



## ENGLISH CAFÉ – 33

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### TOPICS

High school musicals, what a woman looks for in a man, to drive your point home, to call the shots, pilot TV shows, to be debt-ridden, to be in charge, on behalf of

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### GLOSSARY

**drama** – a serious play or performance

\* Watching a good drama sometimes makes me cry.

**hit musical** – a very successful or popular play that includes singing

\* I plan to see the hit musical “The Producers” when I go to New York City.

**crew** – the people who work on a play or film who are not actors or actresses

\* The crew doesn’t get the same respect as the actors in this theater.

**backdrop** – what you see behind the actors and actresses in a play, usually a picture painted to look like a specific place; the background of the situation

\* The backdrop looks like the city of Los Angeles in the 1920’s.

**theater set** – everything on the theater stage for a play except the actors and actresses

\* It’s not easy creating a theater set that looks real and convincing.

**to dim** – to make darker, to turn down the lights very slowly

\* When the people at the wedding began to dance, they dimmed the lights.

**scene** – one part of a play; a play is divided into “acts” and each act is divided into scenes

\* The scene where the woman gets sick is followed by a scene where she dies.

**cast** – the actors and actresses in a play, movie, or television show

\* I always look at who is in the cast before deciding to see a movie.



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**fundraiser** – an event or activity to make money for an organization

\* The fundraiser for the school made enough money for the students to take a trip to Washington D.C. this year.

**to rehearse** – to practice for a play or performance

\* We need to rehearse many more times before we have our first performance.

**birdie** – a small bird; a word sometimes used by children for “bird”

\* Do you see that birdie up in the tree?

**clueless** – not knowing about something; being ignorant of something

\* I feel so clueless about taking care of young children.

**critical** – to say negative things about someone or something else

\* My mother-in-law is critical of my cooking every time she comes over for dinner.

**overbearing** – to be too confident; to bother other people by thinking you are better than them

\* I like Michael but he can be overbearing at meetings when he’s trying to impress the boss.

**gentle** – to be nice or polite; opposite of rough

\* If you want to hold the baby, you need to be gentle.

**to please** – to make someone happy, usually by doing something nice for them

\* The audience laughed at all of the jokes. They were easy to please.

**to treat** – to act or to behave toward someone

\* Some people treat their pets better than their family members.

**to respect** – to have a good opinion of someone's ability or personality

\* The students have a lot of respect for their teacher.

**debate** – an argument or disagreement

\* The debate over which plan to use has been going on for many months.



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### ENGLISH LEARNING TIPS

One of the best ways to improve your writing is to do a lot of reading. We know from many years of research that good writers are almost always good readers. Most of what you need to write well – good grammar, organization, spelling – come mainly from reading.

Writing isn't just a result of reading, of course. There are some hints and tips that can improve your writing, and there are skills you learn that are specific to writing. Interestingly enough, people who are good writers in their native or first language are usually also good writers in their second language. If you're a good writer in Japanese, for example, you will probably also be a good writer in English. This is because many things you use in writing "transfer" from one language to another language.

Reading is especially important if you want to write a specific type of letter or report. Try to read other letters or reports similar to the ones you want to write. The more samples or models of good writing you can find, the easier it will be to write like a native speaker. American business letters, for example, are usually more direct and shorter than business letters in some other languages. By reading lots of business letters, you'll get a "feel" for how letters in English are written. Soon you will be able to write letters in a similar style yourself.



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### COMPLETE TRANSCRIPT

You're listening to ESL Podcast's English Cafe Number 33.

Welcome to the English Cafe Episode 33. I'm your host, Dr. Jeff McQuillan, coming to you from the Center for Educational Development in beautiful Los Angeles, California.

A Podcast Learning Guide for today's podcast, with a complete transcript, vocabulary definitions, cultural information, tips on learning English, and much more is available at our website. Go to [eslpod.com](http://eslpod.com) and click on Learning Guides for more information.

This is an all-new service we started this week, and we think you'll really enjoy it. In today's Learning Guide, for example, we have tips on improving your writing in English which you won't want to miss. Go to our website to sign-up for our Learning Guide service today.

