



TOPICS

Types of prisons and the parole system; American cities: Austin; using prepositions with the days of the week; for the world to owe (one) something; late/early morning, afternoon, and evening

GLOSSARY

prison – jail; a place where criminals are kept after a judge or jury have agreed that they've broken the law and should be punished for it

* For robbing a bank, Steve went to prison for 15 years.

to pose a threat – to present a danger; to have the possibility of hurting or killing someone

* Dogs may pose a threat to small children playing in the park and should be kept on leashes.

solitary confinement – for prisoners to be kept in a small room (cell) by themselves, usually as punishment, and to not be allowed to see or interact with other people

* After the fight, each of the prisoners was kept in solitary confinement for two weeks.

cell – the small room where a prisoner is kept with a lock on the door, so that he or she cannot leave without permission

* The police station has three cells to keep prisoners in.

incarceration – the process of putting people in prison and keeping them there for a period of time

* The purpose of job training for prisoners is so they'll be able to find jobs after their period of incarceration.

probation – the allowing of a person convicted of a crime to not go to prison, usually for people who have never committed a crime before or for people who have committed small crimes

* If you commit even a small crime while you're on probation, the judge will definitely send you to jail.



ENGLISH CAFÉ – 235

overcrowded – with too many people in a space; with more people in an area than it is designed to hold

* The bus was so overcrowded that the passengers found it difficult to breathe.

parole – the allowing of a criminal who has shown good behavior and who has served part of his or her time in prison to leave prison early

* After serving eight years of her 15-year prison sentence, Samantha received parole and is now looking for a job.

sentence – the amount of time that one is supposed to spend in prison for having committed a crime

* The judge gave her the maximum sentence allowed for this crime: 25 years in jail!

music venue – a place where music is performed; a place where musicians perform in front of an audience

* I prefer to see my favorite bands perform in small music venues, so I can see and hear them better.

campus – the buildings and land that are part of a school, college, or university

* Bindi's first class is on the north side of campus, and her second class is on the south side of campus.

bumper sticker – a sticker that is placed on the back of one's car

* Dr. Jeff McQuillan has a bumper sticker on the back of his car that reads: "I Love Cats!"

for the world to owe (one) something – to feels like one should receive something without working for it; for someone who is lazy to feel that good things should be given to him or her without work or effort

* He won't get a job or do anything to improve his living situation, but instead walks around as though the world owes him something.



WHAT INSIDERS KNOW

Johnny Cash and His Prison Performances

Many musicians have “made a mark” (been influential) in American music and one of those musicians is Johnny Cash. Johnny Cash was born in 1932 and he was “primarily” (mainly) a country music “artist” (musician), although he also recorded rock and roll and blues music. He had many “hit” (very popular) songs, including “I Walk the Line” and “Ring of Fire.” (“To walk the line” means to follow the rules.)

Johnny Cash, who died in 2003, was known for his deep voice and his “soulful” (music that sounds like it comes from deep emotions) sound. He liked to dress only in black clothing and became known as “The Man in Black.”

Johnny Cash did not have an easy life. He had problems with alcohol and drugs for many years. His battle with drugs and alcohol and his “tumultuous” (with many uncertain times) relationship with his wife June Carter was “depicted” (shown) in the 2005 award-winning film Walk the Line.

Johnny Cash felt a lot of “compassion” (concern for those in difficult situations) for prisoners. He performed many concerts at different prisons beginning in the late 1960s. Two of these performances were recorded and then released as “live” (performing in front of an audience while being recorded) albums: Johnny Cash at Folsom Prison (1968) and Johnny Cash at San Quentin (1969).

Both Folsom Prison and San Quentin are “maximum security prisons” in California, with prisoners who have committed the most serious crimes, such as murder. Today, these albums are considered classics, and contain several hit songs that Johnny Cash continues to be known for.



COMPLETE TRANSCRIPT

You're listening to ESL Podcast's English Café number 235.

This is English as a Second Language Podcast's English Café episode 235. 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 types of prisons in the United States and the prison parole system, or the system that shortens the amount of time some prisoners have to stay in prison. Then we'll continue our series on American cities, focusing on the city of Austin, Texas. And, as always, we'll answer a few of your questions. Let's get started.

