



## TOPICS

The Godfather; Graceland and Elvis; to hinder versus to hamper versus to impede; the hunt is on; quick and dirty tips

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## GLOSSARY

**godparent** – someone chosen by a child's parents who promises to help raise a child with Christian values

\* Who should we ask to be Inez's godparents, your brother and his wife?

**mafia** – a large group of organized criminals who control many illegal activities

\* The mafia controlled this city in the 1930s and the police couldn't stop their illegal activities.

**bribery** – giving someone money or something else of value so that that person will do something dishonest or illegal that will benefit one

\* Giving money to the judge in your court case would be considered bribery.

**corruption** – bad, dishonest, and/or immoral (morally wrong) behavior, especially by people in power

\* The new governor promised to get rid of corruption in the state government.

**brutal** – very mean, cruel, and violent

\* There is no excuse for the brutal treatment of children.

**to legitimize** – to make something official, legal, acceptable, or right

\* This new law would legitimize marriage between two men or between two women.

**stillborn** – a baby that is already dead when he or she is born

\* Improving the quality of the food and eliminating smoking and drinking during pregnancy has reduced the number of stillborn babies in this region of the world.

**sideburns** – the long strips of hair that some men let grow on the sides of their face, in front of their ears

\* Those sideburns look strange on a face like Charlie's.



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**the rest is history** – a phrase used to refer to something that everyone or almost everyone knows

\* Zhong and Diane went on their first date eight months ago and they really liked each other. The rest is history.

**mansion** – a very large home on a lot of land, owned by very rich people

\* How much do you think it costs to maintain a mansion of that size?

**recording studio** – a place where people record music; a room or building where good quality sound or music is recorded

\* Come into the recording studio next week and we'll record the first three songs for your new CD.

**artifact** – an object with historical or cultural importance; an object that is an important part of a historical event or belonged to someone important in history

\* Scientists discovered artifacts of people who lived in this area over 2,000 years ago.

**to hinder** – to hold back or slow down, even to the point of stopping something

\* The bad storms hindered communication and we weren't able to call for help.

**to hamper** – to slow down movement or progress, often through restraints, such as a rope

\* He is trying to find a job, but is hampered by not owning a car and not having reliable transportation.

**to impede** – to slow down by making movement difficult; to stand in the way of someone or something

\* This morning, a large fallen tree on the freeway impeded traffic.

**the hunt is on** – a phrase meaning a search for someone or something has begun

\* The president of the company announced last week that she's leaving. The hunt is now on for a replacement.

**quick and dirty tips** – a list of short, easy-to-understand but useful suggestions on a particular topic

\* I don't have time to read through the entire users' manual. Since you have the exact same printer, can you just give me some quick and dirty tips on how to set it up?



## **WHAT INSIDERS KNOW**

### **The Musical Bye Bye Birdie**

In American high schools, students have a choice of “extracurricular” (apart from the main school subjects, such as math, science, and history) activities that they can “take part in” (be involved in). There are many sports and clubs for students with different interests.

Each year, most high schools “put on” (organize for performance) a “musical,” which is a play with music, singing, and often dancing. One musical that is popular among high schools across the United States is Bye Bye Birdie. The musical is set in 1958, and was “inspired by” (encourage or influenced by) Elvis Presley and his “draft notice” (official letter from the government that one has to serve in the military).

In the musical, the main character is a singer very similar to Elvis Presley, named Conrad Birdie. Conrad receives a draft notice and his “manager,” the person who controls Conrad Birdie’s business and career matters, decides that they would try a “publicity stunt” (event or actions to get attention) before he goes off to war. They record a song and select a “random” (chosen without a specific reason) “fan” (person who likes something very much) to receive a kiss “on the air” (during a broadcast) when Conrad sings the new song on television. Things don’t go as planned, and there are many “comical” (funny) things that happen. Many of the songs in the musical are very “memorable” (difficult to forget).

The original “production” (performances of the show) was very successful, winning the “top” (most important) prize for theater, the Tony Award. Bye Bye Birdie was made into a movie in 1963 and into a television movie in 1995.



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### COMPLETE TRANSCRIPT

You're listening to ESL Podcast's English Café number 232.

