



TOPICS

Explaining TV show names; Mount McKinley and mountaineering; highest versus tallest; CEO versus CFO versus CIO

GLOSSARY

sitcom – situational comedy; a series of funny shows that use the same characters, showing how they interact with each other in new situations each week

* After a long day at my job, I like watching a sitcom so I can laugh and forget about my work for a while.

scrubs – the loose clothing worn by doctors and nurses in hospitals, and especially in an operating room or emergency room

* The doctor changed into her scrubs in preparation for the surgery.

on the fringe – far from normal; very unusual; something that isn't accepted or believed in by very many people

* Chasmie's ideas about religion have always on the fringe, but she has many followers.

widow – a woman whose husband has died; a wife whose husband has died

* Chloe was a widow for six years before she remarried.

weed – small plants that grow very quickly, but that one does not want to grow in one's garden; an informal term for marijuana (a plant whose leaves are smoked and is considered an illegal drug in many countries)

* Karl was growing and selling weed for years before the police found out and arrested him.

trek – a long, difficult journey; a long journey, usually outdoors when walking on foot

* You are too young to go on a trek through the woods by yourself.

mountaineering – the sport of climbing very tall mountains and trying to get to the top even when it is very difficult

* I know that Rita likes difficult sports, but why is she going mountaineering in the middle of winter?



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to climb – to use one's arms and legs to travel high up on something, such as a tree or a mountain

* While her father was in the other room, the baby climbed on top of the table to try to reach the plate of cookies.

peak – the highest part of a mountain; summit

* We couldn't see the mountain peak because of the low clouds.

route – path; roads that one travels on to reach a particular place

* Javier doesn't like to drive on freeways and decided to take a route on surface streets instead.

summit – the highest part of a mountain; peak

* When the climbers reached the summit, they stopped to look at the incredible view.

to stretch – to extend; to include a large area; to cover a large area

* The cold weather stretched across the entire region and many places saw snow.

highest – having the greatest distance from the bottom to the top; reaching the most distance from the ground

* We can all fly kites, but Dane can fly them the highest.

tallest – having the greatest height; having the greatest distance from the bottom to the top, usually used to describe people and buildings

* Which building is the tallest in the city of Chicago?

CEO – Chief Executive Officer; the person who leads a company

* The CEO made an announcement about our new sales strategy for next year.

CFO – Chief Financial Officer; the person who makes decisions about how money is spent and invested (used to make more money) at a company

* Making sure that our financial statements are ready and that we file the proper reports with the government are the responsibilities of the CFO.

CIO – Chief Information Officer; the person who makes decisions about technology, computers, and computer users at a company

* I don't know if we'll be able to upgrade our computers this year. We'll have to write a formal request to ask the CIO.



WHAT INSIDERS KNOW

The Strangest Television Shows

It's easy to find television shows that follow a "formula," a successful way of doing things that many people are familiar with and that they enjoy. On television, there are a lot of half-hour sitcoms with a family or group of friends who have a problem or a misunderstanding that is resolved or "cleared up" by the end of the 30 minutes. "Similarly" (in the same way), there are "dramas" (shows with serious stories) with familiar "themes" (main topics), and "nowadays" (recently), there are "reality shows" (showing real people in specific situations) that follow a familiar format.

This is not to say that television shows are always "predictable" (easy to guess what will happen next or in the future). There have been "a number of" (several) unusual television shows in the past. One such show was shown in the early 1990s called Twin Peaks, about a "federal special agent" (police officer of the national government) who "investigates" (tries to find out what happened) the murder of a popular teenage girl in a small town. This show was full of strange dreams, bizarre characters, and a lot of deaths.

Another unusual television show was a comedy. It was called Strangers with Candy. This show "centered around" (focused on) a "middle-aged" (person between the ages of about 40 to 60) woman who returns to high school as a student. Her name is Candy and she used to be drug "addict" (needing something (drugs) very badly) and a "prostitute" (a person who sells sex for money). As you can imagine, she has a lot of problems adjusting to life in this high school, and many of the jokes in the show are about her trying to behave like a typical teenager. The title of this show, Strangers with Candy, is a "play on words" (using a word or phrase with more than one meaning). Children are often warned to stay away from "strangers" (people whom one doesn't know) who offer us candy or other attractive things, because they could be bad people who want to harm us. Since "Candy" is also the name of the character, perhaps the title is telling us to stay away from the character Candy because she is also dangerous.

Although we see unusual television shows "now and again" (occasionally), it is difficult for such shows to find a large audience. Both of these shows went "off the air" (ended, with no new shows made) after just two "seasons" (years).



COMPLETE TRANSCRIPT

You're listening to ESL Podcast's English Café number 218.

This is English as a Second Language Podcast's English Café episode 218. I'm your host, Dr. Jeff McQuillan, coming to you from the Center for Educational Development in beautiful Los Angeles, California.

