



TOPICS

American Cities: San Diego; tabloid press and U.S. libel/slander laws; under (someone's) thumb; precision versus accuracy; coming to you from

GLOSSARY

moderate climate – weather that is neither very hot nor very cold; comfortable weather

* Many people like to go to Florida for a vacation because of its beautiful beaches and moderate climate.

urban renewal – making an area of a city that may be in poor condition more attractive by making it safer, prettier, and more economically developed

* After two years of urban renewal, the number of tourists visiting the city increased by 40%.

defense – protection against attack; anything related to the military and helps to protect a country from danger

* The army, navy, and air force are responsible for the defense of the country 24 hours a day.

pharmaceutical – anything related to the making of drugs or medicine

* Pharmaceutical companies spend a lot of money every year trying to find new cures for diseases.

press – different types of media or ways of telling people the news, such as newspapers, magazines, television, radio, and the Internet

* The freedom of speech in the United States allows the press to find out important information and to tell the public the truth, even if the news is unpleasant.

tabloids – small newspapers or magazines that focus on interesting or unusual news about famous people and events, and sometimes the stories in these newspapers are not true

* Last week, I read a strange story about a dog with three heads in a tabloid magazine that I bought at the supermarket.



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headlines – titles of stories; the phrase or sentence at the top of a news story that tells people what the story is about

* Newspapers attract readers by putting the most interesting headlines on the first page.

shocking – surprising in a bad way; something bad that happens unexpectedly

* Yan cried after she heard the shocking news that her hometown had just experienced a big earthquake.

slander – something untrue that is said about a person; a lie about a person that makes others think bad things about that person

* Kim wasn't chosen for student president because his opponents slandered him by saying that he had cheated on his exams.

libel – something bad and untrue that is written about a person; a written lie about a person that makes others think bad things about that person

* That newspaper had to apologize to the actress for libel. It said that she was cheating on her husband, even though it wasn't true.

to sue – to take legal action against someone because of something bad that that person did or said

* Daniel sued the car company for producing an unsafe car and causing his accident.

to go over the line – to do something too much so that it breaks the rules and makes someone angry

* Luisa knew that she was supposed to be home by 10 p.m., but she went over the line tonight and came home at midnight.

under (someone's) thumb – to be under someone's control

* The employer kept his workers under his thumb by saying that he wouldn't pay them if they didn't obey him.

precision – accuracy or correctness in the measurement of something, such as distance or time

* If we want this cake to turn out well, we must follow the recipe with great precision.

accuracy – correctness in measurement or fact; without mistake

* If a scientist wishes to be successful, she must carry out her experiments with accuracy.



coming to you from – a phrase used in radio and television to say where someone is broadcasting from

* Coming to you from Times Square, I am Lisa, bringing to you New York City's grand New Year's celebrations.

WHAT INSIDERS KNOW

Celebrities' Bad Behavior

There is something that makes us all interested in knowing about “celebrities” (famous people). We want to know all about their lives. Many people believe that because celebrities get so much attention, they should try to be good examples for us to follow. However, many celebrities in the past have behaved badly and have been in trouble with the law.

Zsa Zsa Gabor, an actress, is an example of a celebrity that many people admire, but who lived a very “unexemplary” (a bad example) life. In 1989, Gabor was stopped for drunk driving by traffic police in Beverly Hills, California. The police found that she was driving without a proper driver's license. She also had an open bottle of alcohol in her car, which is illegal in many states. When the police wanted to arrest her, she “slapped” (hit on the face) the police officer. In addition to this “incident” (event), Gabor had also done other bad things, such as leaving her hotel without paying and stealing clothes.

Another actress who has been in the news for bad behavior is Winona Ryder. Ryder has played big roles in many movies. In 2001, Ryder was caught stealing about \$5,000 worth of clothes and other things from a big department store in Beverly Hills. As punishment, Ryder had to repay the department store, do 480 hours of “community service” (helping the community in different ways), and go for “counseling” (advice or help) that will help her become a better person.

