



TOPICS

Ask an American: living in a tiny home; volume versus issue versus version

GLOSSARY

first and foremost – most importantly; a phrase used when one has a list of things and wants to show that the first one is the most important one

* I need to thank so many people who have helped me get this award, but first and foremost, I want to thank my parents.

to free up – to make something available; to do or use something that makes more money, time, or other resources available

* By canceling our cable TV, we were able to free up an extra \$80 each month.

housework – chores; the work that one does to take care of the place where one lives, such as washing dishes, cleaning bathrooms, vacuuming carpets

* Shauna hates doing housework, so she pays for professional cleaners to clean her home once a week.

to come in – to enter one's home or office to do something or provide a service

* The high school asked a famous scientist to come in and give a lecture to the students.

to speak to (something) – to relate to something; to emphasize something; to show the importance of something

* Your exceptional grades speak to your commitment to school and all the time you spend studying.

to wonder – to think about something and ask questions to yourself about something

* Have you ever looked at the nighttime sky and wondered whether there is life on other planets?

excess – having too much of something

* My closet is an example of excess. Do I really need 10 pairs of black shoes?

to shift – to change in a big and important way

* The company has shifted direction, trying to sell its products to teenagers instead of adults.



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to downsize – to sell, give away, or throw away the things that one has because one wants to have a simpler lifestyle and fewer possessions

* After their children grew up and moved out of the home, Jun and Yuki decided to downsize, selling most of their things and moving into a smaller apartment.

china – nice dishes, such as plates, bowls, cups, and more

* They have regular dishes for everyday use and a really nice set of china for special occasions.

thought process – a way of thinking about something; a series of thoughts that lead to one conclusion

* When they asked him why he decided to move to Wyoming, he described his thought process: he was tired of living in a big city and he wanted to have a less stressful life in a place where he could own some land and horses.

global warming – the way that temperatures on the planet are increasing because of things that humans are doing that put carbon dioxide and other “greenhouse gases” into the air

* Melina takes the bus instead of driving a car because she doesn’t want to contribute to global warming.

fluorescent – a type of light bulb that is filled with gas and uses less energy than a regular light bulb does

* If you want to save money on your electricity bills, try changing your light bulbs to fluorescent light bulbs.

rethinking – a big and important change in the way that we think about something

* When Ebony decided to start volunteering at the hospital on the weekends, it marked a major rethinking in how she chose to spend her free time.

volume – a collection of written and bound (put together tightly) pages or one of a series of books

* How many volumes are there in your history of the United States?

issue – one of a set of printed, published, and distributed periodicals (publications that are produced/made regularly)

* Peter went to the library to get the spring issue of ESL Journal.

version – a form or variation of an original, often used to talk about software

* Which version of Skype are you using?



WHAT INSIDERS KNOW

Living in Trailers and Trailer Parks

In the United States, part of the “American Dream,” or the wish that Americans have for their own life and for their children’s life, is to own your own home. But owning a home can be very expensive, so some people have to look for other options.

People who want to own their own home but don’t have enough money to buy a big home might consider living in a “mobile home” or a “trailer,” which is a small home that can be put on wheels and pulled by a very powerful truck. Usually trailers aren’t moved very often. Someone who buys a trailer usually has it moved once and then lives there for a very long time.

Most trailers aren’t very “luxurious” (fancy). They are often “cramped” (crowded, without enough space), but they do have a kitchen, bathroom, a bedroom area, and a seating area. Some people spend their whole lives living in trailers.

Sometimes the trailers are put on a piece of land much like a house is. But most trailers are “set up” (put) in “trailer parks,” which are large areas with many trailers next to each other. Usually there isn’t very much land around the trailers, but the people who live in the trailers do try to make a little yard, planting flowers or having a “walkway” (path) to the front door.

Most of the people who live in trailers and trailer parks are “low-income” individuals, or people who don’t make very much money. But as other, higher-income Americans begin to downsize and look for smaller places to live, they might decide to move to trailers, too. Trailers are “certainly” (definitely) cheaper than homes, and they usually don’t need as much “maintenance” (care; repairs), either.