This Café begins with a discussion about U.S. prisons. A "prison" is the same as a jail (jail). It's a place where "criminals," people who have done something wrong – who have done something against the law that's illegal, are kept for a certain period of time, sometimes for the rest of their life. They are sent to prison after they have been found guilty, that is, after a judge, and usually a "jury," a group of citizens, have agreed that they've broken the law and should be punished for it.

U.S. prisons have different levels of security, as is probably true in other countries. If you're a nonviolent offender, or a criminal (which is the same as an offender) who has broken a law but didn't hurt anybody while doing it – that's a nonviolent offender – then you are kept in minimum-security prisons. These might be people who, for example, use computers for identity theft, or who steal money from their employers, or who download things illegally. Well, probably not that last category, although it should be! These are people who are not considered that dangerous, and so they're nonviolent – they're not violent. The most dangerous and violent criminals are sent to what are called maximum-security prisons, and the highest-security prisons in the United States are known as supermax facilities, or prisons. The people in maximum-security prisons are considered to pose a threat to the people in the United States. To "pose (pose) a



ENGLISH CAFÉ – 235

threat” means to present a danger or to have the possibility of hurting or killing someone. For example, if you are “convicted,” that is if the judge and jury say you are guilty of murder, well, you are put in prison because we’re afraid you may murder someone else.

In a maximum-security prison, some criminals might spend much of their time in what is called “solitary confinement.” “Solitary” means alone, by yourself. “Confinement” means being forced to stay in a certain place. So “solitary confinement” is when the prisoner – the criminal is not allowed to see other people; they are not allowed to leave their cell. The “cell” (cell) is a small room where prisoners sleep and where they stay, most of the time, in prison. This has nothing to do with cell phones; there “cell” is short for cellular. Most prisoners don’t have cell phones in their cells – we hope!

The very highest-security supermax prison in the U.S. is called the ADX Florence, and it is in Florence, Colorado. Colorado is a state in the western central part of the United States. This supermax prison is sometimes called the Alcatraz of the Rockies. The Rockies are the mountains that go through Colorado. Alcatraz was a famous prison here in California; in fact, I talked about that in English Café 205. You might also have heard of another famous maximum-security prison called Leavenworth; it’s actually the Leavenworth Penitentiary. “Penitentiary” is just another word for prison. Leavenworth Penitentiary is in Kansas, which is in the central middle of the United States – right in the middle. It actually had the biggest maximum-security prison beginning way back in 1903 through 2005. It is now considered a medium-security prison. We talked about minimum-security and maximum-security; this is in between – medium-security.

In the United States, “incarceration” (incarceration), which is the process of putting people in prison and keeping them there for a period of time, is one of the main forms of punishment for breaking the law. In the United States, I’m sorry to say, we have the highest rate of incarceration in the world, and the highest number of people in prison. At the end of 2007, there were 7.2 million Americans, or people who were in America when they committed their crimes, in prison or on probation or parole. I’ll talk about what probation and parole are in a few minutes. This was about 2.4 percent of all American adults, or about one in every 42 adults, and I’m sure that number is even higher today.

I mentioned probation and parole; these are common terms we use when talking about crime in the U.S. and criminals. If someone is “on probation” it means that



he or she has been convicted of a crime. The court decided that this person broke the law and should be punished. However, for some reason, the court decides that the person doesn't have to go to jail. Perhaps the prisons are "overcrowded," as they are here in California, meaning there are too many people in the prisons. They don't have rooms – they don't have cells for all of these new prisoners. So for this reason, or perhaps because the crime was not very serious, the court may decide to put the criminal on probation so that he or she doesn't have to stay in prison as they would normally. And as long as this person – the criminal – meets regularly with what's called a "probation officer," sort of like a government official who is in charge of these people on probation, and as long as he or she follows the rules, such as not owning a gun and not getting into any more trouble, he or she can actually lead a somewhat normal life. Usually only nonviolent offenders, or criminals, are allowed to be on probation. Students in school who do not do very well, especially at the university, can be put on probation. That doesn't mean they are criminals, it means that there is a period of time where they have to show they are good enough – they will work hard enough to stay in college. Sometimes it means they have done something wrong. If you start a new job, many companies have what's called a probation period, which means a period of months, perhaps weeks where you work but you're not guaranteed your job; you have to prove that you are good enough.

