



ENGLISH CAFÉ – 144

TOPICS

Saturday Night Live; Howard Stern and shock jocks; using “to” in who, what, where, when, why questions; state of the art; ways to say “good job!”

GLOSSARY

live – a radio, television, or Internet broadcast recorded only once and shown and broadcasted at the same time that it is being recorded; in person and not recorded

* Tonight, my favorite group is giving a live concert at 8 p.m. and I don’t want to miss it!

cast – the group of actors who regularly appear on a television or theater show

* This season, there will be three new people added to the cast of this TV show.

celebrity – a famous person, such as an actor, singer, or musician; a person well known to many people

* When we visit Los Angeles, do you think we’ll see any celebrities?

sketch – in television shows or theater, a short scene that is part of a larger show

* The actors did a funny dance during that sketch to make the audience laugh.

news anchor – a person who is usually sitting at a desk and facing the camera and who tells news stories on television

* The news anchor dropped his script right before the program started and didn’t know what to say during the news broadcast.

current events – important things that are happening in society and government and are in the news

* Kelly knows all the current events from reading three newspapers every day.

to get (one’s) big break – to have an opportunity that helps one very much, usually by advancing one’s career, especially in the entertainment industry

* My cousin Karin is an actress and got her big break last month when she was hired to be in this new comedy show.



ENGLISH CAFÉ – 144

controversial – a topic or issue that people have many different and strong opinions about

* Whether people should own guns is a controversial issue.

shock jock – a radio host who says surprising things, including many things that anger other people

* How can you listen to that radio station when that shock jock says such terrible things about women?

to offend – to make someone angry by doing or saying something that he or she doesn't like

* Nancy told a joke at dinner that offended all of the men in the room.

fine – an amount of money that one has to pay for doing something wrong

* Bucky threw garbage on the ground and got a ticket. Now he has to pay the \$60 fine.

on the air – during a radio or television broadcast; while a radio or television program is being recorded

* Please make sure that no one in the room makes loud noises while we are on the air.

state of the art – the highest development in technology; the newest and best version of something

* I knew that Derrick was building a new house, but I didn't know that everything in it would be state of the art.



WHAT INSIDERS KNOW

The Production Schedule for Saturday Night Live

How is a weekly show that lasts 90 minutes “produced” (made) in just one week? Here’s what happens in a typical week at Saturday Night Live.

Monday: The writers and cast members have a big meeting called a “pitch meeting,” when everyone tells each other and the producer, Lorne Michaels, about their ideas for the show. After the meeting, the writers each write two scripts for that week’s show.

Tuesday: By Tuesday afternoon, the writers have completed over 30 scripts, but not all of them will be used for the show. The “host” or special guest for that week talks to the writers to see what he or she will be doing during the show.

Wednesday: Now that the scripts are done, the writers and the cast do a “read-through,” which means that they will read the scripts aloud, but not act them out. Then, the producer and the host decide which ones will be used for the show.

Thursday: The scripts that are selected but that need some “re-writing” (changes; editing) are worked on by the entire writing staff. The news anchors for the Weekend Update news sketch meet to decide which news items will be included. The musical guests for that week’s show come in to the studio to “rehearse” (practice) with the “crew” (people who take care of the technical parts of the show).

Friday: The cast rehearses their parts. The “sets” (scenery and furniture used for a show) and “costumes” (clothing used in acting) are made.

Saturday: The cast does a “run-through,” which means they practice as though they are performing, but without costumes. Later, they do a “dress rehearsal,” which is a practice in which everything is supposed to be the same as in the final performance. From 8 p.m. to 10 p.m., the cast performs in front of a “studio audience” (people watching in the room where the performance is taking place); 20 minutes will “deleted” before the final broadcast. The show is shown on TV in most parts of the U.S. at 11:30 p.m.



ENGLISH CAFÉ – 144

COMPLETE TRANSCRIPT

You're listening to ESL Podcast's English Café number 144.

