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## ENGLISH CAFÉ – 115

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### TOPICS

Professional wrestling, National Geographic, would-be versus wannabe, be my guest, why not?

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### GLOSSARY

**to wrestle** – to play a sport where one fights with another person, trying to get that person underneath oneself on the floor

\* The school lets boys wrestle only with other boys who are the same age, size, and weight.

**stage name** – a name that an actor or performer uses for performing, but that is not his or her real name

\* Did you know that Nicholas Cage is a stage name, and the actor's real name is Nicholas Coppola?

**match** – an event where two wrestlers fight against each other; a game where two athletes or teams compete against each other

\* Will you have time for a tennis match this afternoon?

**ring** – a square area that is surrounded by rope walls where wrestlers or boxers fight each other and people watch from outside that area

\* The wrestlers moved around a lot and used the entire wrestling ring.

**referee** – a person who watches a game, fight, or other sport event and decides whether the players or fighters have broken any of the rules

\* The player became very angry when the referee said that the ball he hit fell outside of the tennis court.

**to pin (someone's) shoulders** – to force a person's shoulders to touch the floor for a certain period of time during a wrestling match and thereby win the match

\* After three minutes of wrestling, Kuon was able to win by pinning his opponent's shoulders.

**mat** – a soft, plastic-covered surface that is placed on the floor and used to wrestle, box, dance, or exercise on

\* Lisa bought an exercise mat so that she could do sit-ups more comfortably on the wooden floors in her house.



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**tag team** – a team of two or more wrestlers who fight together one after another  
\* When a tag team wrestles, only one person on the team can fight at a time, but the tag team members can change positions whenever they want.

**battle royal** – a fight among many (4-60) wrestlers, where the last person left standing in the ring is the winner  
\* There were so many wrestlers in that battle royal that it was difficult to see all the fighting!

**to diffuse** – to disseminate; to spread; to share information or materials with many people over a large area  
\* Information diffuses rapidly over the Internet.

**not-for-profit/nonprofit** – an organization that is created not to make money, but instead to do something good for society  
\* When did the American Red Cross become a nonprofit organization?

**circulation** – the number of copies of a magazine or newspaper that are sold in a certain period of time  
\* The local newspaper wants to double its circulation by 2010.

**wannabe** – an informal word used to refer to people who try to be something that they are not  
\* Roger is such a wannabe cowboy! He always wears jeans, boots, and a cowboy hat, but the truth is that he has never ridden a horse.

**would-be** – a term used to refer to people who want to become something  
\* Many would-be actors spend thousands of dollars on acting lessons.

**Be my guest!** – a phrase used to mean help yourself; a phrase used to invite someone to do what he or she wants to do; a phrase used to show that one will not be upset if another person does something that he or she wants to do  
\* May I take a shower in the upstairs bathroom?  
Yes, of course. Be my guest!

**Why not?** – a phrase used to show that one has no objections to what another person is suggesting; a phrase used to show that one thinks that another person's idea is okay  
\* Do you think I should apply for that job?  
Why not? The worst that can happen is that the company will say 'no.'



## **WHAT INSIDERS KNOW**

### **The National Geographic Geography Bee**

A “bee” is a competition for schoolchildren, often for spelling or mathematics. One of the most famous bees in the United States is the “National Geographic Bee” organized each year by the National Geographic Society. The “purpose” (reason for existing) of the Bee is to increase interest in “geography” (the study of the earth’s surface, countries, cultures, and other things) in schools and among the general public.

Students in grades four through eight may “compete” (try to win) in the Bee. First, there are competitions in individual schools. Each school may identify one winner. Then those winners are asked to take a written test about geography. National Geographic “grades” (determines how many answers are correct) each test and chooses the “top” (with the highest scores) 100 students from each state to compete in the state competitions in March or April. Finally, the winner from each state goes to the National Geographic “headquarters” (the main building of a business or organization) in Washington, D.C. for the final National Geographic Bee competition in May.