COMPLETE TRANSCRIPT

You're listening to ESL Podcast's English Café number 177.

This is ESL Podcast's English Café episode 177. I'm your host, Dr. Jeff McQuillan, coming to you from the Center for Educational Development in beautiful Los Angeles, California.

Our website is eslpod.com. On it, you can visit our ESL Podcast Store, which has some additional premium courses in business and daily English that you will enjoy, I think. You can also download the Learning Guide for this episode, and every current episode. The Learning Guide contains lots of additional information, including a complete transcript of this episode, vocabulary words, definitions, sample sentences, cultural notes, and a comprehension quiz on what you're listening to now.

On this Café, we're going to have another one of our Ask an American segments, where we listen to other native speakers talking at a normal rate of speech – a normal speed. We're going to listen to them and explain what they are talking about. Today we are going to talk about the advantages or good things about living in a tiny home – a very tiny home, a very small home. As always, we'll answer a few of your questions as well. Let's get started.

Our topic on this Café's Ask an American segment is about people who live in very tiny, or very small houses. We're going to listen to a man who "founded," or created a company that makes these small houses. The company specializes in – focuses on building very small houses, and the person we're going to listen to lives in one of the small houses that his company builds. His name is Jay (Jay). We're going to listen to him talk about why he does what he does, what some of the advantages are of what we might call downsizing. To "downsize" means to go from a larger house, for example to a smaller house, from a larger company reducing it to a smaller company.

First we'll listen to him talking about his house, and then we'll go back and explain what he said. Let's listen:

[recording]

"Well there are a lot of reasons I've decided to live in a tiny house, um, probably the first and foremost would be just because it frees up my time otherwise. So all



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of the time I would spend earning money to pay off a mortgage or rent can be spent, um, doing things I love to do. I don't have much housework now either."

[end of recording]

Jay starts by saying that there are a lot of reasons why he has decided to live in a tiny or small house. He says that first and foremost would be because it frees up his time. The phrase "first and foremost" is used when we have a list of things and want to show that the first one is the most important one. I might say that there are a lot of important people in my life. First and foremost would be my beautiful wife, then my parents, brothers, sisters, and other relatives. They're all important, but my wife is the most important.

When Jay talks about why he has chosen to live in a small home, he says that first and foremost, or most importantly, living in a small house frees up his time. To free up some time means to do or use something that gives us more time for other activities. For example, washing clothes by hand takes a lot of time, but if I use a washing machine instead, it frees up time for other, more interesting activities, like reading a book or listening to a podcast.

Jay explains that if he lived in a bigger house, he would have to spend more time earning money, or working to make money, to pay off a mortgage. A "mortgage" is the money that you borrow from a bank to buy a house. Or he might have to work a lot to make money to pay rent to live somewhere else. But because he lives in a small home, he doesn't have to pay as much money for a place to live, so he doesn't have to work as much. In this way, living in a small home frees up his time so that he can do the things he loves to do.

He also says that he doesn't have much housework, either. "Housework" (housework – one word) is the chores or the unpleasant things that we have to do to take care of the place where we live. Housework can include washing dishes, cleaning the bathrooms, vacuuming carpets, and other not very fun things. If you live in a small house, you have less housework, which, again, frees up more time.

Let's listen to Jay again as he talks about his reasons for wanting to live in a very small home.

[recording]



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“Well there are a lot of reasons I’ve decided to live in a tiny house, um, probably the first and foremost would be just because it frees up my time otherwise. So all of the time I would spend earning money to pay off a mortgage or rent can be spent, um, doing things I love to do. I don’t have much housework now either.”

[end of recording]

You may be wondering how small these houses are. Some of the houses are as small as 65 square feet, or six meters squared, so we’re talking about very small houses.

Jay is unusual, because most or at least a lot of Americans want to live in a big home. The average American home is about 230 meters squared. This is often because Americans have lots of stuff, or things that they own. Next, we’re going to hear from a woman named Margie who works for an organization called the American Institute of Architects. Architects are people who design homes and buildings. Marjorie thinks that Americans are changing in terms of what they want in their houses. Let’s listen to what she has to say.

