



TOPICS

How to become the president of the United States, tailgating parties, seize versus arrest versus detain, pronouncing “the,” expressions for showing sympathy

GLOSSARY

constitution – the highest law of a country’s government

* The U.S. Constitution was written in 1787 and officially adopted in 1789.

amendment – an official change or addition to a country’s constitution

* The First Amendment to the U.S. Constitution gives Americans freedom of speech and religion, among other things.

natural-born – a citizen of a country because one was born in that country

* In the United States, only natural-born citizens can become president.

naturalized – a citizen of a country that is not the country where one was born

* Mia passed the citizenship test and became a naturalized U.S. citizen in 1988.

term of office – the amount of time that an elected government representative can hold his or her position before he or she must be elected again

* The U.S. president has a four-year term of office.

term limit – the maximum number of times that a person can be elected for a particular government position

* The United States has a term limit so that no president can serve more than two four-year terms.

primaries – primary election; a U.S. election where people choose the person who will run for a particular government position for each political party

* Which candidate do you think will win the Democratic primaries?

general election – a U.S. election where everyone can vote for whom they think should hold a particular government position

* The U.S. general election is held on the first Tuesday of November every four years.



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consecutive – things or periods of time that follow one another without any break

* Melvin has an unusual work schedule because he works 10 consecutive days and then has four days to rest.

to tailgate – to have an informal party where one's pick-up truck or car is parked, usually before or during a football game

* He always tailgates with his friends before important university football games.

tail – back; behind; rear

* The seats in the tail section of the bus are less comfortable than the seats in the front of the bus.

to grill – to cook something by placing it on a metal frame over a hot fire

* When the weather is nice, we grill chicken and hamburgers in the backyard.

hinge – a small piece of metal that is attached to a wall and a door or another object to let that door or object open and close easily

* When the hinge broke, the door wouldn't close properly.

to seize – to catch someone, especially a criminal, by surprise and not let that person get away

* The police seized three drug dealers on the street yesterday.

to arrest – to take a person to a police station because he or she has broken a law

* Yolanda was arrested for stealing things from the grocery store.

to detain – to not let someone leave a place, usually because the police want to ask that person questions

* After the shooting, everyone who saw it happen was detained for two hours for questioning by the police.

to be in custody – to be kept in jail until one can go to court and have a trial

* Gregory was in custody for almost two months waiting for his trial.



WHAT INSIDERS KNOW

Recent Election Controversies

The 2000 presidential election in Florida was highly “controversial” (with many strong opinions for and against something). The “ballots” (pieces of paper that have each person’s vote) had to be counted and re-counted many times and the final “outcome” (results of the election) weren’t known for more than one month.

The “margin” (the difference in the number of votes between the first and second candidates) was very small, so the state decided to re-count the ballots “manually” (without using machines). The manual re-count found many mistakes in the way that the ballots were counted the first time.

One “county” (a geographic area) in Florida used “butterfly ballots” where a page appeared on each side of the marks that people were supposed to show their selection of a “candidate” (a person who is running for a political office). Many people were confused by the butterfly ballots and accidentally marked the wrong candidate’s name.

“Hanging chads” were another problem with the ballots in Florida. A “chad” is the small piece of paper that is made when a hole is punched in a piece of paper. Normally the chad should separate from the ballot. However, sometimes one side of the chad remains connected to the ballot, and this is known as a “hanging chad.” A “dimpled chad” is a chad that remains connected to the ballot on all four sides, but one can see that a person tried to punch it out of the paper. There was a lot of controversy about whether and how hanging chads and dimpled chads should be counted.

After all of these problems in Florida, many people “called for” (demanded) election “reform” (changes to make something better), but the problems still have not been solved completely.



COMPLETE TRANSCRIPT

You're listening to ESL Podcast's English Café number 118.

This is the English Café episode 118. I'm your host, Dr. Jeff McQuillan, coming to you from the Center for Educational Development in the beautiful City of Los Angeles, California.

