



TOPICS

Ellis Island; The Rat Pack; lots of versus a lot of; sleep versus asleep, wake versus awake, rise versus arise; alpha male

GLOSSARY

immigration – when people enter to live or settle in a country that is not the country in which they were born

* There is more immigration in this area of the country than any other, because of the promise of jobs.

to undergo – to experience something; to endure something

* Celia isn't sure if she wants to undergo a dangerous operation at the age of 80.

inspection – the act of looking at something very closely; for something to be very carefully viewed and checked

* Before our restaurant can open, we need to pass a health inspection.

unsanitary – unclean; not healthy

* This kitchen is unsanitary and there's no way I'll cook in it!

family tree – a map or chart that shows the history of a family and the relationships between family members

* My family tree is full of relatives from Africa and Asia.

pop culture – popular culture; modern lifestyle; aspects of culture that are widely accepted

* These advertisements are out of touch with pop culture, and we don't think they'll appeal to young people today.

desegregation – the ending of laws that make people of different races or skin color go to separate places and use separate public facilities

* There were many protests when school desegregation took place.



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impromptu – something done without preparation and is made up suddenly, or at that moment

* Enid gave an impromptu speech at her sister's wedding that made everyone laugh and cry.

to sell out – to sell all the tickets for a performance or event, so that no seats are left empty

* Let's go buy our tickets to see Dr. Jeff McQuillan before the theater sells out!

to rule – for someone to be very popular and dominant, so that they are viewed as the most important in the field

* Shows about police officers and lawyers rule the television schedule.

brat – a child who behaves very badly and whom people don't like

* The neighbor's brats pulled up all of our flowers and left a mess in the front yard!

coming-of-age – the time when a person reaches maturity; when a child becomes an adult.

* This book tells the coming-of-age story of a young Elvis Presley.

lots of / a lot of – much or many; a large amount of something

* We spent a lot of time on vacation taking lots of pictures of beautiful scenery.

sleep – the state or period when the mind and body are at rest; not awake

* Barry has been up studying for two days and needs some sleep.

asleep – in a state where the mind and body are at rest; to not have feeling in a body part; to be inactive

* The only time I have to clean the house is when the children are asleep.

to wake (up) – to come out of sleep; to get someone or something out of sleep

* Tell Greta to wake up or she'll be late for work.

awake – the state of no longer sleeping; for sleeping to end

* Are you still awake? I thought you went to bed three hours ago.

to rise – to get into an upright position, usually from sitting, kneeling, or lying on one's back; to move up; to be higher than other things

* When the judge enters the courtroom, everyone rises.



to arise – for a situation, problem, or opportunity to become known or available; to emerge

* We were told to contact the building manager if any problems arise.

alpha male – the personality of a man or boy who is a leader and often in charge, and whom other people follow

* Tina works in an office of alpha males, so she has to be very aggressive to get her ideas and opinions heard.

WHAT INSIDERS KNOW

Angel Island

Ellis Island is the most well known location for “incoming” (entering) immigrants to the United States, but it was not the only place where immigrants legally entered the country. A “lesser-known” (less well known) “entry point” (place where people enter a place) for immigrants is an island in San Francisco called “Angel Island.”

Between the years 1910 and 1940, about one million immigrants from Asian countries entered the U.S. through the Angel Island Immigration Station. So many people passed through Angel Island that the station was often called “The Ellis Island of the West.”

As on Ellis Island, it was not easy to “gain entry” (get permission to enter) into the United States. There were many reasons the government refused entry to people who wanted to make the United States their new home. For Asian immigrants, there was an additional “obstacle” (problem; something preventing one’s progress). In 1882, the U.S. government passed a law called the “Chinese Exclusion Act,” which severely limited the number of Chinese immigrants allowed into the country. (“To exclude” means to not allow or to prevent someone from entering.) “Prior to” (before) 1882, many Chinese immigrants came to the U.S. to find gold as part of the Gold Rush in the San Francisco area. Many others came to work on building the new “railroads” (trains that moved on metal tracks or lines). By the 1880s, some people believed too many Chinese immigrants were arriving, and the Chinese Exclusion Act was passed. Because of this, many



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Asian immigrants spent years at Angel Island waiting for permission to enter the country.

