



ENGLISH CAFÉ – 140

TOPICS

New York Theater District/Broadway shows; Barbie dolls/G.I. Joe, I don't have versus I have no, in the street versus on the street, identifying yourself on the phone

GLOSSARY

district – area or part of a city; section of a town or city

* Cesar lives downtown, near the financial district where he works.

mainstream – appealing to the general public; liked or recognized by most people

* My favorite actress seldom acts in mainstream Hollywood movies.

controversial – something that creates a lot of disagreement; a topic about which people have strong and differing opinions

* The talk show this past weekend had two guests who talked about controversial political topics.

cutting-edge – new, modern, and exciting; something that has not been done before and that is considered new and interesting

* Mina's new cell phone has cutting-edge technology not found in the average cell phone.

lucrative – profitable; making a lot of money

* Jim was offered a job he liked, but it's not very lucrative and he's worried he won't be able to pay his school loans if he accepts it.

figurine – small doll of people, animals, and things; small toy of people or things that children play with

* For many years, my mother collected figurines of sleeping dogs that are now worth a lot of money.

infant – young baby; at an early stage of development

* The classes offered at the community center are for older children, not infants.



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voluptuous – having womanly curves with big breasts and hips, and a small waist

* The models at the party were all voluptuous and sexy.

to distort – to change the way that something is seen, or the way that something appears; to make something appear different from what it really is or looks like in real life

* Are you losing weight or is that mirror distorting the way your body looks?

accessory – something designed to be sold and used with something else; something that can be added to something else to make it appear or work better

* Bettie bought a dress for the party, but she still needs to buy the accessories, including a purse and a necklace.

action figure – small doll of soldiers, sports heroes, or characters with superpowers, like Superman and Spider-Man

* Let's take all of our action figures outside and have a big battle!

armed force – the parts the U.S. military, including the Army, Navy, Air Force, and Marines

* Which branch of the armed forces will Cassandra be serving in after she finishes high school?

I have no – I don't have; I am without

* You may have told your parents we're going to dinner with them, but I have no intention of going!



WHAT INSIDERS KNOW

Broadway Musicals Made into Movies

Movies take “inspiration” (source of ideas) from many places. One of those places is Broadway. A number of very successful Broadway shows have been “turned into” (changed into; adapted into) equally successful movies. Three recent examples have even won Academy awards, the most “prestigious” or highly respected award for movies.

The movie, Chicago, won six Academy awards, including Best Picture (best film) of the year. The movie, released in 2002, is based on the 1975 Broadway musical production, which “ran for” (continued for) 936 performances. It tells the story of a woman who kills and the “celebrity” (being famous) and justice she receives.

Dreamgirls is another Broadway show, which had a lot of success as a movie. The movie was released in 2006 and it won three Academy awards. The Broadway musical upon which the movie was based opened in 1981. As a Broadway musical, it also won many prizes, including six Tony Awards, which are the awards given each year to the best Broadway shows. The story of Dreamgirls takes place in the 1960s and 1970s, and is about a group of African American female singers who try to become famous and successful.

Finally, Phantom of the Opera, was a very successful Broadway play for many years before it was turned into a film. A “phantom” is a ghost, a spirit of someone who has died, and the “opera” is the theater where trained classical singers perform. This musical and film tells the story of a phantom who lives in the opera house. He takes a young girl “under his wing” (to teach or protect) to train her to be a great opera singer.



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COMPLETE TRANSCRIPT

You're listening to ESL Podcast's English Café number 140.

This is ESL Podcast's English Café number 140. I'm your host, Dr. Jeff McQuillan, coming to you from the Center for Educational Development, 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 business and daily English.

On this Café, we're going to talk about the New York Theater District and the shows on Broadway. We'll talk about what people mean when they say Broadway or a show on Broadway. We'll also talk about a very popular American set of toys, and those would be the Barbie dolls and G.I. Joe. We'll talk a little bit about their history and their popularity in the U.S. And as always, we'll answer a few of your questions. Let's get started.