The competition has been held every year since 1989. Each year it becomes more “intense” (serious and stressful). Many children study geography “all year long” (during an entire year) to compete. The competition is shown on public television. The questions are extremely difficult and most “viewers” (people who watch the competition) are “amazed” (very surprised in a good way) by the children’s knowledge of geography. The three top winners receive “scholarships” (money given to someone to pay for his or her education) of \$25,000, \$15,000, and \$10,000.



## **COMPLETE TRANSCRIPT**

You're listening to ESL Podcast's English Café number 115.

This is the English Café episode one-one-five (115). 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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This episode of the Café is going to find us talking about professional wrestling – what it is, why it is so popular in the United States. We're also going to talk about an American institution, something that most Americans know about, called "National Geographic," what the organization is, and why it's so famous. And as always, we'll answer a few of your questions. Let's get started.

Our first topic is professional wrestling. Professional wrestling is very popular in the United States; it is a very different kind of entertainment. If you saw the movie Spiderman, and remember early in movie when Spiderman is trying to get some money, so he goes to a place where they have people who are fighting each other and he puts on his costume – his special clothing to make him look like a spider-man, that is an example of a type of professional wrestling. "To wrestle" is a verb that refers to two people who are fighting each other, trying to win.

There is a well known type of wrestling, amateur wrestling, sometimes called "Greco-Roman" wrestling, which is a very old sport where two people, usually men, are on the ground and trying to defeat the other person. It's a kind of a fight but it's not like boxing, where you hit them. Instead, you are trying to control them with your arms and legs. Amateur wrestling is something that children learn at school, at least in the United States men or boys learn it. It is an Olympic sport, of course, and it is a very difficult and respected sport.

Professional wrestling is not the same; there are some similarities. You do have two people, we call them "wrestlers," who are trying to fight each other, but it's a very different kind of entertainment – a different kind of sport. Professional wrestlers have to be athletic, but really their main job is to entertain – to put on a show, we might say. So, professional wrestlers have "stage names," meaning not their real name, but they create a name that makes them sound tough – that



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makes them sound mean. They have special costumes that they wear, and there is a lot of fake (or not real) parts of a professional wrestling match. The game – the fight between two people is usually called a “match.” We use that word “match” instead of “game” for other sports as well; for tennis, we talk about a “tennis match.” Well, for wrestling – for professional wrestling they have matches. These are people (again, mostly men) who are paid to go and entertain people. Everyone knows that it isn’t real; it’s really more like a play than a sport. But, the people who are wrestling (the wrestlers) are usually very good at keeping people entertained by doing crazy things.

A typical wrestling match takes place in a ring. The “ring,” just like the ring on your finger, is a small area like a stage that has ropes around it. We use a ring for boxing; we also use a ring for professional wrestling. A typical wrestling match is a “one on one match,” meaning one person is fighting one other person. Professional wrestling has a “referee,” a person who, in most sports, decides whether people are following the rules or not, but in professional wrestling, the referee is more like a director. They are often telling people (the fighters – the wrestlers) what they should be doing next. In fact, in many professional wrestling matches the referee has something in his ear (an earphone) and someone is telling him what he should do next – what he should tell the wrestlers to do next.

Now, the purpose of a professional wrestling match is to pin your opponent’s shoulder to the floor. “To pin someone’s shoulders” means to hold their shoulders down. So you get the person, you throw them down, and you get on top of them and you try to hold their shoulders to the floor. We call the floor in a wrestling match the “mat” (mat). So, you are pinning their shoulders to the mat, usually for three seconds. We would say “for a count of three,” meaning you hold their shoulders down three seconds, and then you win. This typically takes five to seven minutes in most professional wrestling matches, sometimes it’s a little longer.

One of the interesting things about professional wrestling is how crazy some of the people are. One of the things they try to do at the end of each match is have what’s called a “finishing move,” and this is something that they do to try to win the match – to try to win this fight.

