



ENGLISH CAFÉ – 130

TOPICS

How to become a lawyer in the U.S.; five most famous lines from U.S. movies;
proper versus appropriate

GLOSSARY

attorney – lawyer; a person whose job is to practice law; a legal professional
* I need to find a good attorney to help me write legal contracts for my business.

state bar – a state-level organization of all the people who are allowed to work
as lawyers in a particular state
* I cannot practice law in Idaho, because I am a member of only the state bar for
Nevada.

admission – entry into an organization; permission to join an organization or
participate in a group
* The university offers admission to only the best-qualified students.

bar exam – a difficult state-level test that people must take and pass in order to
work as professional lawyers in a particular state
* If you don't pass the bar exam the first time, can you take it again?

to hurt (someone's) feelings – to do or say something that makes another
person feel bad or sad
* Kristy hurt his feelings when she told him that she thought his new haircut
looked very strange.

to beg – to ask desperately for someone to do or not do something
* The children begged their parents to buy them a new computer.

frankly – basically; honestly; without any additional information; with just the
truth
* I'd like to help you with that project, but frankly I just don't have enough time.

black market – the unofficial part of the economy where things are bought and
sold without paying taxes, outside of the laws
* If medicines continue to become more expensive, many people will start to buy
them on the black market.



ENGLISH CAFÉ – 130

to refuse – to say no; to deny; to reject; to not accept

* Lila refused to go to the dance with her cousin.

class – style; finesse; status in upper society

* Suzanne has so much class! She always dresses well, speaks well, and seems to know all the right people.

contender – a person who is competitive and is able to compete with other people

* You'll never be a contender for a scholarship to a good university if you don't improve your grades in high school.

bum – a person who does not have a job, money, or a home

* I was living with my aunt until she told me, "Stop being a bum and get a job!"

unconscious – unaware of what is happening around oneself and unable to hear or see for a period of time, usually because one has been hit on the head very hard

* Stephan was unconscious for a few minutes after the skiing accident, and when he woke up he couldn't remember what had happened.

kid – child; a word used to address someone of any age in a friendly, informal way

* No problem, kid, don't worry about it.

proper – correct; with the right words and actions for a particular situation

* Under Kevin's leadership, the company took all the proper steps to avoid the lawsuit.

appropriate – suitable; fitting; correct for the situation

* I don't think it would be appropriate for you to wear that old dress to the wedding.



WHAT INSIDERS KNOW

Famous TV Lawyers

Many popular American television shows are about lawyers. The shows are about not only their professional work, but also their personal lives.

One famous TV lawyer is Perry Mason. The TV show, Perry Mason, “aired” (was shown on television) from 1957 to 1966. Mason was a “defense attorney” (a lawyer who helps the people who have been accused of a crime). In most of the “episodes” (shows), his client was accused of having committed a murder. Mason usually conducted a “thorough” (detailed and in-depth) investigation and found out that someone else was “guilty” (responsible for having committed a crime). Mason always “won the case” (argued successfully in the courtroom).

L.A. Law is another famous legal drama that aired on television from 1986 to 1994. It was about a “law firm” (a company of many lawyers) in Los Angeles. The show “dealt with” (covered, or related to) legal issues, but also many social and cultural issues that were important during that time.

Another famous TV lawyer is Ally McBeal. The show, Ally McBeal, aired from 1997 to 2002 and was very different from Perry Mason. McBeal was a young lawyer working in Boston. She and the other lawyers worked on very unusual cases, but the show did not really focus on their legal work. Instead, it focused more on their personal lives and their romances.

Although these shows are “entertaining” (interesting and/or fun to watch), many real lawyers “criticize” (say negative things about) them. They believe that TV shows about the law and lawyers give the American “public” (ordinary people) the wrong idea about how law is practiced in the country.



ENGLISH CAFÉ – 130

COMPLETE TRANSCRIPT

You're listening to ESL Podcast's English Café number 130.