Actors and actresses are not the only ones who get in trouble with the law. The famous rapper Eminem, for example, was arrested in 2000 for carrying a “concealed weapon” (hidden gun) and for fighting with a man who had kissed Eminem's “ex-wife” (former wife). Many celebrities have also been caught drunk driving. Some of these include Paris Hilton, Mel Gibson, and Nicole Richie.



COMPLETE TRANSCRIPT

You're listening to ESL Podcast's English Café number 186.

This is English as a Second Language Podcast's English Café episode 186. 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 continue our series on American cities, focusing on San Diego, California. We're also going to talk about the tabloid press, magazines that have lots of gossip about famous people (celebrities), and how it is related to what are called libel and slander laws that restrict what tabloids can say. And as always, we'll answer a few of your questions. Let's get started.

San Diego is California's second-largest city and the eighth largest city in the United States with more than 1.3 million people living there. The city is in southern California, on the U.S. "border," or the dividing line with Mexico, with the Mexican city of Tijuana located just on the other side.

San Diego was built on the San Diego Bay (bay), or a large area of water that is part of the ocean but is surrounded by land; there is land on three sides of it. Because of this, San Diego has a lot of beautiful beaches that are very popular with "tourists," people visiting there, as well as "locals," the people who live there.

San Diego has a very "moderate climate," meaning it never gets very cold or very hot. The temperature is usually between 57 and 72° Fahrenheit, or 14 and 22° Celsius. There is also very little rain in San Diego. The climate (or weather) in San Diego is very similar to here in Los Angeles; it is only two hours south of Los Angeles.

There are many urban renewal efforts in downtown San Diego. "Urban renewal" means programs or other efforts or attempts to make part of the city safer, prettier, and generally more attractive to tourists, while also improving the local economy.



My first trip to San Diego was back in, oh, 1992. It is a beautiful city, but back then there were some parts of the downtown area that were not very nice. In fact, a lot of the downtown area was mostly “abandoned,” meaning there were very few businesses; nobody really wanted to be there, with the exception of one small area. The urban renewal efforts, however, in the last 20 years or so have built many “skyscrapers,” or very tall office buildings, nice hotels, apartments, restaurants, places to buy things, stores, and more. Today downtown San Diego is a much nicer place to visit; it is very popular for conventions and “conferences,” people who come together to talk about a similar topic. I’ve been there or four times for conferences related to teaching.

San Diego has an economy that is based on, or relies on, defense, manufacturing, and tourism. When I say “defense,” I mean things that are related to the United States “military,” or the army and other organizations that protect Americans from other countries and from danger; that’s their job, anyway. There are many military institutions in San Diego, as well as related companies that work for the military. If you go to San Diego, you will, probably see some people in the military, and there’s a large military “base,” or a large area owned by the military that they use.

San Diego also has many “manufacturers,” companies that make things, especially in the area of biotechnology. “Biotechnology” is a type of science that is interested in how chemicals and very small machines can work inside the body and help the body. It’s a technology – it’s an application of that kind of science. There are also many cell phone companies in San Diego as well as drug companies, but we would call “pharmaceutical” (pharmaceutical) – pharmaceutical companies, companies that make drugs and medicines. Many of these companies have very high-paying jobs, or positions, because it’s very expensive to live in San Diego.

The third part of San Diego’s economy – the third main part is tourism. Many tourists visit San Diego because, as I mentioned, it has very good weather, and also because there are some interesting things to see and do in San Diego. For example, Balboa Park is a large park in the city that has many beautiful gardens, interesting museums, restaurants, stores, and the famous San Diego Zoo, a place where you can go and see animals – if you like animals. I, personally, would rather see human beings! But if you like animals, you can also visit SeaWorld, which is sort of like a zoo for fish and animals that live in the ocean. There’s also something called the Wild Animal Park, which is also like a zoo, but the animals can walk around in larger, more natural areas and people drive



through the park in their car to see the animals. I've never been to the San Diego Zoo, SeaWorld, or Wild Animal Park. I'm sure they're very nice, if you like animals!

