



ENGLISH CAFÉ – 200

TOPICS

The White House; noises made by animals, humans, and machines; document versus documentation; to have to do with; gawd-awfully (god-awfully)

GLOSSARY

renovation – an effort to make changes to a building or room to make it more beautiful or more comfortable

* They'll be eating at restaurants until their kitchen renovation is finished.

wing – a long part of a building that extends in one direction from the center

* The CEO's office is in the north wing of the building.

head of state – a president, prime minister, or other important leader of a country

* Have you ever personally met any heads of state?

press briefing room – a room where news reporters come to listen to important announcements from the government or a company and then ask questions

* The press briefing room was filled with reporters from the country's biggest newspapers, magazines, television channels, and radio stations.

china set – dishes; a group of expensive, formal dishes that all have the same color and style

* Hendra asked for a new china set as a wedding present.

to bark – for a dog to make a loud noise or “speak” with its mouth

* The dog barks whenever someone comes to the door.

pow – a noise made when two things hit each other, especially if one's fist (the shape made when one's hand is closed tightly to hit something) hits another person or thing

* The child hit his cousin – pow! – and she started to cry.

bam – a loud sound made when two objects hit each other, most often used to describe the sound made when a gun is fired or shot

* Did you hear that loud bam? What was that?



ENGLISH CAFÉ – 200

thud – a sound that is made when two things hit each other, especially when a heavy object lands on something very heavily

* They heard a loud thud, and then the child's screams. He had fallen down and hit his head.

splat – a sound made when something wet hits a hard surface

* The wet swimsuit made a "splat" when it fell to the floor.

clank – a sound made when two metal objects hit each other

* She has a headache from listening to the clank, clank, clank at the factory all day long.

ding – a ringing sound, almost like music, that is made when two pieces of metal or a piece of metal and a piece of glass hit each other

* Don't you hear the ding of the doorbell? Someone must be at the front door.

document – a piece of official information in writing, usually on paper

* Sam took the wrong documents to the passport office when he tried to apply for a passport.

documentation – a collection of documents; a set of information

* What documentation do you have showing that you've lived at this address for the past five years?

to have to do with (something) – concerning or about something; related to or involved with something

* Some of the questions on the test tomorrow will have to do with European history during the Middle Ages.

god-awfully (gawd-awfully) – horribly; very unpleasantly; shockingly

* Why are the children yelling so god-awfully? What happened?



The Western White House

The White House may be the one of the most beautiful “residences” (homes) in the United States, but even the President needs to “get away” (have a vacation) sometimes. Some past presidents have returned to the homes they lived in before they became president on their vacations, while others “establish” (create) new vacation homes. While the president is “in office” (serving as president), their other home is informally called “The Western White House.”

George W. Bush, for example, often returned to his “ranch” (home with a lot of land where cows, horses, and other animals are kept) in Texas when he had time off. President Ronald Reagan liked his home in California so much he spent one-eighth (1/8) of the time he was president living there.

Unlike most recent presidents, President Bill Clinton did not have a Western White House during his presidency. Instead, he spent his vacations in borrowed homes on Martha’s Vineyard, Massachusetts, an island off the east coast of the United States.

“Federal” (national) law allows the president to “designate” (officially name) a home apart from the White House so that federal money can be spent on this home, making it possible for the president to visit and live there temporarily. These funds can be used for “upkeep” (maintenance) of the home, as well as providing proper “security,” so that the president and his or her guests are safe during their visit.

It is not clear yet where President Barrack Obama will spend his vacation time. Many believe “speculate” (guess) that his Western White House will be his home in Chicago, Illinois, where he lived before becoming the president.



ENGLISH CAFÉ – 200

COMPLETE TRANSCRIPT

You're listening to ESL Podcast's English Café number 200.

This is ESL Podcast's English Café episode 200. Can you believe it? I'm your host, Dr. Jeff McQuillan, coming to you from the Center for Educational Development, as always, in beautiful Los Angeles, California.

You can visit our website at eslpod.com. Download this episode's Learning Guide, an 8- to 10-page guide we provide for all of our current episodes that gives you some additional help in improving your English. You can also take a look at our ESL Podcast Store, with additional courses in English, as well as our ESL Podcast Blog.

On this Café, we're going to talk about the White House, the large building in Washington, D.C. where the U.S. president lives and works. Then we'll talk about some of the noises made by animals, humans, and machines in English, how you write and say those noises. And as always, we'll answer a few of your questions. Let's get started.