You'll also want to go and look at our all-new website design. Adriano Galeno, originally from Brazil but now living in Canada, is a web designer who has worked with us to create a great new website. Thank you, Adriano, for all of your work over the past few months! Adriano has really done a great job. Please go to [ESLPod.com](http://ESLPod.com) and take a look at his excellent work.

On today's cafe, we're going to talk about the high school musicals and why they are such a big part of high school culture in the United States. We'll talk a little bit about a survey asking what women look for in men. That should be interesting. And as usual, we'll answer some questions. Let's get started.

We're going to start today talking about a very popular institution in schools - musicals. Now, a "musical," you probably know, is a play where people sing. In American high schools, almost every high school, public or private, they put on or perform a musical every year, usually in the spring time, usually in April or May. This time of year is when you can go watch a high school musical.

Most high schools have some sort of drama club or theater club. "Drama," of course, is connected to acting and to the theater. And high schools will perform



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these musicals by getting students to play the parts, to play the characters in the musical and to do the singing. And this is a very popular event. It is usually a play, a musical that is popular or has been popular. So, these aren't original plays; these are famous musicals. Most of them were Broadway musicals or plays, musicals that were originally in New York City. Broadway, of course, is the street in New York City where all the big theaters are. So, if someone says, "This is a Broadway musical," they mean that it originally was a play on Broadway. We also call these hit musicals. "Hit" is a very popular, could be anything - a play, book, a musical - we call it a hit musical.

Well, there are lots of different popular musicals that you can go to, at these high school performances. Most of them are given for three or four times. They have this same play three or four times, usually in the same weekend. They cost probably—I don't know, it's been a while for me—10, 15 dollars? When I was in high school, I was part of the high school musical, I think every year - freshman, sophomore, junior, and senior. It's been a few years, so I have to think. But, I participated in the high school musical and, unfortunately, I can't sing and I can't act and have no other talent—really, no other abilities. So, when I signed up for the high school musical when I was a freshman, they made me part of the lighting crew. The "crew" are the people who are not on stage, the people who are doing the work with the lights and setting up the stage and painting what we would call the "backdrop" – that's what you see behind the actors and actresses, the singers. We also called these the "set" - everything on the stage, except the actors. Well, I was part of the lighting crew, so I was responsible for turning the lights on and off. Usually, in a theater, when you are changing between different parts of the play, different scenes (a "scene" is a part of a play), you would dim the lights. To "dim" means to lower the lights, to make it dark. That was my big responsibility. I couldn't sing, I couldn't act, but I could turn the light switch on and off. So, you know that I have a great future in the theater, I think.

Well, the people who play in the musical, the people who play the characters, who sing, are called the "cast." The cast are the people who are actually singing or acting. I was not in the cast, I was in the crew - the people who do all the other work. The reason that high schools have these musicals - a couple of reasons, I think: one is it's a fun experience for the students to do these musicals; another is to make money for the school. These are, in other words, what we would call fundraisers. A "fundraiser" is an event, something you do in order to get more money for your organization or for your school. Of course, even public schools here in the United States have to get money from people in order to have



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a good quality program. The government doesn't give enough money to the schools for everything, so the schools have to have fundraisers. The verb, by the way, is "to fundraise." These musicals are part of the fundraising efforts, the fundraising plans of the school. They need that money, and so they charge 10 or 15, maybe 20 dollars per person. And, of course, the parents of the students who are in the play and the family will all want to go see them. So, usually it's a very popular event.

The play usually begins rehearsing several months before the play. To "rehearse" is when you are practicing. So, if you are practicing, you come to school maybe every other day and after school. You have what's called a "rehearsal." And that is when you rehearse, when you practice for the play. Some of the popular plays from my youth, from when I was in school, and still popular: Grease, which was also a movie with John Travolta and Olivia Newton John back in the 70's. "Grease" is very popular in high schools. It's about kids in high school in the 1950's in the United States; "The Sound of Music," which was a musical, again a movie, as well as a musical, with Julie Andrews. (singing) "The hills are alive, with the sound of music..." You see why I'm not in a musical? "Oliver" is another popular musical. This is based on the Charles Dickens novel; "Bye, bye, birdie" - a "birdie" is a word for a small bird, in this case - was also a popular musical; and "Hello, Dolly." Dolly is a name of a woman. Again, that was a famous movie, which many high schools like to perform as well. So, that's a little information about high school musicals and how important they are in high school culture here in the U.S.