In 1940, a large fire destroyed the main building on Angel Island and the processing of immigrants was moved off the island. Since 1962, the immigration center has been designated by the State of California as a State “Landmark,” a building with historical importance. The center was renovated in recent years and re-opened in 2009.



COMPLETE TRANSCRIPT

You're listening to ESL Podcast's English Café number 244.

This is English as a Second Language Podcast's English Café episode 244. 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 Ellis Island, which has a very important place in the history of the United States. We're also going to talk about the Rat Pack, which was a group of actors and musicians in the 1960s. And, as always, we'll answer a few of your questions. Let's get started.

We begin this Café with a discussion of Ellis Island, a very important historical landmark in the United States, meaning an important place in our history. Today, in fact, Ellis Island is a popular tourist attraction in New York City, but between 1892 until 1954 this island off of the coast of New York served as the immigration site for most people coming to the United States from Europe and other areas in the world. "Immigration" is when someone moves from their home country, where they are born, and lives in another country and becomes a citizen of that country typically. The opposite is "emigration" (emigration), that's when people leave the country from which they are born. So, it's the same process. Immigration ("imm" at the beginning of the word) talks about people coming into a country, emigration talks about people going out of their country. Obviously, you can't have immigration without emigration.

Anyway, Ellis Island is located at the mouth, or at the end of the Hudson River in New York Harbor in the New York City area. The "mouth" of the river is where the river meets the ocean or large lake into which it flows. The mouth of Nile is in northern Egypt; it goes into the Mediterranean Sea. The mouth of the Mississippi is in Louisiana; it goes into the Atlantic Ocean, the Gulf of Mexico. Well, the mouth of the Hudson River goes into the Atlantic Ocean, and there is located this island – Ellis Island.



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The island used to be called Oyster Island when it was a Dutch and later English colony. An “oyster” (oyster) is a type of sea animal that you can eat. It lives in a shell, which is a hard body, if you will. Inside of an oyster you sometimes find a very expensive jewel called a “pearl.” A man named Samuel Ellis purchased or bought this island in 1770, but the U.S. government purchased it from him in 1808. The island is still named after Samuel Ellis. Ellis Island became a “critical” or very important part of the country’s defense system during the War of 1812 between the United States and Great Britain.

Throughout the 19th century – the 1800s, millions of immigrants began arriving in the United States, from European nations primarily such as England, Ireland, and Germany, but also Italy, France, other parts of Europe as well. Changes in the economic conditions and in some cases the religious laws of Europe led to what was one of the largest human migrations – movements of people from one part of the world to the other. The U.S. was a huge place – it still is, and so the country welcomed these immigrants; it wanted people to come and live in this country. However, the government became what we would call overwhelmed. There too many people coming in, they couldn’t handle all of the forms and paperwork – legal documents that you needed for all these new immigrants.

Finally, in 1892, the U.S. government recognized that they needed one place – a central immigration station, where all or most of the immigration work could be done. This immigration station was built on Ellis Island, and over the next 62 years, more than 12 million immigrants entered the country through Ellis Island. The United States required that all immigrants, many or most of whom were coming over on boats or ships, undergo inspection. “To undergo” (undergo – one word) means to experience something, often something that isn’t pleasant – isn’t nice. An “inspection” is like an examination, where something is looked at very carefully and checked to make sure that is good enough for whatever the purpose of that thing is. Well, the inspection of immigrants was meant to check or look for health problems and possibly legal problems before they were allowed to come into the U.S.

Often the people who were traveling on these large ships, the ones that had the cheapest tickets, what we would call the third-class passengers, traveled in very crowded and not very sanitary – unsanitary conditions. “Unsanitary” means not very clean, not healthy. So there were doctors who examined the immigrants when they arrived to Ellis Island to determine whether they were healthy enough to enter the country, whether they had any disease that would perhaps prevent them from coming in because if they came in with a disease other people could



get the disease. If the immigration “officials,” the workers determined that the immigrants were healthy and did not have any legal problems, then they were free to come into the United States and start their new life.