This is English as a Second Language Podcast's English Café episode 232. 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 a very well-known American movie called The Godfather. We're also going to talk about perhaps one of the most famous musicians of the 20<sup>th</sup> century from the U.S., Elvis Presley, the King of Rock and Roll. We'll also specifically talk about a large mansion – a house where he used to live, called Graceland. And, as always, we'll answer a few of your questions. Let's get started.

This Café begins with a discussion of a movie called The Godfather. Actually, there were three movies related to The Godfather. For Christians, especially for Catholics, a “godfather” and “godmother, we could call them “godparents,” is someone who promises to help raise a child with Christian values if the parents are not able to do so. Normally, the child – the baby is brought to the church to be “baptized,” to participate in a ceremony where the child's parents and the godparents that the parents select for the child promise to raise the child in the Christian faith. Parents usually pick two godparents – a godfather and a godmother – that would help them, if for some reason they couldn't raise the child themselves. Often the godparents are relatives: aunts, uncles, cousins. I was the youngest in my family, as you may know, number 11, so by the time they got to me we had run out of aunts, uncles, and cousins. There were no more left; all of my older brothers and sisters had them as godparents, so my godparents were our neighbors next door, in the house next door to us, next to where we lived.

In 1969, getting back to The Godfather, an American writer named Mario Puzo wrote a crime novel, a fictional book about crime, called The Godfather. The



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book became very popular, and in 1972 it was made into a movie, what we're talking about today, also called The Godfather.

The book and the movie are basically about a large mafia family. A “mafia” (mafia) is a large group of organized criminals who control many different illegal activities. Nowadays, in many American cities we have gangs, young people usually, who control drugs and prostitution and other illegal activities. These are really a type of mafia. But mafia usually refers to – in the United States anyway – it usually refers to the Italian American Mafia, the traditional Italian American organization which originally was from Italy, especially from Sicily and I believe southern Italy, but you could also have other mafias. Often the mafias are based upon nationality, though not always. You could speak of the Russian Mafia, for example. Here in the prisons – the jails of California we have what's called the Mexican Mafia. These aren't necessarily people from Mexico, but they are often Mexican American.

Once again, the mafia is an organization of criminals; usually they're involved in a lot of bribery and corruption. “Bribery” (bribery) means paying someone to do something that you know is wrong. Sometimes people, for example, offer money to government officials, people who work for the government, to try to get them to do something for them that's illegal. This is an example of bribery. “Corruption” is a more general term to talk about a situation where you have bribery and other problems. Corruption refers to illegal, unethical, or immoral activity by people who are in power – politicians and officials, government officials usually. The mafia is said to be heavily involved in bribery and corruption.

Before The Godfather, most movies had looked at the mafia from the point of view – from the prospective of an outsider, someone who was not part of the mafia, how they would look at the mafia. The Godfather was different, because it showed the mafia from within. That is, you got to see the perspective – the opinions, the viewpoints of those who were actually in the mafia. Now, it's a novel – it's a fictional story. I don't mean they actually reflect or document the views of those in the mafia. The movie focuses on a mafia family in which individuals – criminals – use often brutal violence to get what they want. The word “brutal” (brutal) means very cruel, very violent, very mean.

I won't tell you the whole story of the movie and the book; I'll give you just a little bit of information. The youngest son in this mafia family, whose name is Corleone, is called Michael. Michael doesn't want to be a part of the family business; he does not want to join his father and relatives in this mafia. He



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thinks what his family is doing is wrong. However, over time, he becomes more and more involved in these mafia illegal activities. After his father dies, he becomes the new leader, but he promises his wife that he's going to legitimize the family business. To "legitimize" means to make something legal, make something official, acceptable. I won't go into the rest of the story.

The Godfather, as I said, was the original movie, but there was also two more movies made: The Godfather Part II and The Godfather Part III.

The Godfather, especially the original movie, had many very well-known, famous actors, including the most famous, Marlon Brando. Brando played the character – was the main actor in the movie; he was the leader of the mafia. There was also the actor Al Pacino, as well as the actress Diane Keaton in the movie. Many people believe it was one of the best American movies made of all time. It received the Academy Awards – the Oscar for Best Picture, Best Actor, Best Adapted Screenplay; it won many other awards as well. The music from The Godfather became famous, and that won awards. When the American Film Institute, a group of people who are experts on movies, made a list of the best 100 American movies, The Godfather was number two. Number one, I'm guessing, was an older movie, Citizen Kane.