Let me begin this 200th episode of the English Café by thanking all of you for listening. We also have 500 episodes of our regular ESL Podcast, meaning that we now have 700 ESL Podcast and English Café podcast episodes, and we thank you all for your support over these years.

This episode is going to be talking about the White House; at least our first topic will be the White House. This is the building in Washington D.C. where the President of the United States lives. It has the most famous street address in America: 1600 Pennsylvania Avenue – technically, Pennsylvania Avenue NW in Washington, D.C. As you can guess from the name, it is painted white, and it is the home and workplace of the president and his family. The White House is a symbol of American government and power, I'm sure you've seen many photographs of it in the news or in the movies.

The White House was actually first built beginning in 1792 – from 1792 to the year 1800, and every president since our second president, John Adams, has lived there. That is, our first president, George Washington, did not live in the White House. Right now, President Barack Obama, his wife Michelle, and his daughters Malia and Sasha live there, when we are recording this episode; they also have a dog by the name of Bo.



ENGLISH CAFÉ – 200

The White House has gone through many changes over the years; it has had several renovations, or efforts to make the building more beautiful or more comfortable. It's also had additions, which make the building larger. The White House – the first White House was burned by the British during what we call the War of 1812, and when they rebuilt the White House, they made it larger than the original White House that John Adams lived in.

Nowadays (in current times), the White House has two sections, what we call two wings. A “wing” (wing) is usually the part of a bird or of a plane, it's like an arm; it goes out and helps the bird or the plane fly. But when we're talking about buildings, a wing is a long part of a building that goes in one direction, usually from the center of the building. For example, hospitals have wings for certain types of patients; it's a separate part of the building. A museum could have a wing, dedicated to a certain kind of art. The White House is a long building that has two sections – two wings: the West Wing and the East Wing.

The West Wing is where most of the real work gets done in the White House; it's where the offices are. It's also where the president's office is; it's called the Oval Office. An “oval” is like an egg – it is the shape like an egg; it's round, but it's not a perfect circle because it stretches out a little. The Oval Office is where the President's desk is, and where many official meetings are held. If you've ever seen the president make a speech to the American people on television, many times it will be him sitting at his desk in the Oval Office. There was actually a famous television program about the White House – about the president (not the real president, a fictional – made up president), and that show was called The West Wing, referring to the part of the White House where the work is done, where the offices are.

The other wing – the East Wing of the White House also has an office; it's where the First Lady, the president's wife, has an office. It's also where most of the social events take place, such as important dinners with foreign heads of state, people such as presidents and prime ministers from other countries.

Other parts of the White House include the Executive Residence, which is where the president and his family live and sleep. There's also something called the Old Executive Office Building; the president and the vice president have offices there as well. This is, in fact, where they do most of their work. The Oval Office is often used for official meetings more than day-to-day work, although it could be used for both.



ENGLISH CAFÉ – 200

The modern White House is a very large building; it has six floors – six levels, and there are about 55,000 square feet in the White House, much larger than any normal home. 55,000 square feet is about 5,100 square meters. The White House has 132 rooms – which is, let's see, 127 more rooms than my house has! It has 35 bathrooms. It has 412 doors, 147 windows, 28 fireplaces, 8 staircases (stairs that go from one level to another), and 3 elevators. It would certainly be easy to get lost in such a large place! Hopefully the president knows his way around; that is, he knows where things are by now.

The White House has a lot of historical importance, so the government doesn't make major architectural changes anymore. You are not going to see a new wing to the White House, at least not in the near future. However, each president's family can make some minor changes to the places where they live; there are also changes that can be made to places where they work, but the living area is more common to experience changes when a new president arrives. This could include changing the furniture, the carpet, the wallpaper, which is paper you put on the walls so you don't have to paint it, and other decorations. President Franklin Roosevelt, in the middle part of the 20th century, added a swimming pool in the White House, but this has since been changed or converted into a press briefing room, a room where news reporters come to listen to people speak about the president's policies and ask questions. There is no more swimming pool, in that part of the White House anyway. President Richard Nixon, in the late 1960s-early 1970s, added a bowling alley, a place where you can roll a very heavy ball and try to knock down what we call the pins, which are heavy objects that stand on one end. I'm sure for our current president, if there isn't a basketball court he'll probably add one, since he likes to play basketball.