From 1892 to 1954, as I mentioned earlier, more than 12 million immigrants came through Ellis Island. Today, some experts believe that more than half of all Americans can “trace,” or go back along their family history to someone who passed through Ellis Island. More than half of all Americans are descendants, or are the sons of the sons of the sons of the sons of the daughters of the daughters of the daughters of the daughters – you get the idea – of someone who once went through Ellis Island. I have to say this is not true of the McQuillan family, who came over in 1840, and therefore did not go through Ellis Island. They went, most probably, through the city of Boston, which was very popular for Irish coming over in the middle of the 19th century. In fact, it’s still in some ways an Irish town – an Irish city, or heavily influenced in any case.

If you want to trace your family history, there are many organizations that will help you trace your family tree. Your “family tree” is sort of like a map of your family: your grandfather, your grandfather’s grandfather, your great-great-great grandfather, and so forth. My father was very interested in the family tree of the McQuillan family, and he, in fact, worked probably close to 20 years and made a family tree. He wrote a book, actually, talking about the history of the McQuillan family, beginning from the first McQuillans in 1840 who came to the U.S.

Ellis Island, nowadays, is still a popular tourist attraction in New York City. Museums and research centers now are located on the island that allow people to search for their ancestors – the people who first came over and went through Ellis Island. The museum on Ellis Island also teaches people about the history of that island, and its importance. Certainly, if you are visiting New York City, you would want to try to go to Ellis Island. I have been to New York several times, and unfortunately I have never gone to Ellis Island. But now, having read this, I will definitely go the next time I’m in New York!

Our second topic for today is a group called the Rat (Rat) Pack (Pack). A “rat” is a small animal, sort of like a mouse, but larger and it has a longer tail. A “pack” is a group of certain kinds of animals, in this case rats, often move around in groups, and we would call that group a pack. Well, the Rat Pack is a famous group in U.S. popular culture, or pop culture.



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The Rat Pack was a group of actors and jazz musicians who were popular, as I said before, in the 1960s. The “press,” the media, such as television, radio, and newspapers – remember this is before the Internet – called this group of actors and musicians the Rat Pack. The general public – the average person also came to know this group as the Rat Pack. A rat pack refers to a group of people who are very close to each other or have similar interests.

Well who was in the Rat Pack? Singers in the group included Frank Sinatra (who we sometimes call Old Blue Eyes, because he had blue eyes), Dean Martin, and Sammy Davis, Jr. The actors included Peter Lawford and Norman Fell, and there was one comedian in the group, Joey Bishop. Members of the Rat Pack often performed in Las Vegas, Nevada, and it, in fact, helped make Las Vegas a popular destination for people looking for entertainment. Of course, you may know that Las Vegas is also a place where you can legally gamble, in fact in the whole state of Nevada, where Las Vegas is located. The places where you go to gamble are often called “casinos.”

The Rat Pack’s influence was important not just for Las Vegas, but also for the cause of desegregation of the Las Vegas hotels and casinos. “Desegregation” is ending laws that discriminate against people because of their race – their skin color. It says that you can no longer separate those groups, as was done commonly in the United States before the 1960s. In Las Vegas, members of the Rat Pack refused to play music and perform at hotels and casinos that didn’t allow black, or African American entertainers. One of the members of the Rat Pack, the singer Sammy Davis, Jr., was himself black. Hotels and casinos had to get rid of their policies of segregation, of separating blacks and whites, if they wanted the popular Rat Pack performers to come to their hotel or their casino to sing. So they used their power to get these places to stop discriminating.

Members of the Rat Pack were popular, because their style of entertainment was very what we might describe as upbeat, sort of happy, and also a little impromptu. “Impromptu” (impromptu) is something that you do without a lot of preparation, suddenly, right at that moment. Often, when one member of the group was scheduled to perform somewhere, the other members of the group would also go and perform. Of course, the audiences were very happy; they were what we might call “delighted,” very happy and surprised to see these other performers. They thought they were just going to hear one singer, and then several other of the performers come as well. Most of the scheduled appearances – most of the shows for these performers were sold out. “To sell



out” is a two-word phrasal verb meaning to sell all of the tickets you have for a certain performance or event. The past tense would be “sold out.”