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On this Café, we're going to talk about the meanings of the names of certain popular television shows in the United States. We're also going to talk about Mount McKinley in the U.S., a mountain, and about the sport of mountaineering, or hiking and mountain climbing. And as always, we'll answer a few of your questions. Let's get started.

We begin this Café with a discussion about television and the names of television shows (television series). If you watch American television or hear about American television, you may be wondering what the titles of the shows mean, so we'll talk about a few of those.

We'll start by talking about a show called Scrubs (scrubs). Scrubs is what we call a "sitcom," which is short for "situational comedy." It's a series of funny shows that use the same characters. There was a famous sitcom in the 1990s called Seinfeld; that is an example of a sitcom. Usually, the sitcoms have the same characters and show how they interact with each other in new situations each week. "To scrub (something)" means to rub something very hard against it to clean it. If, for example, you have a spot on your shirt you may take some soap and water and scrub it; you may take another cloth, or perhaps another part of the shirt and scrub the spot so that it comes out (so that it is removed). However, "scrubs" (plural) as a noun has a different meaning. "Scrubs," when we are talking especially about hospitals and medicine (medical care), refers to loose clothing, the clothing that isn't tight, worn by doctors and nurses in a hospital, especially if they're in an operating room or in an emergency room. Scrubs, then, refer to the clothing: the shirts, the pants, and sometimes what is called a "gown" (gown), which is sort of like a dress, usually it's green or blue. They're comfortable, these scrubs are, and easy to wash. The television show called Scrubs has that name because it's about doctors and other people who work in a



hospital, and of course, because they work in a hospital, they wear scrubs. Just about any show – television show about a hospital will have some character in scrubs.

Another TV show you might hear Americans talking about, although it's not as popular anymore, is Big Brother. This is actually an international show now, I believe. It's what we call a "reality" TV show, meaning that ordinary people – well, really, mostly people who want to become actors but aren't very good at it – agree to be in some television program as part of some supposedly real situation. The people who get involved in these shows are almost always actors or actresses who have not been successful and are looking for a way to be on television. That's not always true, but it's surprisingly common here Los Angeles where these shows are, for the most part, filmed.

Well, Big Brother is a show where you have different people living together in a house. Everything they do in the house is recorded by video cameras. Some people are each week "evicted," or forced to leave the house, and the last one who remains wins the money. I really have never watched the show; it never has interested me, but the title is somewhat interesting. The title comes from a novel (or a book) called Nineteen Eighty-Four, which was written by the British author George Orwell in 1949. In the book, everything people do is watched by the government, and the government is therefore known as Big Brother. This is why the Big Brother show has its name, because people are always being watched – they're always being filmed. The expression, however, was common before the television show; people would talk about Big Brother. In general, they're referring to the government finding out everything you're doing or watching you're doing.

Another television show that's popular is called Fringe. Normally "fringe" (fringe) is at the bottom of a piece of clothing or fabric, where there are many small strings. Lots of blankets have fringes around the edge for decoration. The show, however, gets its name from a different meaning of fringe, or at least a meaning that is not related to clothing or to fabric. Something that is "on the fringe" is something that is not normal, something that is very unusual, something that isn't accepted or believed in by very many people. This can be used to talk about people's political ideas; it can be used to talk about people's social or religious ideas. Usually, it refers to things that many people believe are simply not scientific. There are many people, for example, who don't believe that drinking certain kinds of herbal tea or getting massages are forms of medical treatment. Those things won't help you medically, some people believe; they think that's a fringe belief. Of course, if you believe that, then it's not on the fringe. But this show – this TV show called Fringe is a science fiction show about strange things



that are happening all over the world. The American Federal Bureau of Investigation (the FBI) is trying to investigate these strange crimes using what they call “fringe science.” So the FBI uses scientific techniques – or supposedly scientific techniques that are very unusual. I watched the show, I think, once, and it was okay. It’s a science fiction show, so you can’t really criticize it for being real or not real; it is by definition not real.

There’s another TV series with the title Weeds (weeds). Weeds is about a “widow,” a woman whose husband has died. If the wife dies, we call the husband a “widower.” This widow doesn’t have enough money to live on, so she begins to sell “marijuana,” an illegal drug in the United States, to her neighbors. The show is called Weeds for a couple of reasons. Normally “weeds” are small plants that grow very quickly, but you don’t want to have them in your garden or your yard, either because they’re ugly or because they are hurting the other plants in your yard, or the other things growing in your garden. In the springtime, we spend time pulling weeds. When I say “we,” I mean some people – I don’t! You try to kill them by pulling them out of the ground. However, when someone uses the word “weed” in the singular (without the “s”), they’re talking about marijuana. It’s a slang term; you’re more likely to hear people talk about smoking weed rather than smoking marijuana, it depends on who your friends are – my friends don’t talk about either! Another reason why the show is called Weeds, in addition to the connection with marijuana, is that many years ago when a husband died, the wife would wear only black clothing, and this clothing was sometimes called “widow’s weeds,” although the phrase is not used anymore.

