



Coffee and Conversation for ESL Listening



with Donielle and Khristyna

Episode 52: Exploring the U.S – The South

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 Khristyna discuss the American South, exploring its regional differences, Southern hospitality, food, music, history, and memorable destinations.



Southern Speak

- y'all** short for "you all" – used when speaking to 2 or more people. Also: **all y'all** for every single person in the group; emphasizes everyone
- fixin' to** getting ready to do something (Ex: I'm fixin' to leave)
- Bless your heart.** an expression of sympathy or affection that can also be used sarcastically to disguise criticism or disapproval as kindness
- buggy** shopping cart
- Coke** often used to refer to any soda, not just Coca Cola

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

See more vocabulary and language focus from this episode.



Vocabulary: Words and Phrases Used in the Conversation

and all that jazz	and other similar things; an informal way to avoid listing everything <i>We picked apples, drank cider, bought homemade treats, <u>and all that jazz</u>.</i>
dead center	exactly in the middle of something <i>Our town was <u>dead center</u> in the hurricane's predicted path.</i>
“cone of doom”	a humorous way to refer to the cone-shaped area showing where a hurricane's center might travel, generally referred to as “the cone” <i>We were right in the <u>cone of doom</u>, so we started preparing for the storm.</i>
hurricane (or storm) shutters	strong coverings placed over windows to protect them from hurricane winds and flying objects
better [to be] safe than sorry	it is wiser to take precautions now than regret not taking them later <i>The storm might miss us, but we'd better put up the shutters. <u>Better to be safe than sorry!</u></i>
time-consuming	taking a lot of time to do or complete <i>Putting up the hurricane shutters is very <u>time-consuming</u>.</i>
crabby	irritable, grumpy, or easily annoyed; informal <i>I was feeling <u>crabby</u> after spending hours working outside in the heat.</i>
But I digress	used when you realize you've gone off topic and want to return to your main point <i>I could complain about the weather all day, <u>but I digress</u>. Let's get back to the South.</i>
Southern hospitality	the tradition of being friendly, polite, generous, and welcoming to visitors, especially in the American South <i>Our neighbors invited us in for sweet tea, which was a lovely example of <u>Southern hospitality</u>.</i>
out and about	away from home and doing things in public places <i>When you're <u>out and about</u> in a small Southern town, don't be surprised if strangers wave at you.</i>
jarring	unexpectedly surprising, uncomfortable, or unsettling <i>It was a little <u>jarring</u> when a teenager called me ma'am for the first time.</i>
weigh in on [something]	to give your opinion or share your knowledge about a subject <i>I'm a vegetarian, so I can't really <u>weigh in on</u> the local seafood restaurant scene.</i>
rave about [something]	to talk about something with great enthusiasm and praise <i>Everyone <u>raves about</u> the food in New Orleans.</i>
Creole	relating to a distinctive cultural and culinary tradition, especially in Louisiana, influenced by French, Spanish, African, and other cultures <i>We tried a delicious <u>Creole</u> dish during our visit to New Orleans.</i>
I'm not holding my breath	an informal expression meaning you do not expect something to happen soon, or perhaps at all; often used humorously or sarcastically <i>Khirstyna keeps promising to visit me in Alabama, but <u>I'm not holding my breath</u>.</i>
bourbon	a type of American whiskey <i>Kentucky is famous for its <u>bourbon</u>, and visitors can tour places where it is made.</i>
lean into [something]	to enthusiastically embrace, emphasize, or make the most of something <i>Georgia really <u>leans into</u> its reputation as the Peach State, with peach symbols everywhere.</i>