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In this Café, we're going to talk about how to become President of the United States. The presidential elections begin in a few weeks here in the U.S., the beginning of the process of selecting a president. We're going to talk about what the official requirements are to become president. I can tell you that intelligence is not one of them! We're also going to talk about something called "tailgating" and "tailgating parties," what they are, and what you do at them; very popular in the United States, especially at sporting events – at games. Let's get started.

Our first topic is how to become President of the United States – a simple thing! "The United States Constitution," our official law that has the basic rules for government in our country, has some specific requirements that you have to meet in order to become the President of the United States; not just anyone can become president. These are official rules that you must follow, or qualifications that you must have. There are three that are listed in the Constitution – the main part of the Constitution. The first one, which most American citizens know about, is that you must be a natural-born citizen of the United States.

Well, what does that mean, "to be natural-born?" Usually that's written "natural-(hyphen) born." A natural-born citizen is someone who has two parents who are both U.S. citizens when they are born. So, when you were born, if your mother and your father were U.S. citizens then you are considered a natural-born citizen, even if you are born in another country. Let's say your parents are living in Paris or in Beijing or in Buenos Aires, it doesn't matter where you're living if both of your parents are U.S. citizens. Now, if only one of your parents, your mother or your father is a U.S. citizen, then you are not a natural-born citizen, as I understand it.



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The other kind of natural-born citizen is if you are born physically in the United States. So, if you were traveling and you were pregnant, or your wife was pregnant, and you had your baby born in a hospital in the United States, the baby would be a natural-born citizen. Even if you came into this country illegally, if the child is born in the U.S. the child is a U.S. citizen even if his parents are not.

Here in California we have, you may know, a famous governor, Arnold Schwarzenegger; he is not a natural-born citizen of the United States. He can be Governor of California, he could be Senator for California, but right now with our current Constitution, he could not become president because he is not a natural-born citizen. Arnold Schwarzenegger is what we would call a “naturalized citizen.” A “naturalized citizen” is someone who becomes a citizen of the United States after they are born. This is someone who’s an immigrant who goes through the process of “naturalization,” officially becoming a citizen of the U.S. So, a “natural-born citizen” is someone either born physically in the United States, or who has two parents who were U.S. citizens when they were born.

The second qualification is that you must be at least 35 years old. Thirty-five is considered young nowadays. The youngest president ever to be elected was President John F. Kennedy, back in 1960. He was 43 years old, about my age. He was the youngest to be elected president when he started in 1961. The oldest president, when he left office – when he finished his term, we would say, his period as president – was Ronald Reagan; in 1988 he was 77 years old. So, there is an age requirement, you must be at least 35 years old.

The final requirement is one that many Americans don’t know about, but it is in the Constitution. It is that you have to have lived in the U.S. for at least 14 years. So for example, if your parents are living in Moscow and you grow up in Moscow, even though you’re a natural-born citizen, you have to come back to the United States for at least 14 years in order to become president. Now, the Constitution isn’t clear exactly about this; it doesn’t say the 14 years have to be “consecutive,” meaning one after another after another. The fact is that no one has ever challenged this requirement – no one has said, “Hey, that person hasn’t lived here for 14 years,” but it is in the U.S. Constitution.

A President of the United States, according to the 22nd Amendment to the Constitution, can only have two terms of office. The United States Constitution was written in 1789 or so, but there have been changes, and those changes are called “amendments.” The 22nd Amendment was approved after the presidency of Franklin Roosevelt. Franklin Roosevelt was president for four terms, or was elected to be president for four terms; he died in his fourth term. He was



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president from 1933 up to 1945. He was an important president in U.S. history: president during the Great Depression and during World War Two. But many people felt that he was president too long, that we shouldn't have a president who can go on and on and on, so they decided to put what would be called a "term limit." "Term" is the time – the period. So, there's only two terms that you can be president, in other words, normally eight years. Our current president is in his second, and last, term. He can only be president for two terms. Before him, President Clinton was president for two terms; Ronald Reagan was president for two terms. Let's see, Eisenhower was president for two terms. All of the other presidents – well, that's not true; President Nixon was president for two terms, but, well, he resigned – he quit – halfway through his second term for doing things that were illegal.