The Godfather, as I said, had two "sequels," or related movies. One was released in 1974; the other was released in 1990, so much later. All three movies focus on the same mafia – Italian American mafia family; they're all considered very good. If you haven't seen the movie, especially the original, I can recommend it. However, I have to warn you it is somewhat violent.

Like a lot of popular movies, there are famous expressions from The Godfather that many Americans know, even Americans who have never seen the movie. The most famous saying – the most famous line from The Godfather is when Marlon Brando tells one of the characters – one of the other members of the family, "I'm going to make him an offer he can't refuse." That means I'm going to tell this person that they have to do something basically; I'm going to force them to do it, but I'm not going to say I'm forcing them. "I'm going to make them an offer" means I'm going to ask them to do something. But you're really not asking them, you're not just giving them an opportunity; you're making it so that the person cannot say no – cannot refuse. Sometimes this phrase – this saying is used jokingly. When someone says to you "I'm going to make you an offer you can't refuse," they mean they're going to ask you to do something that is



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something that you will not say no to, usually because you want to. But if they are forcing you, it's because you don't have any choice.

There is a more recent television series that is sort of like The Godfather story; it's called The Sopranos, and it is also about an Italian American mafia family that lives in the eastern part of the United States. Some of you may have heard of that television program as well. Some Italian American groups were angry at The Sopranos, the television show, because they felt that it was a false picture of the Italian American community.

Our next topic is about one of the most famous Americans of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, Elvis Presley. Elvis Presley is still called by many people the King of Rock and Roll. You're probably already familiar with Elvis – he goes by his first name – and his music, so I'm going to talk a little bit about his early life, which you may not know about, and about the most famous place associated with Elvis, his large home called Graceland.

Elvis was born in Mississippi, which is in the southeastern part of the United States, in 1935. He was actually born as a twin; there were two babies at the same time. However, the other baby died. When that happens, we usually say that the other twin was “stillborn” (one word) which we use to describe babies that were dead even before the other twin was born. As Elvis grew up, he was an only child, meaning he had no brothers and sisters. He had, therefore, a close relationship with his parents. His family was very poor; unfortunately his mother drank too much – too much alcohol, and the father got in trouble and was “jailed,” or put in prison for eight months. During this time, Elvis and his mother were not able to stay in their home – they weren't able to keep their home, they couldn't afford it, they didn't have enough money – so they had to live with relatives, cousins and so forth.

Elvis was very quiet in school; most people thought he was very shy. When you say someone is “shy” (shy), you mean that they're very quiet, they don't talk to other people, they don't like to talk to other people. I am not shy! His first musical performances were in 1945, when he was only 10 years old, at the Mississippi-Alabama Fair and Dairy Show. Alabama is a state next to Mississippi. A “fair” is like a celebration; it's a big gathering of people. “Dairy” refers to cows, and fairs often have animals as part of the fair. Fairs are places where you can come and buy things, but usually they are a series of contests and shows about the agriculture or the local area where the fair is taking place, especially for state fairs. Elvis dressed as a cowboy for his first performance,





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and sang a song while standing on a chair in order to reach the microphone, because he was so small. He won first place in the contest, he won five dollars and free tickets for all the rides at the fair. The “rides” were the machines that you could get on, things like the Ferris Wheel and the merry-go-round, the sorts of things you find at places such as Disneyland and Disney World, except they’re not quite as nice at a state fair.

When Elvis turned 11 – when he was 11 years old – he was given his first guitar and he became more and more interested in music. Elvis started to play in a small band, a group of musicians who perform together. He carried his guitar around with him; most of the time he had it with him. As a teenager, he began to grow his famous sideburns. “Sideburns” (sideburns – one word) are long stripes of hair that some men grow on the sides of their faces, in front of their ears; they go down from the ear towards the bottom of your face, towards your chin. He also started wearing more unusual clothing as a teenager. Although he continued to be shy, he kept performing and the audiences really liked his music.

From there, once he became popular, we could say that the rest is history. That phrase, “the rest is history,” is used to refer to something that everyone or almost everyone knows. Most people, probably most of you, are already familiar with Elvis Presley’s adult life and his music, so I won’t talk too much about that. He did eventually, of course, become a famous Rock and Roll singer; he was on television. He sold millions of records – millions of copies of his songs. Unfortunately, like a lot of popular musicians, he was involved in drinking alcohol too much, and drugs, and this eventually killed him.