People who go to Washington, D.C. often want to visit the White House. Getting access to the White House – being able to visit has become more difficult after the terrorist attacks of September 11, but people can still get tickets for tours of the building, you just have to plan ahead of time – you have to make plans in advance. You can't simply go to Washington, D.C. and expect to get into the White House; you need make reservations. In fact, there are about 5,000 people who visit the White House every day. The tours take visitors to many of the important rooms in the White House, and the guide provides information about changes that have been made to the building over time and the ways that the, normally, First Ladies have decorated it – it's usually the wives that decorate the White House, or change the decorations. The China Room, for example, has pieces of each First Lady's china set. "China" refers to special dishes that are used for formal occasions, and every First Lady chooses their own set of dishes, what we call the "china set."



ENGLISH CAFÉ – 200

I have been to Washington twice, once when I was about eight or nine years old again when I was 26 or 27, but I have never actually visited the White House. We just never went there. So next time I go to Washington I hope to visit the White House to talk to the president – you know, all the normal things that we at the Center for Educational Development do when we go to Washington! If you go to Washington, I certainly suggest that you try to get a tour of the White House; I'm sure you'll enjoy it.

Our next topic is going to be completely different; it's going to be about the noises that are made by animals, humans, and machines. These are always interesting to look at, because they're so different in every language. When a dog makes a loud noise, for example in English, we say that it "barks" (barks). To bark is when a dog makes a loud noise, like "woof-woof" – that's my dog imitation, thank you! When we are describing the actual noise, however, we don't say "bark-bark," we say "woof-woof" or "bow-wow." A cat, for example, makes the sound that we say is "meow" – "meow." A cow, the animal that gives you milk to drink and meat to eat, says "moo" (spelled moo). "Meow" is (meow). A horse says, or rather makes the noise "neigh" (neigh). A pig says "oink" – "onk-oink" (oink). Now, a duck says "quack-quack" (quack). A chicken says "cluck-cluck" (cluck), and a rooster, a male chicken, says "cock-a-doodle-doo." Well, maybe not that high! "Cock-a-doodle-doo" (cock-a-doodle-doo) – rather complicated!

There's actually a funny little song that American school children children sing; it might be helpful for you in getting to know the sounds that animals make in English. It uses noises from farm animals, at least the noises that we interpret in English. Here is what it sounds like:

Old MacDonald had a farm, E-I-E-I-O
And on his farm he had a cow, E-I-E-I-O
With a "moo-moo" here and a "moo-moo" there
Here a "moo" there a "moo"
Everywhere a "moo-moo"
Old MacDonald had a farm, E-I-E-I-O

That's just one part of the song; there's one for each animal. I won't sing all of them. To explain the song a little bit, "E-I-E-I-O" doesn't really mean anything; it's not a real word, it's not a real expression, it's just a sound that is made in the song. This particular verse or section is repeated many times with different animals; in this one, it was the cow. MacDonald, by the way, is not the famous



ENGLISH CAFÉ – 200

restaurant; it's just the name of the farmer. "Old MacDonald," meaning he was an old man; he had a farm; on the farm he had different animals. In this verse, it was a cow, and so you hear the sound that a cow makes: "moo-moo."

Here a "moo" there a "moo"
Everywhere a "moo-moo"

The funny sounds that are made in English, that are made by people anyway, aren't necessarily the sounds that the animals themselves are making; it's just what people believe that animal is saying – the sound the animal is making. Animals don't actually talk, of course, so when I say they "say," I really mean the noise that they make.

However, if you like to read, for example, comic books, books with many drawings, you might actually see some of these sounds spelled out. There are other sounds that are made by humans – by people. For example, when one person hits another person, in a comic book this is sometimes represented by the word "pow" (pow). "Pow," is the noise that is made when two things hit each other, especially your fist – your hand. When you close your hand tightly and you another person we would say, in a comic book, "pow," that's the sound that is made. "Bam" (bam) is very similar; it could also be used to represent the loud sound when two objects – two things hit each other. Often it's used to describe the sound that a gun makes when it is fired or shot. "Bang" (bang) is another word we use to describe that same noise of a gun.

"Thud" (thud) is a sound that is made when two things hit each other, similar to "bam," but usually "thud" is used when a heavy object drops or lands on something. You might say, for example: "The heavy box fell to the floor with a thud," meaning making the sound "thud." The word "splat" (splat) is used to describe the sound when something wet hits the floor or another hard surface. For example, if a wet towel falls to the floor, an American might describe that sound as a "splat."