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

a crapshoot	an informal expression (derived from the name of a dice game) for a situation in which the result is unpredictable and depends largely on luck • <i>Buying peaches can be <u>a crapshoot</u>. They may be delicious; they may be terrible.</i>
thriving	growing, successful, and doing very well • <i>Atlanta has a <u>thriving</u> film and television industry.</i>
I'm not a big ____ person	Informal: I'm not especially interested in or enthusiastic about a particular thing • <i>I'm not a <u>big fish</u> person, so visiting an aquarium isn't usually my first choice.</i>
hub	An important center of activity, business, transportation, or culture • <i>The South was a major <u>hub</u> of the Civil Rights Movement.</i>
lose [one's] mind[s]	Informal: react with strong or exaggerated excitement, anger, or frustration • <i>When Alabama loses to their biggest rivals, some fans completely <u>lose their minds</u>.</i>
claim to fame	the thing that makes a person or place especially well-known or proud • <i>One of Mobile's <u>claims to fame</u> is its long history of Mardi Gras celebrations.</i>
adamant	very firm about an opinion or decision and unwilling to change it • <i>Khrystyna's husband is <u>adamant</u> that they go to California instead of Florida.</i>
critter	Informal: affectionate or humorous word for an animal or small creature • <i>You might see all kinds of interesting <u>critters</u> in the Florida Everglades.</i>
snowbirds	people, often retirees, who spend the winter in a warmer place and return home during warmer months
distillery	a place where alcoholic spirits such as whiskey or bourbon are produced
get around to [something]	to finally find the time to do something you have been intending to do • <i>We've talked about visiting the Bourbon Trail, but we haven't <u>gotten around to it yet</u>.</i>
touch on [something]	to mention or discuss a subject briefly without going into much detail • <i>We only had time to <u>touch on</u> a few interesting facts about each Southern state.</i>
outdoorsy	enjoying outdoor activities such as hiking, camping, or exploring nature; • <i>An Arkansas vacation is perfect if you're an <u>outdoorsy</u> person.</i>
nutty	strange, silly, or somewhat crazy; informal and sometimes humorous • <i>Every state has its share of <u>nutty</u> stories that attract attention.</i>
quaint	attractively old-fashioned, such as a small town, building, or neighborhood • <i>Charleston is known for its <u>quaint</u> streets and historic houses.</i>
charming	pleasant, attractive, and appealing in a way that makes people like something • <i>Charleston is a <u>charming</u> city with beautiful architecture and historic neighborhoods.</i>
get [one's] start	to begin a career or the activity that later makes you successful and often famous • <i>Many famous musicians <u>got their start</u> at Sun Studio in Memphis.</i>
dry	describing a town, county, state, etc. where the sale of alcohol is prohibited • <i>Jack Daniel's whiskey is produced in a <u>dry</u> county in Tennessee, although the distillery has special permission to sell bottles.</i>
Founding Fathers	the influential political leaders who helped establish the United States as an independent country • <i>Several of America's <u>Founding Fathers</u> came from Virginia.</i>

Cultural Note: Sounds of the South

The American South has shaped many of the world's most popular musical styles. Explore five genres with Southern roots and listen to what makes each one distinctive!

Blues – Mississippi: Expressive vocals and guitar playing, with roots in African American musical traditions. Famous artists include B.B. King, Muddy Waters, and Robert Johnson. [Listen](#)

Jazz – Louisiana: Born in New Orleans, known for improvisation and lively rhythms. Famous artists include Louis Armstrong, Duke Ellington, and Ella Fitzgerald. [Listen](#)

Rock and Roll – Tennessee: Memphis helped launch the careers of legends like Elvis Presley, Jerry Lee Lewis, and Carl Perkins. [Explore its roots](#)

Country – Tennessee: Nashville's signature sound, known for storytelling and memorable melodies. Famous artists include Dolly Parton, Johnny Cash, and Patsy Cline. [Listen](#)

Bluegrass – Kentucky: Fast-paced acoustic music featuring banjos, fiddles, and mandolins. [Listen](#)

Join the Conversation

- Before listening to this episode, what did you already know about the American South? Which cities can you name in the Southern states below? Which would you most like to visit?

• Alabama	• Kentucky	• South Carolina
• Arkansas	• Louisiana	• Tennessee
• Florida	• Mississippi	• Virginia
• Georgia	• North Carolina	• West Virginia
- Was there anything that you heard in the episode that surprised you?
- Is there a region in your country that you feel especially connected to?
- Have you ever struggled to understand someone speaking your own language because of their regional accent?
- Is there a particular food that your region is famous for? Is it something you personally enjoy?
- Have you ever visited somewhere mainly because of its connection to a famous person, movie, or musician?
- Is there a city or region in your country that is especially famous for music, art, or entertainment?
 - *BONUS: If you could ask Donielle & Khrystyna one question about the American South, what would it be?*

Thanks for checking out our podcast!

We're enjoying our discussions, and we hope that you are finding them helpful!



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