[recording]

“You can hire professionals to come in and organize your garage and your closet, and really that speaks to having a lot of stuff. And if you have to organize it, and you don’t even know what it is, you sort of start to wonder: ‘well do I really need to have as much as I have’. And I think that the time of American excess has really begun to shift and people are starting to identify what’s really important to them.”

[end of recording]

Marjorie starts by saying that you can hire professionals to come in and organize your garage or closet. To have someone come in means to invite someone into your home to do something. You might have a carpet cleaner come in to clean your carpets really well, or you might have a plumber come in to fix your sink. Margie is talking about professional organizers who come in to help people figure out where they should put all the things they own so that they can find them easily and so that their homes don’t look messy or unorganized.

Margie says that needing to get help from professional organizers really speaks to having a lot of stuff. The phrase “to speak to (something)” means to relate to something or to emphasize something or perhaps to show the importance of



something. The fact that ESL Podcast has lots of listeners all over the world speaks to the quality of our episodes that are written by Dr. Lucy Tse and our ESL Podcast team.

Then Margie goes on to say that if you have to organize the things you have, and you don't even know what exactly you have, then you start to wonder whether we really need all the things that we have. The verb "to wonder" means to think about something and to ask questions to yourself about something. Some adults might wonder what their world would be like – what their life would be like if they had a million dollars or 10 million dollars. Children wonder about what the world would be like with dinosaurs or other large prehistoric animals. Well, Margie is talking about people who start to wonder whether they have to have all of the things they have in their home. They may ask themselves these questions and decide that they want to downsize, to move to a smaller home with less things – less stuff.

She says that the time of American excess has really begun to shift. "Excess" (excess) means having too much of something. If you have excess body weight, you're eating too much and you may be unhealthy or fat. Margie's talking about American excess, or the problem of simply having too much stuff. However, she think that it's starting to "shift," or to change in a big and important way. Many people find that their way of thinking shifts when they have children – it changes. Government policies often shift when a new person becomes president. Margie thinks that Americans' relationship with their excess stuff is starting to shift, because they're starting to identify what's really important to them, and it isn't the stuff that they own. So they are starting to think about getting rid of excess stuff, of downsizing, which would allow them, or let them live in a smaller home.

Let's listen to Margie talk about all of this one more time.

[recording]

"You can hire professionals to come in and organize your garage and your closet, and really that speaks to having a lot of stuff. And if you have to organize it, and you don't even know what it is, you sort of start to wonder: 'well do I really need to have as much as I have'. And I think that the time of American excess has really begun to shift and people are starting to identify what's really important to them."

[end of recording]



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Now we're going to listen to man named Bill. He created another of these companies that builds very small houses. He's going to talk about why people downsize and the environmental importance of having a smaller house.

Let's listen:

[recording]

"I've had several people, young people that just want to downsize. They've just said, 'I'm getting rid of stuff. I'm having garage sales, you know, I have three sets of china. What do I need three sets of china for?' So there's just a thought process that's going on where people are saying 'Okay, if global warming is really a big problem, how much help am I by changing light bulbs to fluorescent.' It's going to take a major rethinking of everything we do."

[end of recording]

Bill says that several people, including young people, have come to his company because they want to downsize. As we explained earlier, to downsize means to sell, give away, or throw away things that you have because want to have a smaller, simpler lifestyle. He says that people have told him that they're getting rid of stuff, having garage sales, which is when people put things they want to sell in the front of their yard or in their garage and try to sell it to other people for a low price. Garage sales are very popular on Saturdays and Sundays in the United States.

Bill gives us an example. He talks about someone who has three sets or groups of china. Here the word "china," spelled with a lower-case "c," is not the country of China. This kind of china means nice dishes, like plates, bowls, cups, and other dishes. Most Americans – many Americans like to have a nice set of dishes (of china) so that everyone eats from the dishes that look the same, but some families have more than one set of these nice dishes. When I was growing up, my mother had a set of china – of nice dishes and cups that she kept in a special place and we only could use those on important holidays, Christmas and other days when we had a large family meal. Well, we always had a large family meal, but a holiday meal. You may know I come from a large family.