Getting back to prisoners: Another option for a criminal or an offender is to be put on parole. This happens when a criminal has already gone to prison for some time, we would say when they have served part of their sentence. "Sentence" here is the amount of time that you are supposed to spend in prison. It's completely different meaning from a collection of words, a noun, and a verb. If a criminal has shown good behavior while serving his or her sentence, the courts and the prison officials can decide to put him or her on parole, and that allows the criminal to leave prison. Similar to people on probation, people on parole must follow certain rules: must meet regularly with their parole officer, who is like the probation officer; not break the law, of course. But for the most part they can, again, go back to their homes, try to get work, and so forth. Of course, it's not always easy to get work if you have been in prison – although I did it!

Now we're going to stop talking about the happy topic of prisons and instead continue our series on American cities. Today we're going to talk about the city of Austin, which is the capital city of Texas. Texas is located in the central south part of the United States; it is on the border of Mexico. Mexico is south of Texas. On the eastern border you have Louisiana and Arkansas; on the northern border,



ENGLISH CAFÉ – 235

the State of Oklahoma; and on the western border of Texas, the State of New Mexico.

Austin is not a large town; there are less than a million people there, about 800,000 in the city itself. If you consider the whole area around Austin, with the suburbs outside of the city, it's about 1.6 million. It's the fourth largest city in Texas and the 15th biggest city in the country.

Today, Austin is growing very quickly. It has become a popular place for people to live, especially younger people. In fact, Austin is called the second best place to live in the United States – I'm not sure where the first place is, probably St. Paul, Minnesota! It's also called the third greenest city in America, meaning it's very environmentally conscious. It is also called the least stressful metro area, and America's number one college town; we'll talk about why in a second.

Since the 1970s, Austin has also been known, for many Americans, as a place for good musical performances. A lot of musicians move to Austin. In fact, the city calls itself the live music capital of the world. It has more music "venues," or places where music is performed, per person than any other city in the United States. Austin has many nightclubs; it also has an annual music and film festival called South by Southwest. It has a few other festivals as well, but South by Southwest is probably the most famous. There used to be a television program called Austin City Limits. The "city limit" is the border of the city, where the city ends, or where it begins. Austin City Limits might be still on the air – might still be showing on TV, I'm not sure. But I remember watching the show many years ago, and they always had interesting musical performances.

I called Austin America's number one college town, the reason is that the University of Texas at Austin is located – you guessed it – in Austin. It's a large school; there are more than 50,000 students at what we would call UT Austin, for University of Texas at Austin. They also have more than 17,000 faculty and staff. "Faculty" are the professors; "staff" are the people who do all the work – not the professors, of course! The "campus," the area where the school is located, also is famous because it has the Lyndon Baines Johnson (or LBJ) Library and Museum. This library and museum has all of the important historical documents related to when Lyndon B. Johnson was President of the United States. You may remember that Johnson was John F. Kennedy's vice president, and when Kennedy was assassinated – coincidentally in Texas – Johnson became president. He then won reelection in 1964, but he did not run for election again in 1968. So the LBJ Library and Museum is also at UT Austin.



ENGLISH CAFÉ – 235

The university is famous for its programs in computer science and engineering. Many of its students stay in Austin after they graduate, working in Austin's what we might call "thriving," or very successful, high-tech sector. Some of the area's largest employers include Dell Computers, 3M, Apple, Hewlett-Packard, Google, and Intel. All of those companies have offices in Austin. The Austin area, in fact, is sometimes called Silicon Hills because it is similar in the amount of talent as Silicon Valley, which is here in California, in Northern California. Silicon Valley is where most, or many of the major Internet and technology companies are located. Well, they call it Silicon Hills – I didn't think there were that many hills in Austin, but I guess there are. Austin is also home to a lot of biotechnology and "pharmaceutical," or drug-making companies. It's also home to famous a grocery store in the U.S. called Whole Foods Market, which is an expensive organic grocery store chain.