This is ESL Podcast's English Café episode 130. I'm your host, Dr. Jeff McQuillan, coming to you from the Center for Educational Development in – where else – the beautiful City of Los Angeles, California.

Visit our website at eslpod.com. While you're there, you can download the 8 to 10 page Learning Guide for this episode. You can also take a look at our ESL Podcast Blog, where several times a week we provide you with even more help in improving your English.

On this Café, we're going to talk about how to become a lawyer in the United States. We're also going to talk about some of the most famous lines from American movies. And as always, we'll answer a few of your questions. Let's get started.

Every country has its own system of education and professional training. Today we're going to talk about how to become an "attorney" (attorney), which is just another word for a "lawyer," someone who works in the legal system. In the United States, traditionally, being an attorney was very prestigious. When we say something is "prestigious," we mean that it is a job that brings people a lot of respect from other people. Lawyers are usually thought to be intelligent and hard working. Being a lawyer is a prestigious job, however many people don't like lawyers; they make jokes about attorneys. That has been happening for many centuries, of course!

Lawyers have to study many years to earn their degree and they spend a lot of money on their education. Like doctors, however, they also "earn," or receive, a lot of money once they begin working as lawyers. When you work as a lawyer, we use the expression "to practice law." "To practice law" means to work as an attorney. Normally, "practice" is a verb that means to learn something, to be training to do something. "I am practicing on the violin" – I am trying to learn to become better. But when we talk about law, "to practice law" means to actually be working as an attorney.

To become a lawyer in the United States, first you need to "earn," or receive, an undergraduate degree. Undergraduate education is usually the first four years that you go to college or university after you complete high school. Your undergraduate degree is usually called a "bachelor's degree." After you get your



ENGLISH CAFÉ – 130

undergraduate education, if you want to continue studying, then you go to graduate school. In graduate school you can earn a master's degree and a doctorate, or PhD. If you go to medical school, you can earn a medical degree, an MD. For example, I earned my undergraduate degree from the University of Minnesota, then I went to graduate school and got a master's at the University of St. Thomas. Finally, I received my PhD from the University of Southern California. People who become lawyers earn an undergraduate degree in many different topics; you can study politics, you can study history, you can study literature, and then become a lawyer. The most popular things that are studied, however, are English, communications, business, and history.

After you get your undergraduate degree, the next step is to apply to law school. "To apply" means to fill out the "paperwork," the forms, in order to ask for permission to study at that particular college or school. The place where you study law is usually called a "law school" rather than a "law college," but it's the same. Most law schools are very "competitive," meaning there are many people who are trying to enter into the program, many more than they have places for. So, you have to be very well qualified; you have to have good grades and be intelligent in order to study in these schools. Most "applicants," people who try to enter a university, have to take the LSAT to get into law school. The "LSAT" is a test that is specifically for those who want to go to law school.

Most law school programs last, or take, three years. They require very intensive study. "Intensive" (intensive) means, here, very serious, so intensive studying is studying very hard, for many hours every day. Once you finish law school, you receive a professional degree called a "Juris Doctor," or "JD" "Juris" comes from the word "jurisprudence," which is a general word describing the law. So, you study hard in law school and you graduate with your JD, or Juris Doctor, now you have finished your legal education but you are not yet officially a lawyer.

To become a working lawyer, someone who can practice law legally in a state, you must become a member of an organization called the "state bar." The "bar" (bar) is a state organization of lawyers who have permission to practice law in that state. It is not related to the bar where you go drinking, although if you have ever spent time with an attorney, you probably would want a drink! A person with a JD has to apply for admission to the bar of the state where he or she wants to work. So, if you work in California, or want to work in California, you have to apply for admission to the bar, or organization of lawyers, in California. Admission is usually dependent upon, meaning it depends on, your experience and your ability to pass a very difficult examination, or test, called the "bar exam." The bar exam is very difficult in most states. In California, only about 50 percent



ENGLISH CAFÉ – 130

of the people – the JDs – who take the bar exam pass on their first try. Many people have to take the exam several times before they are allowed to become a lawyer.