There are a lot of events, as I mentioned earlier: conferences and get-togethers that take place in San Diego; people go there for certain things. For example, every year there is a Rock 'n' Roll Marathon, a very long race for runners, that has been held every year in the last 10-12 years, since 1998. San Diego is also known for its Gay Pride Parade each year. It has about 100,000 people that come to participate. A gay person is also called a homosexual, when a man likes another man, or a woman likes another woman romantically. There is also many medical and business conferences in San Diego. San Diego has some very beautiful golf courses, and there are some beautiful cities very close to San Diego, just north of the city that are right on the ocean, places like La Jolla for example. San Diego also has a pretty good university, the University of California at San Diego, which has a lot of researchers who are interested in biotechnology and other medical sciences.

Now let's talk a little bit about the tabloid press. The "press" refers to the newspapers, television stations, radio programs, magazines, what we sometimes call the "media." The regular press is interested in important local, regional, national, and international news, or at least we hope they're interested, but the tabloid press is a little different. Technically, a "tabloid" is a small newspaper of a certain size. Tabloids are small newspapers that have photographs and stories about "celebrities" (famous people), strange events, drugs, sometimes sex. Tabloids focus on what we would call the "sensational." Sensational stories are things that are unusual and might not even be true. Tabloids usually don't have stories about serious news; they have lots of gossip about celebrities and famous people.

If you go to a grocery store in the United States and you stand in line to pay for your food, you will see several magazines and tabloids that you can buy. Reading the "headlines," or the names or titles of stories can be very interesting. I often see tabloid headlines about men who give birth to babies or "aliens," people from other planets. I don't normally believe these things are true – normally, but it can be interesting, if you are standing in line at the grocery store, to look at them. I have never actually bought one, however.

Other tabloid headlines say shocking things about famous people. Something that is "shocking" is surprising, but in a negative way – in a bad way. For example, you might find it shocking that I once spent five years in jail (in prison).



That would be very shocking. It's not actually true, but it would be sort of unexpected for me.

Tabloid headlines often say shocking things about famous celebrities like movie stars or singers. For example, they might talk about a health problem that an actress has. Or they might talk about a famous singer who is cheating on his wife with another woman, meaning he is seeing another woman romantically without his wife knowing – we assume she doesn't know. Tabloids will say horrible things about people, and the people whom they write about often become angry, especially when the stories are not true. When you say something about someone else that isn't true it's called "slander" if you say it out loud. If you write it down, this bad, untrue thing, is called "libel" (libel). Slander, then, is when you say something false and negative about someone that would hurt their reputation, that would make people think that they are a bad person. That's called slander. Libel is when you write it down in a newspaper, a tabloid, and so forth.

For example, if you write an article about me that says that I spent five years in jail, that would be libel, because it isn't true, it would make other people think bad things about me, and it's written down. Naturally, I don't want to see libel or hear slander about me. Neither do famous people who are written about by the tabloid press, so there are some laws to protect them, to control or "limit" what tabloids can say about people.

Some celebrities have successfully sued the tabloid press for printing libel about them. To "sue" means to take legal action against someone or to start a lawsuit against someone. If a drunk driver, someone driving a car who has been drinking too much alcohol, hits your car, you might sue him for the damages that he caused, the money you had to spend to fix your car. In the same way, celebrities can sue the tabloid press after reading articles that are not true and that give readers a bad idea about the type of people they are. The famous singer Aretha Franklin and the actor Tom Cruise have both sued the tabloid press for saying false things. Sometimes they win millions and millions of dollars because they win their suit (their court case).