The other topic for today is what women look for in men. It's always interesting to find different surveys, different polls - "poll", a survey when you ask people their opinion. Sometimes, these are about political topics or social topics. I found one today, actually Lucy found this poll where they asked women what they look for in a man; what an American woman looks for in a man. Now, if you are a man listening to this podcast, you have no idea, probably, what a woman wants. I know I don't. And if you are a woman, you know that many men are what we would call "clueless." To be "clueless" means that you don't have a clue, you don't have any idea, you are ignorant about this. This is a popular word among younger speakers, kind of a slang. There was actually a movie called "Clueless" about high school girls. Well, most men, I think, are clueless when it comes to or in the matter of what women look for.



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So, I'll just read these; I think they're kind of interesting. I'll start from the bottom, Reason Number 9: A woman wants a man who is a good listener, someone who will listen to them. Of course, if you have a girlfriend or a wife, or in a romantic relationship, you should know that you need to listen to your female partner. Number 8 is they want a man who shows love, who is loving to them; that makes sense. Number 7: they want a man who is not critical. To be "critical" means that you are always finding something wrong with the other person, something you don't like. You are telling them things that are wrong with them. Well, that's what you should not do. Women want men who are not going to criticize them. The verb, of course, is "criticize," means being critical. We use that word, critical, in a couple of different ways. We can also say something is critical, meaning it's very important. "This is a critical mission." "This is a critical procedure." It means it's very important. But here, it means to criticize, to say something negative about someone else.

Reason Number 6: They (Women) want a man who is confident, but not overbearing. To be "confident," of course, means that you know what you can do and show other people that you are able to do something and that you believe you are able to do something. We might say, "You believe in yourself," "You believe in your own abilities." But, to be "overbearing" means that you are too confident in that you, perhaps, are - the expression we might use is "coming on too strong," so that you tell everyone how great you are or you tell everyone how wonderful you are and your confidence makes you a little arrogant. To be "arrogant" means that you think you are better than other people. And so that's part of being overbearing. So, women want a man who is confident, but not too confident, not overbearing.

Number 5: They want a man who is gentle. Here, gentle means sort of the opposite of rough. Gentle is the opposite of rough. Gentle is someone who is kind, someone who says nice things about other people, someone who thinks about their spouse or their girlfriend. That's someone who would be gentle. Reason Number 4: A woman wants a man who wants to please her. To "please," as a verb, means to make someone happy, to do what they want to do. So, you say to your wife, "Honey, what would you like to do tonight? Where would you like to eat? I want to make you happy." I do that, all the time. Just ask my wife. I hope she would say the same. Reason Number 3: A man who will treat them kindly. To "treat" someone means to behave towards them, to act towards them in a nice way. I'm going to treat you kindly or nicely. You can also





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treat someone badly, which means you are mean to them and say negative things to them. That's a good way to be single the rest of your life.

Number 3, I'm sorry - Number 2: Women want a man who respects their opinions. To "respect," which was also a famous song, to respect someone means that you consider someone intelligent, you are open to their ideas, you think that they are a good person. If you respect someone's ideas or opinions means you take them seriously, you listen to them, and you that they are, at least, intelligent opinions.

The Number 1 thing that women look for in men, according to this survey, was they want a man who will talk with them, who will have conversations with them. Isn't that, of course, what most of us want from life? Well, so now, if you're a man, you know exactly what you need to go and get the woman of your dreams. So, you can just thank me when that happens.

Now, let's answer a few questions.