These are the official requirements to become president; there is a lot more involved in becoming president. There are two major political parties in the United States – two groups. One is called the Republican Party; the other is called the Democrat Party, or the Democratic Party. Republicans and Democrats both pick a candidate, and those candidates are then voted on. In order to select the candidates we have a series of elections; each state has its own election. These are called "primaries," and the primary helps select who will be the candidate – not the president, but the representative from each of the major political parties. After they're selected, and they're selected over a period of three or four months in the early part of the election year, then there is a what we call a "general election" that will be in November – the first Tuesday in November – and that is the election to pick the president. At least, that's the way it's supposed to work. Now, the whole bit about the parties and the primaries, that's not in the Constitution. The Constitution only gives you the requirements – the qualifications for being president.

We've been talking about different kinds of parties – the Republican Party, the Democratic Party – now we're going to talk about another kind of party, a "tailgating party." "Tailgating" is something that became popular, especially during the 1970s, and has continued to be popular. When I was growing up, we used to tailgate.

"Tailgating" comes from the name for the door on the back of, for example, a truck or a station wagon, and this door has a hinge. The "hinge" (hinge) is what connects the door to the rest of the car. This door goes down. Normally when you have a part of the car like the trunk in the back, or the hood in the front, you lift them up, but a tailgate goes down. You will see these on trucks, for example. If you're going to take something off the truck, you have to put the back door



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down, and we call that back door the “tailgate.” “Tail” (tail) is the back of something, like the tail of a dog or the tail of a rabbit. A “gate” (gate) is another word for a door.

So, what does this have to do with having a party? Well, it became popular in the early 1970s for people to go to a big sporting event – a football game, a soccer game – and before the game began, outside of the stadium in the parking lot where all the cars are, they would have a little party in or next to their car. So, you would have, say, two families that would both drive cars to the game, park them in the parking lot. If one of them had a tailgate, you would open the tailgate, and you would stand around or bring chairs and sit in the parking lot and have a small meal to have a party to celebrate the fact that you were at the game. Tailgating, however, comes before the game, not after the game usually.

Tailgating is a way of socializing – of talking to your friends, of having a good time – because when you go to the stadium, you, of course, are watching the game. So, it’s an opportunity for people to have fun before the game. Tailgating usually involves cooking some food, or bringing some food to eat. People will bring what we call “grills” (grills). A “grill” is something that you heat up and cook food on. The most popular kinds of foods at a tailgating party would be hamburgers, hot dogs; you might also have baked beans. It’s also popular to bring some cold salads such as potato salad, which is a salad with chopped potatoes – cooked potatoes with mayonnaise and other “ingredients,” other things that go into the food. The other thing you do at a tailgating party is you drink, usually alcohol, beer for example.

Tailgating parties can last an hour, or two hours even, before the event. So, if the game starts at 5:00, you may go at 3:00 and cook your food and talk to your friends and drink in the parking lot before the game.

Tailgating is something I used to do when I was a child and we would go to a football game, or a soccer game. We would go early, with different members of my family, and we would bring chairs, we would bring something to cook the food, and food to eat, and there we would have our little party. Some people spend a lot of money on these tailgating parties, more money than they spend on the actual tickets.

How common is tailgating? Well, one “survey,” one questionnaire where they asked people if they tailgated – found that about 25% of all of the fans – all of the people who go and watch the National Football League, which is our professional American football organization – a quarter of all fans going to, we would say



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“attending” a game, an NFL or National Football League game, were tailgaters, people who would go early and have these little parties.

I haven’t been to a tailgating party in many, many years, but I do know some people who go and participate. It’s not just for professional sports, it could also be college sports – college football for example – where people go early and have these tailgating parties.

Well, this party is over, so now let’s answer a few of your questions.

Our first question comes from Asko (Asko) in Finland. The question has to do with the meaning of three words that Asko has heard in listening to the radio: “seize,” “arrest,” and “detain.” All three of these words are related to crime and the police usually. Let’s start with the verb “to seize” (seize).