Austinites, or the people who live in Austin, tend to have very liberal political views, even though Texas is a very politically conservative state. For President George W. Bush was once governor of Texas. Because Austin sees itself as being different – as being independent from the rest of Texas, some people, as a joke, call it The People's Republic of Austin as if it were its own country. And of course, People's Republic is usually associated with the communist countries, both past and present. Austinites themselves are very proud to be different; they often use bumper stickers, which are small pieces of paper that you put on the back of your car. They have interesting sayings: Keep Austin Weird, meaning keep it different – don't make it like other cities in Texas. So, it's a very different sort of city.

I've been to Austin a couple of times. A friend of mine did his Ph.D. in Spanish Literature at Austin. UT Austin used to have one of the best doctoral programs – Ph.D. programs in Spanish Literature. I don't think that's true anymore. In any case, it's a beautiful, nice city. If you ever have a chance to visit, I think you would enjoy it.

Now let's answer few of your questions.

Our first question comes from Giuseppe (Giuseppe) in Italy. Giuseppe wants to know when we say, for example, "on Friday" and when we just say "Friday." In other words, how do we use prepositions when we are talking about time, specifically days of the week?



ENGLISH CAFÉ – 235

Well, “on” is a preposition that is often used in expressions of time as well as expressions of space, where something is. When we are talking about expressions of time, “on” is used before a day of the week to specify when something will happen: “We are going to have a meeting this week.” “When?” “On Friday.” That’s the specific thing that will happen. “We’re going to the movies.” “When are you going?” “On Saturday.” We are going on Saturday.

Sometimes Americans leave out the preposition, so they say “We’re going to have our meeting Friday,” instead of “on Friday.” Or, “My brother is leaving Monday,” instead of “My brother is leaving on Monday.” It’s okay to omit, or not to say, the preposition, but mostly in informal conversation. In more formal writing, people often use the “on,” or usually use the “on,” but there’s not a strict rule. In American English, prepositions are sometimes left out – sometimes not used just to make the speaking easier. So, if you are listening to a radio broadcast, for example, you may not hear that preposition. It would be very difficult to explain all of the uses of the preposition “on” in English; there are just too many for us to explain here.

Kenta (Kenta) in Japan wants to know the meaning of a sentence: “He thinks the world owes him something.” What does that mean? Well, “to owe” (owe) means that you need to pay, or repay, money to a person or a business, a bank typically, usually because you borrowed money from them (they lent you money – gave you money) but you have to give them the money back. You had a loan. It doesn’t have to be money; someone could do you a favor. Sometimes you ask people for a favor, and if they say yes, you say, “I owe you one,” meaning I owe you a favor – I will do a favor for you in the future.

The sentence “He thinks the world owes him something” refers to when someone feels entitled to get something. They feel like they should receive – that it is right for them to get something. In this case, they feel they need to get something without working for it. It’s sometimes an expression we use to describe someone who is lazy, who doesn’t work very hard, who thinks that everyone should just give him things. That’s the meaning of that particular sentence.

Finally Eri (Eri), in Japan also, has some questions also related to time and expressions of time, especially the expression “late afternoon,” or when we say “early morning.” What do these times refer to? What do we mean by “early morning”?



ENGLISH CAFÉ – 235

Well, “late” is something that happens or exists near the end of a period of time. “Early” is something that happens or exists near the beginning of a period of time. It’s difficult to give exact times; different people mean different things, there’s no rule. Generally speaking however, early morning refers to some time between six in the morning and eight, or maybe nine in the morning. Late morning would be 10-10:30 to noon. Midmorning would be probably between maybe 9 and 10 or 10:30. Similarly, early afternoon would be between 12:30 and 2:00 in the afternoon. Late afternoon would be after three or four, until 5 or 5:30. Most Americans consider 6:00 the beginning of evening, so early evening would be between 6 and 8:00 at night, and late evening would be, say, between 10 and midnight.

You can listen to our podcast in the early morning, the midmorning, the late morning, the early afternoon, the mid-afternoon, late afternoon, early evening, mid-evening, or late evening – anytime. We’re on 24 hours a day for you!

If you have a question, we’ll try to answer it here on the Café. Email us at eslpod@eslpod.com.

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

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