We're going to begin our Café on Broadway, in New York City. It is part of the New York City Theater District. A "district" is an area, or a part of a city. For example, in Los Angeles and in New York and in San Francisco, there is a Chinatown. It's a district or area where there are many Chinese American people living. New York City has a very famous theater district; it's sometimes called Theater Row (row). A "row" is a line of things, one next to the other. The Theater District, or Theater Row, is located on the island of Manhattan, which is, sort of, downtown New York City. It's located in the middle, what we call "midtown" Manhattan.

If you ever go to New York City – to midtown Manhattan – you can walk around the Theater District. It doesn't just have theaters; it has movie theaters and hotels and many restaurants. The Theater District is 11 blocks long by three blocks wide. A "block" is the distance from one street to another, so there are 11 streets going north to south in the Theater District, and three streets going east to west. One of the streets that runs through the Theater District is called Broadway, so there is an actual Broadway street. The part of Broadway that passes through the Theater District is sometimes called "The Great White Way." If you ever go to New York and walk down Broadway at night, you'll understand why it's called "The Great White Way," there are some many lights on the theaters that shine very brightly.



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The Theater District has 39 large, professional theaters that each have more than 500 seats for theatergoers, or people who go to watch theatrical performances. If a play or show is at one of these 39 large theaters, we say that they are “on-Broadway.” “On-Broadway” refers to theater plays and shows that are in one of these main theaters in the Broadway district. Sometimes, it’s called simply the “Broadway Theater.” Many people think that the very best shows – the very best plays in the United States are on Broadway, that it represents the best English-language theater in the United States, and perhaps the world, although those in London would probably disagree. So, when people talk about a Broadway musical or a show that is on-Broadway, they’re talking about performances that take place in this theater district with the large theaters.

There are other theaters in the Theater District besides these 39 main theaters. Performances that are held in the Theater District in places that have less than 500 seats, usually between 100 and 499 seats are called “off-Broadway” shows. When I went to New York a few years ago we – my wife and I – went to an off-Broadway comedy play. It wasn’t very funny, unfortunately! When people talk about “off-Broadway,” then, they mean that it’s still in the Theater District, but it’s not one of the larger theaters. Theaters in New York City that have less than 100 seats are sometimes called “off-off-Broadway shows” and that could be any place in the New York City area – it doesn’t matter whether they are in the Theater District or not.

On-Broadway shows are usually “mainstream,” which means that they appeal, or are popular, with the larger, general public – most people. On-Broadway shows are usually not controversial. Something is “controversial” if it creates a lot of disagreement and people have strong, differing opinions about the topic. Mainstream shows try to be popular with everyone, and on-Broadway shows are usually, therefore, not controversial. Most on-Broadway shows don’t have topics that offend anyone. “To offend” means to say something that would hurt another person’s feelings.

Plays and shows that are in the smaller theaters – the off-Broadway theaters – usually are more controversial; we might say they’re more “cutting-edge.” The phrase “cutting-edge” (edge) means that it is new, it is exciting, it is modern. Something is cutting-edge if it hasn’t been done before. Many people talk about cutting-edge technology, for example. Cutting-edge theater is theater that looks at new topics that some people may not be comfortable with. So, if you want to see a cutting-edge play in New York, you really need to go to the off-Broadway theaters. On-Broadway shows will be much more mainstream. If you want to



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see something really unusual, then you can go to the off-off-Broadway shows, where you'll see many strange things indeed!

On-Broadway shows are usually thought to be very high-quality performances. Many tourists who go to New York City try to see, or to take in, a Broadway show while they're in the city. "To take in" a show means to go to a show or to attend and enjoy a show at the theater. Because so many people want to take in a Broadway show when they visit New York, tickets are very expensive. On-Broadway shows are very lucrative. "Lucrative" (lucrative) means profitable, or making a lot of money. The actors, directors, and other people who work in the on-Broadway theaters make more money than those who work in the off-Broadway or off-off-Broadway theaters. One estimate is that about 1.5 billion dollars in tickets are sold each year for Broadway shows!

Broadway shows that are popular, and that are making a lot of money, often are there for years and years. Phantom of the Opera, for example, is the longest running show on Broadway. It's been running, I think, at least 20 years. The second longest running show is Cats, which is a strange play based on some children's poetry by the great American poet T.S. Eliot. You can also find shows such as Les Misérables and A Chorus Line. Those are also very long running shows; they've been there for years and years.