I could probably use an attorney, so if you do become a lawyer, be sure to call me!

Our next topic is about some famous lines from U.S. movies. A “line” is like a quotation; it’s what someone said in a movie. We usually use this word in talking about movies or songs; a line is usually a single sentence, for example.

The American Film Institute, an organization devoted to the study of film, a couple of years ago created a list of the top 100 movie quotes, or movie lines, of all time. The phrase “of all time” means ever, so these are the most famous quotes ever made in American movies, according to The American Film Institute. We’re going to talk about the top five movie lines. Movies are, of course, an important part of modern popular culture – American culture in particular, and these lines are often “quoted,” or repeated, by people in real life to mean certain things. So it’s useful, even if you don’t like movies, to know some of these.

According to the list, the number one most famous movie line in the U.S. is from the movie Gone with the Wind, which was made in 1939. The movie is a romance that takes place in the U.S. South during the Civil War, during the mid-19th century when the North and the South were fighting in the United States over issues such as slavery. The movie is a romance between a man named Rhett and a woman named Scarlett. Rhett – his full name is Rhett Butler – loves Scarlett very much, but she doesn’t realize that she loves him, too, until the very end of the movie. They do many things, during the movie, to “hurt each other’s feelings,” or to make each other feel bad. At the end of the movie, she finally realizes that she does love him – she does love Rhett Butler and begs him not to leave her. To “beg” (beg) is to ask desperately for someone not to do something or to do something. Scarlett begs Rhett Butler to stay, but it’s too late. Even though she tells him that she loves him, he turns around to her and says, “Frankly, my dear, I don’t give a damn.”

“Frankly” means honestly, something that is simple but direct, no additional information needed. “I don’t give a damn” means I don’t care. “Damn” is a very strong word – not the strongest word you can use. It’s not a word you want to use with children, or you certainly don’t want to use it with your boss – unless you said, “You are damn good,” which would mean you are very, very good. Usually though, it’s considered a word that would not be used in normal conversation.



ENGLISH CAFÉ – 130

The quote, then, is “Frankly, my dear, I don’t give a damn.” We use it when we are trying to be funny and show that something is not important to us. Even people who have never seen the movie Gone with the Wind know this line; it is easily the most famous line in American movies.

The second most famous line from an American movie is from The Godfather, a 1972 movie about the Italian Mafia in the United States. The “Mafia” (Mafia) is a group of businesspeople and criminals who work in what we call the “black market.” The “black market” is when you buy and sell things outside the regular laws. Often, people do this with illegal goods – illegal things – or because they don’t want to pay taxes. Not that I would know; I don’t buy things on the black market!

In the movie, one of the Mafia members says, “I’m going to make him an offer he can’t refuse.” To “refuse” means to say no to something, to reject or deny something. This line can be interpreted in two ways. First, it could mean that I’m going to make him an offer that is so good that he can’t say no – I’m going to propose something to him that is so good he won’t be able to say no. The other meaning could be that I’m going to make him an offer, but he will have no choice of whether he wants to accept it or not. I’m going to make him accept it; if he doesn’t, I’ll kill him. Well, the Mafia will kill him; I won’t personally kill anyone, I hope! Many Americans quote this line sometimes when speaking with an Italian American accent – I won’t try to do that! “I’m going to make you an offer you can’t refuse” means it’s going to be so good you will want to say yes. That’s the usual meaning – unless you are a member of the Mafia!