Finally, we talk about another science fiction show called Star Trek. You’ve probably heard of this science fiction series. It has gone through many changes. It first started on American television back in 1966. The show is about space exploration in the future. A “trek” (trek) is a long, difficult journey, usually when you are outdoors and walking. In Star Trek, the characters in the show are on a long trek through outer space, meeting life forms (other types of life), going to other planets, and so forth. There have been several TV series that are part of this Star Trek story, and there have also been several movies made including a movie made just last year.

I’m definitely a fan of Star Trek; I’ve seen most of the movies, I’ve watched several of the TV series. I’m not “fanatical,” that is, I don’t dress up like the characters as some Star Trek fans do. But I do enjoy watching the TV shows and the movies.



The more common type of trek would be if you went hiking in the mountains, for example, for a long period of time – a couple of weeks. That could be called a trek, not just a hike because it's much longer and more difficult.

That moves us to our next topic, which is mountaineering and Mount McKinley. "Mountaineering" is the sport of climbing very tall mountains and trying to get to the top even though it's very difficult. To "climb" means to use your arms and legs to go high up on something. Children like to climb trees; they step on the branches, they pull themselves up with their hands; they're trying to get up as high as possible. In the same way, mountaineers (people who participate in this sport; they're also sometimes just called mountain climbers) climb the mountains using their legs and arms, sometimes even with ropes and special tools, especially if the mountain is very steep. To say something is "steep" means it's very vertical; it's very difficult to stand on.

Mountaineering is somewhat different from another popular sport nowadays, which is rock climbing. Rock climbing usually involves smaller climbs; you're not climbing up an entire mountain, you may be climbing up just a cliff (that is, the side of a mountain or where there is a vertical wall of rock that you can climb up). I have never been mountaineering, but I did go rock climbing once, out in an area called Joshua Tree, which is a beautiful National Park out in the desert just east of Los Angeles. However, I was not very good at it, and only did it once, and I will probably never do it again. I have never really gone mountaineering; I have driven in a car through the mountains. It's kind of like mountaineering, except, of course, you don't have to walk! That's my favorite sport, is driving through the mountains. Well, mountaineering is popular among a certain kind of person – crazy person, perhaps! I'm just kidding, of course.

The tallest mountain in the United States, in fact the tallest mountain in North America is called Mount McKinley, and it's a popular one for people who are into (who are interested in) mountain climbing. Mount McKinley is also called Denali. It, at its very highest point, what we would call its "peak" (peak), is more than 20,000 feet. That would be slightly more than 6,000 meters – for those of you living almost anywhere but the United States.

Mountains are usually named after the people who first discover them or who first climb them. This particular mountain had been known as Dinale or Denali by the local Native Americans, the American Indians who lived in that area, and it's still called Denali by people who live in Alaska. But the rest of us Americans, people like me who don't live in Alaska, still call it Mount McKinley.



Why is it called Mount McKinley? Well, when the Europeans first came to the area, the mountain was actually called Densmore's Mountain, after a man by the name of Frank Densmore, who came looking for gold and talked about and wrote about the beauty of the mountain. To be named after someone means to be named in honor of someone, or to be given the same name as someone, so that's why we say the mountain was named after Densmore.

A few years later, another man by the name of William Dicky also came to Alaska looking for gold in the area near the mountain, and he wrote an article for a newspaper called the New York Sun. In the article, he wrote that he and the other men he was with had named this mountain Mount McKinley, after William McKinley, who at the time was running for office (running for political election) and later became President of the United States in the late 19th century. However, President McKinley never actually saw the mountain or even went to Alaska, but the mountain is still named after him. What happened to McKinley? Well, he was assassinated in 1901 (he was shot to death). His vice president was a man by the name of Theodore Roosevelt; we call him Teddy (Teddy is a short name for Theodore), and he went on to become rather famous in American history as well.

I said that people like to try to climb Mount McKinley. In 1903, the first person to attempt to climb the mountain was a judge by the name of James Wickersham. He chose, however, a very difficult and dangerous "route," or path up the mountain. He failed to reach the peak of the mountain (to reach the top of the mountain), and no one was actually able to climb that same route that he chose until 60 years later, until 1963. Other mountain climbers took a different path (a different route) in order to reach the peak, or the "summit," which we also use to talk about the highest point of the mountain. Walter Harper reached it in 1913. Today, many people still try to climb Mount McKinley; only about half of them seem to make it all the way up to the summit, it's very difficult. It can take anywhere between two and four weeks, and many climbers have, unfortunately, died along the way. Remember what I said about the mountain climbers being a little crazy!