Now, when two metal objects hit each other, we say that noise is a "clank" (clank). Trains often make clanking noise when the individual cars move against each other. Your silverware, what you use to eat with – your knife, your fork, your spoon – these could also make a clanking sound, if you hit them together. If you hit two pieces of metal or a piece of metal and a piece of glass, you might hear a ringing sound, almost like music. We call that noise a "ding" (ding). At a party – sometimes at a formal party, people will hit the spoon against a glass to make loud dings to get other people's attention. Bells also make dinging sounds.



ENGLISH CAFÉ – 200

You might hear a ding when a microwave is finished cooking your food and it's time to open the door and take your food out.

Those are some common noises, then, in English. They are useful mostly, probably, for reading, and for the noises that we talked about at the end, for reading a comic book.

Now let's answer a few of your questions.

Our first question comes from Feiran (Feiran) in Finland. I don't think we've ever had a question from Finland before – welcome Finland! The question has to do with the difference between the word “document” and “documentation.” How are they used; what is the difference in their use?

A “document” can be a noun, in which case it's a piece of official information, usually on a piece of paper or pieces of paper – something in writing. For example, a passport that you use to travel from one country to another that says what country you are from, that is a “document,” an official piece of information. “Document” can also be used as a verb, meaning to show, or depict, or to prove something. You can say, “I have my passport, and you can see the stamps (the marks made by the other countries when I entered and when I left), and this documents that I was there.” So there, we're using “document” to say it proves that I was there. Or you might, for example, have a fire in your home and you need to take pictures for the insurance company; you need to “document” the damage – you need to show, to depict, to prove that there was damage using the photographs. Those are the two possibilities with the word “document,” noun and verb meaning something different.

“Documentation” is a collection of documents; it's a set of information, as a noun. “Document” may be used as noun, as I said, or as a verb, but “documentation” is only used as a noun. It usually refers to all of the information that is needed for a particular purpose. So for example, if you are applying for a passport here in the United States, you might need a couple of different documents, official pieces of information such as your driver's license or perhaps a birth certificate. Together, these documents form what we would call the “documentation,” the group or set of information that you need in order to accomplish some particular official task or business, in this case, getting a passport.

“Documents” can be plural; you can have two documents. But, “documentation” is usually not plural because the idea of “documentation” is that you have several different documents. It's already plural in idea, anyway. So, for those of you who



ENGLISH CAFÉ – 200

like grammar, “document” is what we call a count noun: you can have one document, two documents, three documents, and so forth. “Documentation” is a non-count noun; you never add an “s” to the end. It is “documentation” – plural, and that is all you need to do.

Our next question comes from Keisuke (Keisuke) in Japan. Keisuke wants to know the meaning of the expression “to have to do with.” What does this mean, “have to do with (something)”?

“To have to do with (something)” means to be concerning something, to be about something. “My book has to do with the fall of the Roman Empire,” that means the topic of my book; my book is about the fall of the Roman Empire, or World War II, or butterflies – whatever. “My job has to do with teaching English,” it’s related to – it’s about teaching English.

Sometimes, “to have to do with” will be used in asking a question or in talking about something that is involved in something else. For example: “Did John have anything to do with this broken window I see here?” In other words, was John involved, was he responsible, did he do it?

There’s a special use of these expressions when you use them to say, for example “I had nothing to do with that broken window.” When you put it in the negative, it means that you were not involved at all; it’s a very strong, negative statement. “She had nothing to do with this paper.” “She had nothing to do with this situation.” She wasn’t involved at all. If you use the positive – the affirmative form, and say “I had something to do with it,” you mean that you were involved, but perhaps you were not the most important person. So it has those different meanings, whether it’s positive or negative – whether it’s in the affirmative or in the negative.

Finally, Jose Daniel (Jose Daniel) in Spain wants to know the meaning of a word he saw when reading a book: “gawd-awfully” (gawd-awfully).

“Gawd” (gawd) is how some people pronounce the word “god” (god), so it’s sort of a variation of that word. If you say something is “gawd-awful” or “god-awful” you mean that is terrible, that it is very unpleasant, it is horrible. You may describe a movie as being “gawd-awful” – terrible. However, you have to be careful with this expression; some people don’t like you using the word “god” or a variation of that word in that way. But if you do read it or hear it, it means something that is terrible, something that is horrible: “That’s a gawd-awful (or god-awful) song.”



ENGLISH CAFÉ – 200

Notice also that “God” (God) is normally capitalized in English; the “G” is large and the “o” and “d” are small. However, in an expression like “god-awful” it is not capitalized – the “g” is not capitalized.

If you have a question or comment for us, you can email us. 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 Café.

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