Members of the Rat Pack are often referred to – or were often referred to as cool cats. A “cool cat” is an old slang term referring to someone who dresses very well, is very what we might call stylish. They’re admired by other people; people are impressed by their clothing. Fans of the Rat Pack might say that the members of the Rat Pack ruled Las Vegas during the 1960s. While the word “rule” can refer to a king or a government being in charge of a country or group of people, it can also be used to describe someone who is very popular, in fact is what we might call dominant; they are the main performers, the most popular.

While they were popular, the Rat Pack also made quite a few movies. Their most famous movie was called Ocean’s Eleven. This movie was about a robbery at a Las Vegas casino. A “robbery” is when someone steals something from you. Ocean’s Eleven was such a popular movie during the 1960s that it was remade, or done again, in 2001 with popular actors such as Brad Pitt, Matt Damon, George Clooney, and the actress Julia Roberts. I also was in the movie. I had what we call a very small role – a very small part. You probably remember me sitting next to Brad Pitt during the movie!

By the end of the 1960s, the Rat Pack began to become less popular because there was a new what was then called counterculture that was developing in the U.S., and in other countries. The 1960s counterculture was a cultural movement that included protesting the Vietnam War, women’s rights, consumerism, civil rights, and other causes – other issues that people were concerned about. The individual members of the Rat Pack continue to be popular, but the group was no longer as powerful in the entertainment industry as they were before.

You don’t want to confuse the Rat Pack with another group from popular culture – another group of American actors. They were called the Brat (Brat) Pack. A “brat” is an informal word we use to describe a child who behaves very badly, always crying, always yelling, someone that people don’t like to be around. The Brat Pack (with a “b”) was a group of actors and actresses in the 1980s who appeared in what we might call “coming of age” movies, movies about when a teenager becomes an adult.

Members of the Brat Pack appeared in popular movies like The Breakfast Club and St. Elmo’s Fire. The idea is that they were considered brats because they were very likely to go out drinking, to be, what we would say, partying, and that



they weren't very well behaved. The name the Brat Pack was created, of course, based on the name the Rat Pack. The Brat Pack was a very popular group of actors and actresses. It included people such as Rob Lowe, Robert Downey, Jr., Emilio Estevez, Judd Nelson. These were members of the Brat Pack.

They didn't call themselves the Brat Pack, since to be a brat is something of an insult, and so they didn't use the word to describe themselves because it was meant to be an insult to describe them.

Now let's answer some of the questions you have sent us.

Our first question comes from Nafiseh (Nafiseh) in Iran. The question has to do with the difference between the expression "lots of" (lots of) and "a lot of," where "lot" is singular, no "s". These both mean the same thing; they mean a large amount of something. For example: "I have a lot of brothers and sisters." "I have lots of brothers and sisters." The two are the same. I actually do; some of you know I have eight brothers and two sisters. "I have lots of work to do." "I have a lot of work to do." Again, they're both the same.

Notice that if what you have a lot of is singular, then the verb is also singular. For example: "There is a lot of time before the game begins." "Time" is singular and so the verb "is" is singular. "There are a lot of books on the table." "Books" is plural and so is the verb.

Some people think that "lots of" is little more informal than "a lot of." That might be true, but really they mean the same thing.

Our next question comes from Jeyson (Jeyson), originally from El Salvador, now living here in California. The question has to do with certain verbs that appear in two forms, one of which has the letter "a" at the beginning. For example: "sleep" and "asleep," "wake" and "awake," "rise" and "arise," the same word with an "a" in front.