If you have the opportunity to go to New York City, I certainly recommend you try to take in a Broadway, off-Broadway, or off-off-Broadway show. Tickets are expensive, but you can often find cheaper, discounted tickets – tickets that have a lower price – if you stand in line the morning of the performance. When I was in New York, there was a ticket office right in Times Square where you could go and buy tickets for performances that day that were often much cheaper than the regular ticket price.

Our second topic today is about a very different subject: popular children's toys in the U.S. Children all over the world like to play with dolls. A "doll" (doll) is a toy that is shaped usually like a person and is small enough for the child to carry. Normally, people think of only little girls as playing with dolls. Dolls for boys are usually called, or sometimes called, "figurines." They're made out of harder material – plastic – and are sometimes smaller, but that isn't always true. Really, what boys play and girls play with are both kinds of dolls, but the traditional view is that girls are the only ones who play with dolls, even though they're not.

In the U.S., the most popular dolls for girls are Barbie dolls, and the most popular dolls or figurines for boys are G.I. Joe figurines. Let's talk about both of these



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toys. They both have interesting histories, and are parts of American culture that every American child, at least in the last 50 years, knows about.

The Barbie doll was created in 1959. Unlike most dolls, which are made to represent “infants,” or very young babies, the Barbie doll is made to look like an adult woman. Many young girls love playing with Barbie dolls, but often their parents don’t like the doll. This is because the doll is, in part for some parents, a little too sexual. The doll is very “voluptuous,” meaning it has large breasts in front, and very attractive hips and waist. Some people say that playing with Barbie dolls distorts the image that girls should have of the female body. “To distort” means that it changes the way that something is seen, or the way that something appears. Because these dolls look like some people’s idea of a perfect woman, because they are so thin and have large breasts, there is a criticism that says that these dolls are giving a bad impression – a bad idea – to girls about what a typical woman’s body looks like. A young girl sees the Barbie doll and thinks that’s the way their bodies have to be, and that this is a bad image in that it is one that very few women are able to live up to – are able to meet.

That’s a feminist critique of Barbie dolls. Nevertheless, Barbie dolls continue to be extremely popular, despite these criticisms in the last 20 or 30 years. Almost every young American girl, at some point, has a Barbie doll.

Barbie is a fashion doll, meaning that the girls can change her hair and change her clothing. There are many different types of Barbie dolls and many different “outfits,” or sets of clothing that you can buy for the Barbie doll – this is very good for the company that makes Barbie dolls! Lots of girls like to dress and undress their Barbie dolls several times a day. There are also other dolls, like Barbie’s boyfriend, whose name is Ken; there are also cars and houses and stores that you can buy that go with the Barbie doll. These are sometimes called “accessories. An “accessory” (accessory) is something that is designed to be sold and used with something else. For example, computer accessories might include a printer and a scanner.

Obviously Barbie dolls are designed mostly for little girls, although there are some boys, I guess, that play with them. In general, however, little boys in the U.S. tend to play with what we would call “action figures.” These are figurines – small dolls – often of soldiers, of sports heroes, or of imaginary characters, like Superman and Spider-Man.

The toy called G.I. Joe was created in 1963, the year I was born, and became a very popular action figure. The managers of the toy company that make the doll



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were impressed with how popular Barbie dolls were with girls. They wanted to create something similar for boys, so they created G.I. Joe. A “G.I.” is another way of referring to someone who is a soldier in the Army. So, G.I. Joe was a soldier in the American Army, and that is what little boys would play with. That’s certainly what I played with when I was growing up in the late 1960s.

G.I. Joe figures are still popular; they are all “military-themed” figurines, meaning they are figurines from the Army, the Navy, the Air Force, and the Marines. Typically, little boys will play with their G.I. Joe action figures by making them fight other action figures, as little boys do. Sometimes they even have large battles with their friends. When I was growing up, my older brothers and I would often play with the G.I. Joe figures, and we would have several dozen of them, and we would put them on the carpet or on the table and we would have this battle between the two sides.