Many people watch professional wrestling; it is one of the most popular television programs on cable television – on satellite television. It is usually one on one, but sometimes they have what is called “tag team wrestling,” or “tag team wrestling.” I’m from Minnesota, I say “tag” (Jeff pronounces it like “teg”), most Americans say “tag.” “Tag team” is when you have two teams; there are only two



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people fighting at one time, but when one person gets tired he goes and he “tags,” or touches another member of his team, and that member of the team then fights the person in the ring. There’s also something called a “battle royal.” A “battle royal” is when you have many different wrestlers fighting against each other.

As I said, professional wrestling is not a real sport; it’s an entertaining – for some people – an entertaining show. There are some professional wrestlers that have become famous in the United States; perhaps one of the most famous is a man by name of Hulk Hogan. He currently has his own television show on one of the music video channels. Another very famous professional wrestler is Jesse Ventura. Jesse Ventura is famous because after he stopped being a professional wrestler he ran for governor of the State of Minnesota; he became a politician and he was governor of Minnesota for four years. In the United States, almost anyone can be elected to a public office and, well, sometimes the results are not so good! Jesse Ventura was not a popular governor and he lasted only one term – only four years. The current governor of California, Arnold Schwarzenegger, was, of course, an actor. Unlike Jesse Ventura, most people think Governor Schwarzenegger is doing an okay job. I guess that means that maybe I could be a politician, too. Since I don’t have the qualifications – any experience – I should be quite popular! In some countries, famous writers and poets become politicians; in the United States, it’s professional wrestlers and actors!

Our second topic is the National Geographic Society. You may have heard of the National Geographic Society; they have a famous magazine called simply National Geographic, which is published in at least 30 different countries, many different languages. The National Geographic Society is a “nonprofit,” meaning they are not a business trying to make money. They’re a nonprofit, or we now sometimes say “not-for-profit” educational and scientific organization. They have been around for more than 100 years. The National Geographic Society started in Washington, D.C. back in 1888, and soon after started a magazine.

The purpose of the National Geographic Society is, according to their website, to increase and diffuse geographic knowledge, while promoting the conservation of the world’s historical, cultural, and natural resources. “To increase and diffuse” means to spread, to let many people know about. In this case, they are trying to let people know about geographic knowledge, knowledge about different parts of the world. They also are interested in “conserving,” or keeping in good condition, the world’s historical, cultural, and natural resources. Things that people use are called “resources.”



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The most famous part of the National Geographic Society is its educational mission, we might say. Their “mission” is their goal. The National Geographic magazine is published once a month. It’s very famous because the cover has a yellow border around it; the “border” is the part on the outside. It has many different articles about nature, about different countries; usually each issue (each publication) each month has a different country with different maps and so forth that it talks about. It has reports of scientific investigations, archaeology, and other natural sciences.

Most Americans know about National Geographic; many Americans have had a subscription to the magazine at one time or another. I did when I was growing up; we had the National Geographic magazine that would come every month. National Geographic magazines are sort of famous for people keeping them. So, instead of getting the magazine and then throwing it out at the end of the month, people keep the magazines. And, if you go to a garage sale – if you go to a sale at someone’s house, many times you will see boxes and boxes of old National Geographics for sale. I’m not sure if the people ever read them, but many people have subscribed to the magazine. Now, the magazine has some very interesting articles in it, but I’m not sure if everybody actually reads them. Certainly, they have wonderful photography that people like to look at.

National Geographic has also “funded,” or given money for different research projects – different scientific projects. They were famous when I was growing up, back in the 1970s, to have some very well known scientists who produced television programs for National Geographic. Once again, this is part of their educational efforts. The most famous of these was probably Jacques Cousteau, the French scientist, who’s very well known in the United States because of the National Geographic television shows.