Unfortunately, there's no general rule I can give you. Sometimes the two words have different functions in a sentence; one is a verb, the other is an adjective, but it depends on the verb. For example "sleep" is a verb – "to sleep." "I'm going to sleep listening to this podcast." I hope not! "Asleep," with an "a" at the beginning is an adjective or an adverb, but not a verb. You cannot say, "I am going to asleep." No. "Asleep" describes a certain condition – a certain state; it's describing a noun or it could be describing a verb. If it's a noun its describing it's



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an adjective, and if it's a verb, as you know, it's an adverb. It's usually used as an adverb with the verb "to fall," as in the expression "I am going to fall asleep." There, "asleep" modifies the verb "fall." It can be used as an adjective in a sentence such as "My computer is asleep," or "My brother is asleep." That means they are sleeping – although your computer isn't actually sleeping, it's inactive really. "Asleep," then, is an adjective and an adverb," while "sleep" is used mostly as a verb. "Sleep" can also be a noun: "Did you get enough sleep last night?" That means did you sleep sufficiently. Did you sleep a number of hours that would make you feel rested?

"Wake" is a verb. "Wake up, it's time to go to school," my mother said – well she used to say. There, "wake" is a verb: "I have to wake up early." Typically, "wake" is used with "up," but it doesn't have to be. I can say, "I'm going to wake my mother." It means the same as "I'm going to wake up my mother."

"Awake," with the "a" at the front of the word, can be, in fact, a verb or an adjective. For example: "I awoke when I heard the noise outside of the children playing so early in the morning," as they often do outside my house window – I awoke. "I am going to awake tomorrow and eat breakfast." It's the same as "I'm going to wake up tomorrow and eat breakfast." "Awake" sounds a little more formal than "wake up" as a verb. However, only "awake" can be used as an adjective. For example: "Is your brother awake?" "No, he's not. He's asleep." There, both "awake" and "asleep" are modifying "your brother," telling us something about the state or condition of your lazy brother.

"Rise" and "arise," our third example, are also both verbs. "To rise" means to get into an upright position, usually from sitting or lying down on a bed. You move so that you are higher than the things around you. It can also mean simply to go higher. For example: "The temperature is rising today," it's going higher. This verb "rise" is often used with the preposition "up," just like we had with "wake." "The birds rose up in the air," they went higher and higher into the air. A more common use of "to rise up" would refer to a large group of people having a revolution, people going out into the streets to try to change their government. In fact, as a noun we would say "uprising," from the verb "to rise up." "To rise" can simply mean to stand up. For example in a courtroom, when the judge comes into the courtroom one of the employees of the court says, "All rise," meaning everyone should rise – everyone should stand up until the judge sits down.

"Arise," with the "a" at the beginning, is also a verb; it means really the same thing, or it can, but typically "arise" is used with a slightly different meaning.



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Usually it means when something comes from or results from something else, sometimes unexpectedly. “Some problems arose (past tense) during our meeting.” The problems were a consequence or came out in the meeting. You have the meeting, and from the meeting you had problems. That’s why we talk about it “coming from” something.

So as you can see, like a lot of things in English, it depends on the specific word. There isn’t a rule you can apply for all of these.

Finally, Sayed (Sayed), in an unknown country, but we’re guessing still here on planet Earth, wants to know the meaning of the phrase “alpha (alpha) male (male).” Well, a “male” is a man or a boy, someone of the male gender – the male sex. An “alpha male” is someone who is very outgoing, someone who is very aggressive, someone who is ambitious, often someone who is attractive or good-looking. Other people think of them as being very manly – very masculine. It can also mean someone who is a leader, who takes charge of things.

The term “alpha male” has somewhat of a negative connotation – that is, a negative meaning. It implies that the man is being too aggressive, too demanding on others.

The expression comes from the vocabulary that we use in describing animal groups. The alpha male in, for example, a group of gorillas is the male who is in charge of the group: the first one to eat, the first one to go to bed with one of the lady gorillas – if you know what I mean! That’s the alpha male. He has to fight the other males to stay number one. That’s why there’s a negative connotation to that word or phrase.

There’s nothing negative about sending us an email with your questions or comments. In fact, we would love to have them. Our email address is eslpod@eslpod.com.

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

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