This is English as a Second Language Podcast's English Café episode 144. I'm your host, Dr. Jeff McQuillan, coming to you from the Center for Educational Development in beautiful Los Angeles, California.

Visit our website at eslpod.com. You can 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 English, as well as our ESL Podcast Blog, where several times a week we provide even more help in improving your language proficiency.

On this Café, we're going to talk about a very popular and funny television show in the U.S., called Saturday Night Live. Then we'll discuss a man named Howard Stern and the meaning of the expression "a shock jock." You'll learn why some people love Howard Stern and some people hate him, but he is known by most Americans. And as always, we'll answer a few of your questions. Let's get started.

Our first topic today is a popular TV show called Saturday Night Live. Sometimes we simply call it SNL – Saturday Night Live. It's a "comedy," a funny show that is made to make people laugh. It "airs," or is shown on the television, every Saturday night and lasts about 90 minutes. It was first produced in 1975 and continues to be produced today. So, it has been around for more than 30 years. I remember the first Saturday Night Live television shows back in 1975; I was – let's see – 12 years old or so.

Saturday Night Live is filmed, or recorded, live in New York City. If a show is "live," we mean that it is shown on television at the same time it is being recorded. Many shows – most shows are not live on television, but Saturday Night Live is. On a live TV show, if an actor makes a mistake, of course, the audience will see it and so will everyone watching on television. Often the actors' mistakes make the live show even funnier than it would be if it were more carefully filmed and edited.

Saturday Night Live has a cast, just like any television show. A "cast" is a group of actors who appear, or are on, a show on a regular basis. So, the cast consists of the actors in the show. SNL has a cast of "comedians," people who try to



ENGLISH CAFÉ – 144

make you laugh. The cast of Saturday Night Live is joined every week by a different “celebrity,” a different famous person, and musical group – a band. A “celebrity,” as I say, is a famous person; it could be an actor, a singer, a musician, even a politician. Saturday Night Live always has a celebrity host who speaks at the beginning of the show and also participates in some of the comedy routines – some of the funny parts of the show with the regular cast. So, they are an actor that is part of the comedy show. Usually this is an actor, or a singer, or someone else who’s famous, but there have been many different kinds of celebrities. Even our current president, George Bush, was on Saturday Night Live, so was Al Gore, the vice president under President Clinton. So, many famous people go on the show. It’s considered a very popular show, and so a good way for people to get to know you better.

Saturday Night Live is a series of short and humorous, or funny, sketches. A “sketch” usually is a simple drawing, but when we’re talk about television shows or theater, it’s a short scene that is part of a larger show. A “comedy sketch” is where the actors say funny things, but it’s something that they’ve practiced in advance. The opposite of “sketch comedy” would be “improv,” or “improvisation,” where the actors are making up the jokes right there, as they go along; they don’t practice anything in terms of the jokes. But Saturday Night Live is a sketch comedy show, so there are number of small, three to five minutes scenes, or parts of the show, that are supposed to be funny.

Some of the sketches became very popular, and the sketch characters, or the people who appear in the sketches, repeat many times. So, you’ll see the same character – the same person – act in different sketches about the same theme or topic. For example, one popular sketch was called “It’s Pat!” The main character was named Pat, but nobody could tell if Pat was a man or a woman. That’s because the name Pat might be short for Patrick, or it could be short for Patricia. Patrick is a man’s name; Patricia is a woman’s name. So, you would have this character named Pat who would come out, and you couldn’t tell was it a woman or was it a man, and of course, the name doesn’t help, so this lead to many funny situations in the sketches.

Another very popular segment, or part, of Saturday Night Live is Weekend Update. This is a part of every show. Weekend Update is like a news program. You have usually one or two cast members act as “news anchors,” or people who tell you the news on television. Some of their news stories are based on very strange, bizarre things that have happened in the past week. They also are about “current events,” things that are happening in society and government and that are in the news that people have been talking about. So, they’re ways of



ENGLISH CAFÉ – 144

making jokes about the news – about things that are happening. They often find ways to make even very serious and important current events seemed funny.