Like Barbie dolls, G.I. Joe action figures are controversial, with some parents anyway. Some parents believe that these action figures promote or encourage violence among young boys. They don’t want their children to be playing games that involve wars and guns and shooting, because they think this will teach their sons that violence is okay in real life. Once again, however, despite these concerns, G.I. Joe action figures continue to be very popular among most American boys and will probably continue to be popular in the future.

Now let’s answer a few of your questions.

Our first question comes from Yaryna (Yaryna) in Ukraine. The question has to do with the difference between the expressions “I don’t have” and “I have no.”

“Don’t” is a contraction of the words “do not,” so “I don’t have” means I do not have. You probably knew that! “I have no” is an interesting phrase. “No” in this expression is really an adjective that means not any. So, you can say, “I have no money,” that means I do not have any money – I have no money. You could say, “I have no job,” or, “I have no idea why that girl slapped me in the face after I asked her to dance. I have no idea – I don’t have any idea.

Daniel (Daniel) from Poland wants to know the difference between the expression “in the street” and “on the street.”

Well, both “in” and “on” are prepositions that refer to the location of something. Usually, “on” refers something that is on top of another surface or in an area that is not “enclosed,” there are no walls or any barriers around it; it is an open area.



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You can say, for example, that the pen is on the table. It is on top of; it is sitting on top of the table. “The fly is on the wall” – the fly is sitting there on top of the wall.

“In” is usually, but not always, used when you have a space that is enclosed – that is not open. We often use “in” to mean within or inside of something. “My daughter is in the room” – she’s inside of it. Actually, it’s not my daughter; I don’t have a daughter! “Please put the dirty dishes in the sink.” Or, “He poured coffee in the cup” – inside of; it’s a container, it’s a space that is enclosed.

The expressions “in the street” and “on the street” are a little bit more difficult to understand. For example, you would say, “Don’t play baseball on my lawn (on top of, on the surface of my lawn, the grass in front of my house). Play in the street.” Well here, you’re thinking of the street as being something that is enclosed that has definite boundaries or borders compared to your front lawn. However, you can also say, “They didn’t have room the parking lot, so I parked my car on the street.” Here, parking lot is an enclosed area, with walls in a building. The street is relatively an unenclosed the area, compared to the parking lot.

Some uses of “in the street” and “on the street” are simply idiomatic; they don’t necessarily have a real good, logical reason. Notice, for example, that “on” is used when talking about a building or location that is in front of a street. For example: “The theater is on Broadway.” It is not actually on the surface of the street; it is next to the street, but we use “on” for that.

Yener (Yener) in Turkey wants to know how you introduce yourself or give your name on the telephone versus face to face with the other person in the same room as you.

Let’s suppose that someone calls you and the phone rings. You answer “Hello,” and the other person says, “Hi, it’s John.” “It’s John” means my name is John – I am John. Usually, you can use that expression “it’s (plus the name)” when you know the person or it’s an informal situation.

In a formal situation, where you are calling a businessperson that you don’t know – that you have never met – you may call someone, the person may answer, “Hello, ABC Company,” and you say, “Hi, my name is John Thompson, and I’m calling from XYZ Company.” Notice he says “my name is,” not “it’s John Thompson.” If you say “it’s John,” or “it’s John Thompson,” you assume that the other person knows who you are. But here, the other person doesn’t know you;



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this is a formal situation, so you would say “my name is...” You could also say “this is...”: “Hello, this is John Thompson.”

Now, if you are meeting someone face to face, you usually introduce yourself by saying either “I’m...”: “Hi, I’m Jeff,” or, you can give your name: “Hi, my name is Jeff.” The most common form in face to face communication, however, would simply be “I’m...” So notice if you are in the same room with someone you would say “I’m Jeff,” if you are introducing yourself, that is. If you’re talking on the phone, and the person knows you, you would say “it’s Jeff”: “Hi, it’s Jeff. How are you?”

Notice at the beginning of the podcast I say “my name is Jeff McQuillan.” I could say “this is Jeff McQuillan.” In both cases, I’m assuming that you don’t know who I am; I’m introducing myself. I think most of you know who I am, but there are always new listeners, so each episode I introduce myself at the beginning. I also sometimes introduce myself again at the end of the episode, in case you’ve forgotten my name. For example, I say, “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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