When I was a child, in addition to getting National Geographic magazine, I used to get a special kit – a special collection of things every month from National Geographic. National Geographic has a very strong children’s educational division, where they try to educate children about the world, about geography. I remember my mother knew that I was interested in different countries, and so she got me a subscription to this special children’s edition of National Geographic, and each month I would get a map of a different country, some information about that country, and then some sort of toy or object from that country. For example, I remember when I got the information about China it came with an “abacus,” the sort of traditional Chinese calculator. And that was such an exciting thing for me, as an eight and nine-year-old child, to every month



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get these packages with new and interesting things in them from different countries.

National Geographic, I think, has done a wonderful job at educating people about different geographic and scientific topics. As I say, you may have seen their magazines yourself, since they publish many different magazines in different languages throughout the world. Their total magazine “circulation,” that is the number of people who read their magazines, is more than 50 million throughout the world.

Now let’s answer a few of your questions.

Our first question comes from Masakazu (Masakazu), from Japan. Masakazu wants to know the difference between “wannabe” and “would-be” – when do you use these two expressions, and how do you use them?

The expression “would-be” can be used as an adjective. It is used to describe something or someone who is trying to be something – who is attempting to be something, but that is not successful at doing it. For example: “Jeff McQuillan is a would-be singer” – he tries to be a singer but he’s not very successful. When we use “would-be” in this way it’s not a verb, it’s an adjective; often it is written with a hyphen (-) in between. So, “he is a would-be actor,” or “she is a would-be writer” – someone who tries to but is not usually successful. Los Angeles has many would-be actors and writers who work as waiters and waitresses during the daytime.

The other expression is “wannabe” (wannabe). This is an informal term to describe a person who wants to be something. “Wannabe” is like a shortened or contracted form of “want to be,” but it’s spelled as one word. It’s used informally as a noun to describe a person who likes to imitate someone else – who tries to be like someone else. It’s very similar to the adjective “would-be.” For example: “I would rather be a successful podcaster than a wannabe singer.” “Wannabe” can be used as a noun: “he’s a wannabe,” or it can be used, as I did just now, as an adjective as well: “I’m a wannabe singer.”

“Wannabe” is usually something of an insulting term; it’s a negative term to describe someone. For example, Britney Spears, the famous singer, had a husband whose name was Kevin Federline; people said Kevin Federline was a wannabe. He wanted to be a singer himself, but wasn’t.





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Our next question comes from Paul (Paul) in Korea. Paul wants to know the meaning of the expression “be my guest.” “Be my guest.”

“Be my guest” is really a command form; you are telling someone to do something, but it’s used to be polite, to tell somebody to “go ahead.” You can also use this to tell people that they can do whatever they want, or they can go ahead and do something. For example, someone visits your house and says, “May I use the bathroom?” you say, “Sure, be my guest!” meaning “go ahead.” Or, you have a swimming pool and the water is very cold, someone says, “I want to jump in your swimming pool,” you say, “Be my guest!” It can be used both positively and negatively, usually it is meant as an expression to say go ahead – go ahead and do something. You are giving permission to that person to do something.

Our last question is also from South Korea, from Kyonghun (Kyonghun). The question has to do with the expression “why not.” “Why not,” followed by a question mark (?), is a casual or informal way of saying “yes” to someone or “okay” to someone. “There’s no reason why not” – there’s no reason for me not to go. For example: “Do you want to go to the movies with me this weekend?” and you say, “Sure, why not?” – yes, in other words. “Do you think I will get a raise at work?” (I will get more money because I work hard), and your boss says, “Sure, why not? You deserve it.”

Should you send your question or comment to ESL Podcast for the English Café? Why not? Email us at [eslpod@eslpod.com](mailto:eslpod@eslpod.com). We can’t answer everyone’s questions, but we’ll do our best to answer as many as we can.

From Los Angeles, California, I’m Jeff McQuillan. Thanks for listening. We’ll see you next time on the English Café.

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