Many of America's most famous comedians and actors today got their break on Saturday Night Live. To “get one's break,” or “your big break,” means to have an opportunity that helps you a lot – that helps you become more famous, to get more jobs, more work. This is especially true in the entertainment industry, in television and the movies. To get a big break means to get an opportunity for many different people to see you, and become popular and well known. Comedians such as Eddie Murphy of the Beverly Hills Cop movies, or Mike Myers of the Shrek and Austin Powers movies, these are comedians that started on Saturday Night Live and then became more famous. Other comedians, such as Steve Martin, became famous by appearing on the show, especially in the early days.

Saturday Night Live changes its cast every few years, so that you get to see new and different people. And as I say, many of the people who start on Saturday Night Live become more famous in movies and in television shows after they leave the show.

Saturday Night Live is something that most Americans have watched. Not everyone watches it every week; it's not as popular as it was when I was growing up in the 70s and 80s. But it's still a very popular show that people talk about.

Our second topic today is Howard Stern. Howard Stern is also a member of the entertainment industry, except he's not in the movies. He's on television a little bit, but mostly he's famous for being on the radio. Howard Stern is a radio host, someone who creates and leads a regular show, or program. He has a show called – are you ready – The Howard Stern Show. Now you know where you can find him. It's considered very controversial, this show. If something is “controversial,” people have many different, often strong opinions about it. He says things and does things that makes a lot of people angry sometimes. Howard Stern is controversial because he uses a lot of sexual and sometimes racial humor. This means that he says things that are supposed to be funny because they are about some sexual topic or they're about someone's gender – whether they're male or female – or they're about someone's race – their skin color.

Many people think these things are funny, but there are many people who don't like these comments – who don't like Howard Stern's show. Howard Stern always talks about current events, usually saying things that many people don't



ENGLISH CAFÉ – 144

think are very funny. But again, he's very popular. For many years, you could listen to Howard Stern in most American cities. During the morning he would have a live show from New York City, but you could hear it across the country. More recently, Howard Stern has gone to what we call "satellite radio," so you have to have a special satellite receiver in order to hear him. He's less popular now than he was a few years ago because fewer people are able to listen to him now.

Howard Stern used his show – and uses his show – to give his opinions or beliefs about almost everything. He doesn't care if his opinions are unpopular or inappropriate; this is what makes his show so controversial. For this reason, he is often called a "shock jock." To "shock" someone means to surprise someone, often in a negative way. For example, you would be shocked to find out that your best friend stole money from you. A "jock" (jock) is a nickname, or a short name, for a disk jockey, which is another term for someone who has a radio program, usually someone who plays music but not always. So a shock jock is a radio host who says shocking or surprising things, things that may offend other people. To "offend" someone means to make someone angry by doing something or saying something that they may not like.

Some of Howard Stern's programs have been considered so offensive that he has actually had to pay fines to the government. A "fine" is an amount of money that you have to pay the government for doing something wrong – when you break the law. For example, if you park your car where it is not supposed to be parked, you may have to pay a parking fine. Howard Stern has had to pay fines for saying things on his radio show that he is not permitted, or allowed, to say. These are not political opinions; these are words – we might call them "dirty" words or "vulgar" words – that he uses on his radio program that you don't normally hear on the radio. And in fact, the government says you can't say certain words or certain kinds of things that are going to be considered vulgar or inappropriate. Howard Stern has paid more fines for his radio show than any other radio host in the United States!

Many people refuse to listen to radio programs like the one created by Howard Stern because they think they are too offensive. Other people, however, like listening to these kinds of programs. In fact, so many people like to listen to Howard Stern that he is actually now the highest-paying radio host in the U.S., even though he is heard by far fewer people than he was even five or 10 years ago! I guess it must be how he has enough money to pay so many fines for the things he says when he is "on the air," or on the radio.