The third most famous line is from a 1954 movie, On the Waterfront. It’s very long; it’s longer than the one sentences that we are talking about for most these movies. The “waterfront” is where the ocean or the body of water meets the land. In the movie, there are two men who are riding together in a taxi – in a taxicab. One of them, played by the great actor Marlon Brando, says, “You don’t understand! I coulda had class. I coulda been a contender. I coulda been somebody, instead of a bum, which is what I am.” [Jeff imitates Marlon Brando] “You don’t understand! I coulda had class. I coulda been a contender. I coulda been somebody, instead of a bum, which is what I am.” Well, acting is not the career for me, I think!

Let’s explain what this means. The word “coulda” is short for “could have,” it’s an informal way of saying “could have.” “I could have had class,” that means I could have had style; I could have been an important person in good society. Then he says, “I could have been a contender.” A “contender” (contender) means that I



ENGLISH CAFÉ – 130

could have been someone who was able to compete with other people, I could have been good at something. He says, “I could have been somebody (I could have been someone important), instead of a bum.” A “bum” (bum) in American English is a person who doesn’t have a job, doesn’t have any money, is probably homeless, living on the street or in a car. It’s an insulting term. So he says, “You don’t understand! I coulda had class. I coulda been a contender. I coulda been somebody, instead of a bum, which is what I am.”

The fourth most famous line comes from a movie from 1939, called The Wizard of Oz. In this movie – which almost every American has seen I think, it’s been on television many, many times – a girl named Dorothy lives with her dog, Toto. They live on a farm in the state of Kansas, which is in the middle part of the United States, it’s almost right in the center of the U.S. It’s a state famous for having lots of farms and small towns.

Well, one day Dorothy is caught in a strong storm, a tornado, that picks up her home, and when this is happening she gets hit on the head and she falls “unconscious,” meaning she’s unable to hear or see anything for a long time. This usually happens if someone hits you on the head, you become unconscious. When Dorothy wakes up, she finds that her home has “landed,” has set down, in a magical place called Oz where everything is very different from what she is used to back in Kansas. She holds her dog and says, “Toto, I’ve got a feeling we’re not in Kansas anymore” – I don’t think we’re in Kansas anymore. Today people quote this line when they want to say that they are in a strange or unusual situation that is unlike anything they have ever seen before. When you move to Los Angeles, many people will use this line because Los Angeles, like New York City, is so different than the average city or town in the United States.

The fifth and final most famous line we’re going to talk about is from the movie Casablanca, which was produced in 1942, during World War II. It’s a beautiful romance about a man named Rick. Rick falls in love with a woman, but then has to decide whether he will help her and her husband escape from Casablanca so they can continue to fight against Nazi Germany. At the end of the movie, when he has to say goodbye to her, because she’s going to leave before the Germans arrive, he says to her, “Here’s looking at you, kid.” “Here’s looking at you” means I like looking at you, it’s nice to look at you; it’s a way of saying I like you. The word “kid,” here, normally would mean a child, but the actor in this movie, Humphrey Bogart, uses the phrase to make it more memorable, a little softer. Today, people use this line, “Here’s looking at you, kid,” with friends and loved ones to express this idea that you like them or you love them or you like looking at them.



ENGLISH CAFÉ – 130

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

We'll take a question from Bo (Bo) in China. Bo wants to know the difference between the words "proper" and "appropriate."

Both words can mean the same thing in many cases. Something that is "appropriate" is something that is right for a certain purpose or a certain set of circumstances – a certain situation: "It's important to wear the appropriate shoes for your job." But you could also say, "It's important for you to wear the proper shoes for your job." Either word could be acceptable here, and it means the same thing.

"Proper" also has an additional meaning, which is that something is right or correct according to some "social standard," some behavior that is acceptable or not acceptable. For example: "It is not proper for a girl at a party to yell and scream and cry." That's not proper behavior for a boy or a girl. You could also say, "That's not the proper way to use the fax machine. You have to put the paper on the top, not the bottom." The "proper," the correct way of doing something.

If you have a question or comment, email us. Our email address is eslpod@eslpod.com, and we'll try to answer them here on the Café.

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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