Another famous thing about Elvis was his home called Graceland. Graceland is a “mansion,” a large house, where he lived in Memphis, Tennessee. Tennessee is in the central eastern part of the United States. The mansion had 23 rooms, so it was very large. It was originally built back in 1939, and Elvis bought it in 1957, paying about 100,000 dollars. This doesn’t sound like that much money now, but of course, it was worth much more back then; it might be a few million dollars in today’s prices. He made a lot of changes to the mansion, and he added a swimming pool, a racquetball court, and a recording “studio,” a place where he could record his music. The eventual size of the Graceland mansion almost doubled after Elvis had added all of these things.

Elvis Presley died at Graceland, and he, his parents, and his grandmother are all buried there. Many people who love Elvis and his music like to go there; you can take tours of Graceland; you can go and see Elvis’ house. The mansion is filled





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with “artifacts,” things that Elvis owned and used: his clothing, his records, his awards, and so forth. Even his airplane is there!

I haven’t been to Graceland, but I’m sure it’s an interesting place to visit. Because so many people want to go there, it costs a lot of money to keep the house – to maintain the house in good condition. In 1982, Graceland became a museum and was opened to the public, and that’s how it pays for its expenses now; you pay to go into the museum.

This house, Graceland, has sort of become part of American popular culture. The musician Paul Simon wrote a song called “Graceland” about going to see Elvis’ house, and he has a very famous album – a very famous record also called Graceland. It’s a good one!

Now let’s answer a few of your questions.

Our first question comes from Marat (Marat) from Russia. Marat wants to know the differences between the words “hinder” (hinder), “hamper” (hamper), and “impede” (impede). These three words are all similar in meaning; really it just depends on the person using them in terms of which one you will hear. They all mean to slow something down, perhaps even to stop it. It can also mean to hold back. “Hold back” is a phrasal verb meaning to prevent something from happening. For example: “Stan and Cindy’s anger toward each other hindered their communication.” It slowed down their communication, or it prevented them from communicating. “Hamper” and “impede” could also be used here. “It hampered their communication.” “It impeded their communication.” Another example: “Kerry had to walk slowly because she was hampered by all of her bags that she was carrying.”

Although all three words means something similar, there are some slight differences. “Hinder” is not used that much in casual conversation; you will see it more in writing. I would not say that it’s a formal term, but it’s a little more formal than “hamper,” which is more casual, more likely to be heard in conversation. “Impede” is something that is a little bit more formal than “hinder” and “hamper.” “Impede” can also imply, or give you the idea that something has been blocked; not just slowed down, but actually prevented from happening. “Hamper” and “hinder” usually are used when something isn’t completely stopped, but it’s just slowed down, or it’s just not happening as fast as it might otherwise.



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Those are very loose differences, however. Again, the three words are very similar in meaning.

Abdullah (Abdullah) from Saudi Arabia wants to know the meaning of an expression that he heard: “the hunt is on.” “The hunt is on” is a phrase used to show that there is now a search for someone or something that has begun, that you are beginning to look for something. “Now that Malcolm has arrived in London, the hunt is on for a good restaurant.” He’s going to be looking for, now, a good restaurant in London – or in Los Angeles! “Joyce was fired from her job yesterday. She lost her job, so the hunt is on for a new job.” She’s looking for a new job.

The verb “to hunt” is often used when we are talking about animals, and the original meaning of this expression, “the hunt is on,” was almost certainly referring to hunting for deer or some other animal – other than human beings, of course!

Yee Rane (Yee Rane) in China wants to know the meaning of an expression she heard, perhaps on another podcast, called “quick and dirty.” What are “quick and dirty tips” for example? Well, a “tip” is help; it is a piece of advice to help you. “Quick and dirty” is a general expression meaning I’m going to do something that is very easy; I’m going to do it quickly. It’s not the best solution; it’s not the best answer, but it’s good enough. So, “quick and dirty tips” would be pieces of advice that will help you; they’re easy to understand. They’re not necessarily, however, the most thorough, the most complete answers or solutions to whatever problem it is you’re trying to solve.

If you have a question about some word or phrase you don’t understand, you can email us at [eslpod@eslpod.com](mailto:eslpod@eslpod.com). I promise we will not give you the quick and dirty answer, but the complete and, we hope, correct answer.

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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