ENGLISH CAFÉ – 144

Howard Stern Show wrote his “autobiography,” or story of his own life, that was made into a movie later; that became very popular also. Because Stern was also involved in television a little bit and movies, he sometimes liked to call himself the “King of All Media,” meaning that he was the most popular person in all different kinds of media – radio, television, film, etc.

In 2006, Time Magazine put Howard Stern on its list of the top 100 people who shape, or influence, our world. Forbes Magazine made him one of the top 100 celebrities in 2006, so he’s an important personality in modern American culture. Again, you may like him, you may hate him, but most Americans know who he is.

Now let’s answer some of the questions that you’ve sent us.

Our first question comes from Taehoon (Taehoon) in Korea. The question has to do with using prepositions in sentences, especially in questions, when they appear at the end of the sentence. For example: “Who are you talking to?” That would be the most common way of asking that question. You could also say, “Whom are you talking to?” Technically, it should be “whom,” not “who,” because it is the object of a preposition. “To whom are you talking?” is another way of asking the same question. But, “to whom are you talking” sounds a little too formal for most people. So in normal, conversational English you would not use “to whom are you talking,” you would say simply, “who are you talking to.”

There are many examples of this kind of construction. You could ask, “What book do you compare this to?” Or, “To what book do you compare this?” “Where did she send the money to?” Or, “To where did she send the money?” Or, “Which group did you say yes to?” Or, “To which group did you say yes?” You’ll notice that you can put the “to” at the end or at the beginning; I would say having it at the end is probably more common in conversational English.

Ana (Ana) from Puerto Rico says she wants to know the meaning of the expression “state of the art.”

This is actually a common expression that you will hear when talking about the highest level of development of a certain machine or device, something that is the latest or most advanced technology. Some people would say the iPhone by Apple is state of the art technology – it’s the most advanced kind of technology. You could say, “Podcasting is a state of the art technology for teaching languages.” It’s the most advanced – well, I’d like to think so!



ENGLISH CAFÉ – 144

So, “state of the art” is a positive thing, meaning it is the most advanced; it is the latest development in this particular thing.

Rosalba (Rosalba), also in Puerto Rico, wants to know how you compliment someone who has done good work. Can you say “good job,” or do you say “good work”?

“Job” and “work” are the same when you’re talking about a task, something that someone is doing. So, “good job” or “good work” are both possible ways of telling someone that they did well on a certain task. However, “good job” is much more common. You could say “good work,” but you will hear “good job” more often. So for that expression, they are equivalent in meaning.

Using “job” and “work” in a sentence, however, can be a little more difficult. That’s because a “job” is what we call a “countable noun.” The word, or noun, “job” is “countable,” meaning you can have one job, two jobs, three jobs, four jobs. “Work” is not a countable noun; you can’t say “I have one work,” “two works,” “three works,” at least when you are talking about a task – something you have to do. So, you can say, “I have a job,” or you could say, “I have work.” Both of those could mean the same thing. If you say, “I have work,” you usually mean you have things you have to do. If you say, “I have a job,” you mean that I am employed somewhere – I work for someone, or I work for myself.

“Work” can be used as a countable noun when it means something very different, when it means an artistic production: “a work of art.” “There are three works of art here” – three different sculptures or three different paintings. There, “work” means something different, and therefore can be considered a countable noun. But when you are talking about employment, when you are talking about doing things, then “work” cannot be used in the same way as “job” is used.

If you are listening to this podcast at work, on your job, and you have a question you’d like to email us, just send an email to eslpod@eslpod.com. We can’t answer all of your questions on the Café, but we will try to answer as many as we can.

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

ESL Podcast’s English Café is written and produced by Dr. Jeff McQuillan and Dr. Lucy Tse. This podcast is copyright 2008, by the Center for Educational Development.