“To seize something” is to take it suddenly – take it quickly with force. That is, you are taking control of something and you may be using some sort of violence or some sort of threat of violence, a gun for example, to take it. It doesn’t have to be necessarily something criminal. For example, you could have two boys playing on a playground at school, and the bigger boy is trying to hurt the smaller boy with a big stick. The small boy could seize it from him and run away; he could grab it, take it from him quickly and run away.

We also use the verb “to seize” when we are talking about what the police do, for example, to someone’s car or someone’s possessions – the things that a criminal owns. “His car was seized by the police,” that means the police took control of the car; they’re going to keep it. You can also use the verb “to seize” in talking about people: “The police seized the criminals.” Here, the word “seize,” if you’re talking about people, means the same as the next verb, “to arrest” (arrest).

“To arrest” means that you are a police officer or someone from the government, who takes hold of someone – takes control of someone – by threatening force or simply by telling them they have to come with you. So, “to arrest” someone is to put them in a jail, for example. We might say “to put them in custody” (custody). “To put someone in custody” is to arrest them – to put them in a prison, in a jail.

“To detain” (detain) is a little different from “arrest” or “seize.” “To detain” means that you keep someone – you force someone to be in a certain place, but usually it’s for questioning; you want to ask them some questions. For example, you think that somebody has committed a crime; you think that this person has robbed someone – has stolen something from someone, so the police, come and



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they detain him. They don't arrest him – they don't take him to prison, necessarily. They say, "You have to go with us because we want to talk to you, we want to ask you some questions." They're not saying that the person is a criminal, but they want to find out – they're investigating.

Finally, "to detain" can also be used in normal conversation when you are keeping someone from going somewhere else. For example, someone is waiting for you to go with them to the restaurant, and your cell phone rings, and you answer your cell phone – your mobile phone – and you start talking, and the other person is waiting for you. You might say, "Oh, I'm sorry to detain you" – I'm sorry to keep you from leaving.

[Note: In the next section Jeff pronounces "the" with both a short and long "e" – instances of "the" with a long "e" will be underlined.]

Carlos (Carlos) in Mexico wants to know why we sometimes pronounce the word (the) "the" and sometimes we pronounce it "the." I've actually answered this question before on the Café, but let me just review very briefly.

The difference has to do when you are stressing the word; it also is something that we do when we are speaking more slowly. For example, here on the English Café you will often hear me say "the" when I'm saying something slowly: "the police" versus "the police." There's no difference in meaning, really. They mean the same thing, but it's a matter of emphasis – it's matter of stressing something. The more common pronunciation is "the," but sometimes you will hear "the."

One difference with "the" and "the" is that sometimes "the" is used to indicate the only one, something that is unique: "He is the best athlete in the world" – there are no others like him. Or, "Jeff McQuillan is the worst singer in Los Angeles" – no question about that!

Finally, Marina (Marina) in Israel wants to know what you say to someone if you are disappointed that something didn't happen. For example, if someone says to you, "I didn't get the job I wanted, the job that I applied for," what would you say to that person to show them some sympathy?

Couple of different expressions we might use here: you could say, "Oh, that's too bad," you could also say, "I'm so sorry to hear that," you could also say, "I'm sorry it didn't work out." "It didn't work out" means it didn't result in a good outcome – it didn't have a good result. You may also say, "That's a shame," or, "What a pity." All of those expressions could be used to express sympathy with



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someone who, perhaps, has been disappointed. I, for example, asked Angelina Jolie for a date, and she turned me down – she said no. You might say, “Oh, that’s too bad Jeff. I’m so sorry to hear that. I’m sorry it didn’t work out. What a pity!” Well, you wouldn’t have to say all four of those things; one would be enough, but the more the better since I’m very disappointed!

We won’t be disappointed if you send us an email and give us a question or two for the English Café. We can’t answer all of your questions, but we’ll try to answer as many as we can. Our email address is eslpod@eslpod.com.

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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