Our first question for today comes from Reyang, and Reyang in China. The question is what the expression to "drive your point home" means. What is it mean to "drive" your "point" home? Well, this is a common expression. First of all, let's start with a point. When you say, what is your point or to drive your point home, it means your idea, your concept, your opinion, what you are thinking. To "drive your point home" means to say your ideas, to say your opinions, to argue for your opinions, or to argue for your ideas. So, usually, it's when you are presenting evidence, giving people reasons why they should believe what you are saying or why they should agree with you. That's something that you might do, for example, in a debate. A "debate" is when you have a discussion with someone and you disagree with the other person, you try to persuade them, get them to think what you think. You do that by giving them good reasons. So, when you are really arguing very strongly for your opinion, we use this expression, you are trying to "drive your point home," give people a reason to believe you. Thank you, Reyang, for that question.

Quan from Vietnam has a couple of questions. The first one is the expression to "call the shots." What does that mean? Well, it usually means to decide something, to be in charge, to be the boss, to be the person who is making the important decisions. "Who's calling the shots here?" means who's in charge?, who's the leader?, who's the person making the decision? In any good marriage,





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you have the woman who calls the shots. That's the formula, that's the key to a successful marriage, is when a woman calls the shots. Remember that, men. We can use that expression, by the way, "to call the shots," usually for business purposes. We say, "Mr. Johnson is calling the shots," or "Ms. Smith is calling the shots." That means they're the person in charge. It's a little informal, but you'll hear it a lot when people are talking about organizations and businesses.

Another question Quan had had to do with the word "pilot" in the expression "pilot TV show" or "This television show is a pilot." "This program is a pilot." A "pilot" is usually the first show of a new season. What happens here in Los Angeles - most of the television shows are made here in Los Angeles - what happens is that there are different companies. These are called "production companies" these are companies that make movies and television shows. And, there are dozens, maybe hundreds of these production companies and what they do is they write a script, they write a program, a television program, and they get some actors and they film it. And then what they'll often do is they give it to the big television stations and say, "Do you like this?" And if they say, "Yes, we want more of this show," then they'll go and they'll make more of that television show. But, they usually film or they usually make one show first to see if someone's going to buy it, essentially, if one of the television stations is interested. And this is called the "pilot." Usually, when they have a new television show, the first show is the pilot, it's the first attempt, the first show in the series. And, sometimes the pilot is longer than the normal show. It might be an hour and a half, instead of one hour or an hour instead of a half hour. So, that's what we mean by "pilot TV." Of course, the word "pilot," is also the word we use for the person who flies the airplane. That person is the "pilot." But, here, it means something very different; it means the first show of a television series.

One more question from Quan, and that was the meaning of the phrase "debt-ridden." What does it mean to be debt-ridden? Well, to be debt-ridden means that you have a lot of debt. What is debt? Debt is when you owe other people money. So, if you buy a big house and you get a big loan to buy your house, you now have a debt. It's a debt to the bank. The bank gave you the money. To be debt-ridden means you have a lot of debt, you have too much debt, you owe too much money, so much money that you can't pay it back. That's to be debt-ridden. Thank you, Quan, for those questions.

Daniel, over in Slovakia, has a question about the expression "in charge." What does it mean to be "in charge." Well, to be in charge means to be the boss,



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means to be the person who is the leader, the person who is making the decisions. Another question Daniel had was on the expression “on behalf.” What does it mean to say, “I am doing this on behalf of John” or “on behalf of my brother”? Well, this expression means I'm doing it, usually, either for that person or in place of that person. That's one possible meaning. So, “I am here on behalf of my company,” means my company sent me to represent them. Usually, it has that idea that you are representing; you are the person who is bringing that message to the people you are talking to. Sometimes it can just mean “for”: “I'm doing it on behalf of my friend.” I'm doing it for my friend's benefit. I'm trying to do something for my friend. That's another use of the expression “on behalf.” So, thank you, Daniel for that question.

That's all we have time for today on the English Cafe. As usual, we ask you to visit our website at [www.eslpod.com](http://www.eslpod.com), where can get more information about this podcast and find out about the other things that we offer connected to this podcast.

From Los Angeles, California, I'm Jeff McQuillan. Thanks, as always, for listening. We'll see you next time on the English Cafe.

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