There are other places that are popular in the U.S. for mountaineering (for mountain climbing). They include the Rocky Mountains, in Colorado especially. The Rocky Mountains "stretch," or extend (go from) from British Columbia, Canada down to New Mexico. There are some people who climb here in California in the Sierra Nevada, which are the mountains in north central California. Another popular place for mountaineering are the Cascade Mountains (the Cascades) in the Pacific Northwest, and there are other mountains in Alaska



that people climb. Of course, internationally, the most famous mountain that people climb would be the world's tallest mountain, Mount Everest. I some day will go to the peak of Mount Everest, just as soon as they build a road I can drive on!

Now let's answer a few of your questions.

Our first question comes from Sami (Sami) in Saudi Arabia. Sami wants to know the difference in the uses of the words "highest" and "tallest."

"Highest" describes something that is up in the air more than any other thing or person. Usually, you measure from the ground. "Tallest" means the same thing, something that is taller than any other thing or person, again usually measured from the ground. So you could say that the Sears Tower in Chicago is the tallest building in Chicago; you could say it's the highest building in Chicago. "Highest" can be used for buildings, but usually we use other words in talking about people. For people, we tend to use the words "tall," or "taller," or "tallest," and not "high." So you can say your office is the highest in the city, but if you were talking about your brother, you would say he's the tallest boy in the family; you wouldn't say he's the highest boy. In fact, that would mean something completely different. "To be high," as a slang term, means to be intoxicated, for example because you've taken drugs or alcohol; you've smoked marijuana – you were smoking weed, then you're high. So somebody says, "Oh, he's the highest person here," they mean he's the most intoxicated, which is not typically a compliment.

The differences between "high" and "tall" are not necessarily people versus non-people. That's not a bad way of thinking about it to begin with. However, it is possible to use the word "tall" in talking about small objects, for example a desk, or a door, or a car. The word "high," however, is almost never used to describe a person.

There are some other meanings of "high" in addition to the one about drugs. "High" can also mean that someone is very excited or happy about something. Usually, the expression is "to be on a high." "My friend is on a high because his girlfriend just said yes to his proposal of marriage." His girlfriend said yes, she will marry him; he's on a high. "High" can also be used in talking about musical notation; we can talk about a high note and a low note – high note up here, low note down here. We would never call these tall notes or short notes. "High" can also be used to indicate distance from the ground. For example: "The plane is 32,000 feet high," it is above the ground for 32,000 feet. We would not say it's 32,000 feet tall. If you say something is 32,000 feet tall, you're saying that it



goes from the ground up to 32,000 feet, meaning it would be the world's largest airplane! So, "high" and "tall" are used in different cases, even though sometimes you can use them to mean the same thing.

Tania (Tania) in Romania wants to know the meaning of some abbreviations that she's seen. They include "CEO," "CFO," and "CIO." We talked about some of these abbreviations in previous podcasts, but we'll review it here.

"CEO" stands for Chief Executive Officer; this is the person who leads the company. "CFO" stands for Chief Financial Officer; "chief" means the highest in this case. This is the person who makes decisions about how money is spent and invested in a company. Finally, "CIO" stands for Chief Information Officer. This is the person who makes decisions about technology, computers, and people who work in the IT, or Information Technology part of the company. "CIO" is a relatively new position; there were no CIOs 30 years ago. But because computers have become such a big part of American business – of world business, companies started having CIOs.

Every company has a different what we call "chain of command," which tells them who manages who – who is whose boss. Each chief officer is a leader usually of a department or a section of the company. In many companies, each chief, such as the Chief Financial Officer or the Chief Information Officer, report to or is supervised by the CEO, the Chief Executive Officer. In an American corporation (a large company), the CEO is usually put there by the Board of Directors. The board oversees the company's activities, and they appoint (they hire) a CEO to take care of the day-to-day workings of the company (to run the company). The CEO does not have complete control of the company if there's a Board of Directors. If, however, it's a small company, one that does not have Board of Directors and stockholders, then the CEO may have a great deal of control over how the company is run.

Here at the Center for Educational Development, we have a CPO. The "CPO" is the Chief Podcasting Officer; that, of course, is Dr. Lucy Tse. I'm just an assistant to the Chief Podcasting Officer. Although many years ago, I was in a movie called Star Wars. You may have heard of it. I was the person who played the part of CP3O, so, you know, someday maybe I'll make it to CPO!

If you have a question or comment, you can email us. Our email address is eslpod@eslpod.com. We don't promise to answer all of your questions, but we will answer as many as we can.



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From Los Angeles, California, I'm Jeff McQuillan. Thank you for listening. Come back and listen to us next time on the English Café.

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