Well, Bill says that people are wondering or asking themselves why they need all of these plates and cups. He says that this is an example of a thought process, or a way of thinking. If someone says, "Let me tell you my thought process



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behind this decision,” they’re saying let me give you the reasons why I came to this decision.

Bill is talking about a thought process where people know that global warming, or the way that temperatures on the planet are increasing, probably because of things that humans are doing, like driving cars and burning forests, is a problem. They don’t think that they’re helping solve the problem very much just by or only by changing their light bulbs to special kinds of light bulbs that saves energy – fluorescent light bulbs. A light bulb is a small, round piece of glass, usually, that we screw into a lamp or into the ceiling to have light indoors. Most Americans use regular light bulbs that also use a lot of energy, but people are now realizing that they should use “fluorescent” bulbs, which is a type of light bulb that uses less energy. I have fluorescent bulbs in my home. But that seems like a very small change that won’t really help stop global warming, so people who are concerned about the environment are looking for other things that they can do, like downsizing and moving into a smaller home.

Bill ends by saying that stopping global warming and downsizing is going to take a major rethinking of everything we do. A “rethinking” is a big and important change in the way that we think about something. For example, someone might spend their whole life thinking that a dog is dirty, it’s a bad idea to have a dog in your house. But then, perhaps, a dog might save your life. This might cause a rethinking of your position about dogs, why it might be a good idea to have a dog as a pet. I don’t think it would change my thinking, personally. Now if a cat saved your life, well that would be something to think about, I guess!

Let’s listen to Bill’s quote one more time:

[recording]

“I’ve had several people, young people that just want to downsize. They’ve just said, ‘I’m getting rid of stuff. I’m having garage sales, you know, I have three sets of china. What do I need three sets of china for?’ So there’s just a thought process that’s going on where people are saying ‘Okay, if global warming is really a big problem, how much help am I by changing light bulbs to fluorescent.’ It’s going to take a major rethinking of everything we do.”

[end of recording]

You may be thinking about downsizing or moving to a small house, now you know some of the reasons you might want to do that.



Now let's answer a few of your questions.

Our first question comes from Yevgen (Yevgen) in Ukraine. Yevgen wants to know the meanings of the words “volume,” “issue,” and “version” when we're talking about things that are printed, such as books.

A “volume” is usually a collection of written pages, a book or a series of books. For example, I have a copy of one of the great books in the English language, The Decline and Fall of the Roman Empire by Edward Gibbon. This is a large book, and in fact it is in several volumes; it's so large it takes more than one physical book to contain the entire collection of stories that Gibbon tells, his history.

So, that is one way of using the word “volume” when talking about books. An “issue” usually refers a magazine, what we would call a “periodical” – either a magazine or, perhaps, what we would call a “journal.” You can also use this term in talking about newspapers sometimes. So, if someone says, “Well, this is issue 14 of this magazine,” that means that's the 14th magazine that has been produced by that particular company. Each week, for example, magazines like Time and Newsweek in English have a new issue – a new magazine that has a separate number so you can figure out which magazine it is. If someone says, “issue number 435,” well, you know that is that specific magazine.

“Version” is a little more general; version is some sort of what we would call form of an original. So for example, if you have software like your computer's software that you use to type or to do something else, after the software is first produced, the company may produce a better, updated version. They would call that version two; nowadays we say 2.0 or 3.0. These are different programs that are updates of the original program. It's not a completely new program, but it is a new version – a new upgrade of that program.

So, volume usually refers to books; issue usually refers to magazines; and version can refer to lots of different things, nowadays it's most popularly used in talking about computer software.

Now, I should say that it's sometimes possible to use both volume and issue. Sometimes magazines and newspapers will say that the volume is the same for the whole year, and then each individual week or day is its own issue. So, if something is published in the seventh year, and it's the second publication of the year, you might call that volume seven, issue two. This is especially popular with



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scientific magazines (scientific journals – research magazines) that every year is a volume, then within that year each magazine – each journal is a separate issue number, so you have volume and issue numbers.

If you have a question, you can email us. We don't have time to answer all of your questions but we'll do our best. Our email address is eslpod@eslpod.com.

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

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