meaning or intent of a comment or action in a negative way.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>If you say "I'm watching you" it could be <u>taken the wrong way</u>—it could sound threatening.</i>
vigilance	<p>the state of being alert and watchful, especially for danger or problems.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>Good babysitters show <u>vigilance</u> by keeping an eye on everything the kids are doing.</i>
barely	<p>almost not; only just</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>I <u>barely</u> made it to the meeting on time – traffic was terrible.</i>
atlas	<p>A large book of maps, typically used before GPS technology became common.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>When I was a kid, we used a big <u>atlas</u> to plan our road trips.</i>
vintage	<p>From an earlier time and considered classic or of high quality; often used to describe old items that are now collectible.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>She found a <u>vintage</u> map from the 1950s at a secondhand bookstore.</i>
stand out	<p>to be noticeably different or distinct from others.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>Her colorful dress really made her <u>stand out</u> at the formal event.</i>

Vocabulary: Words and Phrases Used in the Conversation - Cont'd

blend in	to look or act like those around you in order to not be noticed. • <i>He wore neutral colors to <u>blend in</u> with the crowd.</i>
stock photos	Pre-taken images available for public or commercial use, often used in ads, websites, and articles. • <i>The magazine used a <u>stock photo</u> of a hipster with a beard, and the man thought he was looking at a picture of himself!</i>
snarkiness (N.) (or snark) snarky (V.)	The quality being snarky: critical or mocking in an indirect or sarcastic way • <i>The editor's response was full of <u>snark</u>—he clearly enjoyed pointing out the mistake.</i>
so much for [doing something]	sarcastic way to express that a plan or expectation has failed or turned out differently. • <i>He wanted to be unique, but someone else wore the exact same outfit—<u>so much for standing out!</u></i>
dupe	trick or deceive someone • <i>She was <u>duped</u> by someone online pretending to be a different person.</i>
put [an experience] behind [someone]	move on from a bad experience or situation and stop thinking about it. • <i>After the breakup, she tried to <u>put it behind her</u> and focus on work.</i>
track [someone/ something] down	search for and find someone or something, especially after a long time or with difficulty. • <i>She <u>tracked down</u> the real person in the photo and contacted him.</i>
end up	to finally be in a particular situation or place, often unexpectedly. • <i>She <u>ended up</u> getting together with the real person from the photo.</i>
get together	Used two ways in this conversation: Definition 1 (social/meeting): To meet or gather socially. • <i>Let's <u>get together</u> next weekend for coffee.</i> Definition 2 (romantic): To start a romantic relationship. • <i>They <u>got together</u> during college, and have been inseparable ever since.</i>
weed [something] out	remove unwanted or unsuitable items from a group. • <i>Online profiles helped her <u>weed out</u> people she wasn't interested in.</i>
turnoff	speech, behavior, or some other quality in a person that causes you to lose interest. • <i>If someone has pictures of them hunting in their profile, it's an instant <u>turnoff</u> for me.</i>
Throw [something] out / [out there] (as an idea)	suggest something casually, especially during brainstorming. • <i>They were brainstorming town names and someone <u>threw out</u> "Why Not"—and it stuck.</i> • <i>I'm just <u>throwing it out there</u> – why not turn this into a podcast episode?</i>

Using See, Watch, and Look

These three verbs all involve your eyes, but they are used in different ways. This chart will help you understand when to use see, watch, and look based on focus, intention, and context.

See	<p>To notice something with your eyes without trying <i>passive</i></p> <p>It can also be used to talk about movies (especially in the present perfect) as an experience, rather than the action of viewing the movie.*</p> <p>*<i>watch</i> is also possible in the affirmative, but less common as a negative)</p>	<p>I saw a shooting star last night.</p> <p>Have you ever seen Titanic?</p> <p>Yes, I've probably seen it a dozen times!</p> <p>Can you believe my husband has never seen Titanic?</p>
Watch	<p>To observe something that is moving or changing <i>active and focused</i></p>	<p>We watched a documentary about whales.</p> <p>Can you watch my kids for a few minutes while I go to the store?</p>
Look	<p>To direct your eyes intentionally at something <i>purposefully focusing</i></p>	<p>Look at this photo—it's from our trip to Italy.</p>

Join the Conversation

- Are there any shows that you like to watch over and over? If so, which ones or what kinds of shows? Do you agree with the article that watching the same shows over and over can give us comfort and enhance our well being?
- Have you ever had a parrot or other type of bird? What was your experience? If not, would you like to have one? What do you think happened to Nigel during those four years he was missing?
- Do you prefer to *stand out* or *blend in* with a crowd? Have you ever seen someone who you thought looked just like you?
- Do you think meeting people online is a good way to find a relationship? Have you heard of any catfishing stories? How do you think people are able to be *duped* for so long without ever meeting in person?
- What's the most interesting or strange place name you've ever heard? Are there any towns with interesting names where you live now? If you could name a new town, what would you call it?
- Have you ever read or heard about a real-life story that was funny, weird, or unexpected—like the ones we talked about in this episode? Discuss one that you found interesting.

Thanks for checking out our podcast!

We are enjoying these discussions, and we hope that you are finding them helpful!



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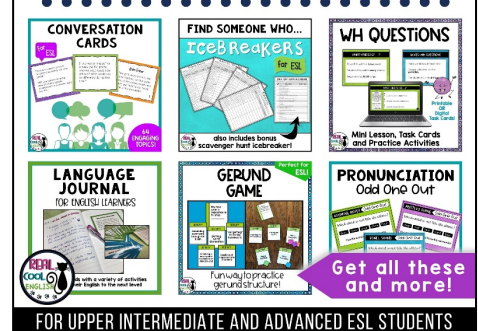
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