"Obviously," or clearly the tabloid press doesn't want to be sued and have to pay that money, so it has become more careful in recent years about the types of stories that they run in their tabloids (that they print in their tabloids). In fact, most tabloids now have at least one lawyer who reads all the articles before they are printed. These lawyers know what kinds of things the articles can say without going over the line. The phrase "to go over the line" means to do too



much of something so that you break a rule, you get somebody angry, you get in trouble. That's to go over the line, to go too far. Most teenagers, for example, know what kind of behavior they can do without going over the line and getting in trouble with their parents. In the same way, tabloids know how much they can say without going over the line and getting sued.

There are millions of people who buy these tabloids; perhaps the most famous one is called the National Enquirer. "To inquire" means to ask, to find out; so an "inquirer" is a person who asks. They had a famous slogan (a famous advertising phrase): "Inquiring minds want to know." In other words, people who are interested and curious want to know this information. I don't know if that's actually true. There are other tabloids that you can buy in the U.S.; tabloids are popular in other countries as well, especially in Great Britain where they have several tabloid newspapers where you can read a mixture of serious and not so serious news.

Now let's answer a few of your questions.

Our first question comes from Svetlana (Svetlana) in Russia. Svetlana wants to know the meaning of the phrase "under (someone's) thumb." There's a famous song by the rock group the Rolling Stones called "Under My Thumb." *Under my thumb...well, I won't sing it for you today!*

"To be under (someone's) thumb" means to be under someone's control, someone who controls you and tells you what to do and so forth. This phrase, in the song, refers to a man controlling a powerful or very aggressive woman. He's controlling a woman who "once pushed him down," meaning someone who made him feel less important, perhaps. "Under my thumb" is not usually used in a positive way; in other words, the person who is under your thumb is considered weak or inferior.

Svetlana also asks about the difference between the words "precision" (precision) and "accuracy." Both "precision" and "accuracy" can refer to something that is exact or absolutely correct. "Precision" usually refers more often to being exact in the measurement of something, such as the time or a distance. In the Olympics, for example, the times that it takes swimmers to swim or runners to run has to be very precise. That's "precision."

"Accuracy" refers to this sort of exactness in measurement, but also more generally to things that agree with the facts. "The newspaper story was accurate" – it was correct; it was same as the truth, it matched the truth. So



“accuracy” has a little more general meaning. “Precision” is often used for things related to measurement, although “accuracy” can also describe numerical measurement as well.

Miwako (Miwako) in Japan wants to know the difference between the words “surrender” and “release.” Are they the same? Are they different? Well, both “surrender” and “release” can mean to give up power over something or ownership over something.

“Surrender” is typically used to give up power over someone even though you didn’t want to. So, if Country A invades (takes over) Country B, Country B will surrender to Country A; they will give up the power to run their country to Country A. They don’t want to; it’s not something they do voluntarily or willingly. That would be “to surrender.”

“Release” can mean to give up your right of ownership to something legally; it can be used in the same way as “surrender.” But a more common use of “release” is to be given freedom, to be set free from something: “I had my dog in a cage (in a little box), and then I released him. I said, ‘You can go and play with the other dogs.’” If you are in jail – if you are in prison, like I was for five years, then eventually if you are a good person in prison you may be released. They may let you go; they may allow you to leave.

Finally, Dragan (Dragan) from Serbia wants to know what I mean when I say “coming to you from beautiful Los Angeles, California.” I say that often at the beginning of our podcast. What does “coming to you from” mean?

“Coming to you from” is a phrase that you will often hear on the radio or television to indicate where the people are broadcasting from (where they are located). If you listen to the BBC newscasts, they may say “coming to you from London.” If you listen to the Voice of America radio broadcast, they may say “coming to you from Washington, D.C.” Well, here at ESL podcast, we are coming to you from Los Angeles, meaning we are broadcasting – technically podcasting – from this location. We’re not a radio station or a television station, but we are someone who records and puts our information out on the Web so that people from many different areas can listen to us. So that’s what we mean when we say “coming to you from beautiful Los Angeles, California.”

If you have a question or comment, you can email us. Our email address is eslpod@eslpod.com.



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From Los Angeles, California – coming to you 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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