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TOPICS

Ask an American: Raising a large family
criteria vs. standard, through vs. throughout, to call it quits

GLOSSARY

installment – a part of something that has many parts

* The salesperson said that if we can pay for the new furniture in installments over two years.

to go into (something) – to start on something; to begin work in a field or type of work

* After she finishes school, she's not sure whether to go into business or politics.

lack of (something) – without something; being without something; not having enough of something

* Due to a lack of money, the community center will be closing at the end of the year.

allergies – having a bad physical reaction to something, such as food or animals

* My allergies bother me every time I visit my neighbor because she has six cats!

to be up for (something) – to be interested in something; to be ready for something; to be willing to do something

* You've had a very busy day. Are you sure you're up for going to a club tonight?

to play ball – to participate in a sport; to begin playing a sports game

* The younger kids wanted to play ball, but the older kids had already started playing their own game on the field.

chore – a job done at home; a task done regularly in one's house

* When we were young, we each had chores to do after school. I cleaned the kitchen and my sister did the laundry.

laundry – dirty clothes; washing clothes that need to be cleaned

* Naomi was sick for two weeks and didn't do her laundry. When she got well again, she didn't have any clean clothes to wear to work.



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to want for (something) – to charge for something; to give as a price for something

* This is the perfect used car for our family. Do you know how much they want for it?

we were in business – we were ready; we were prepared

* We got an email from our web designer that our website was done and that we were in business.

when push comes to shove – at the most important or difficult moment; when a decision must be made

* Len has said all along that he would help us with our project, but when push came to shove, he said he was too busy and we had to do it without him.

criteria – a principle or standard used to make a judgment or decision

* I want to pick the best flowers for this show. My criteria are that they must be fresh, colorful, and large in size.

standard – a level of quality

* The new food servers we hired for the holiday season aren't up to the standard of our regular staff.

throughout – all the way through something; in every part of something

* Morgan kept smiling throughout the entire ceremony even though she was upset and angry.

to call it quits – to decide to stop; to stop doing something

* We've been trying to call him all afternoon and he doesn't answer. Let's call it quits for today and try again tomorrow.



WHAT INSIDERS KNOW

“Blood is thicker than water.”

“The apple doesn’t fall far from the tree.”

“Like father, like son.”

There are many sayings related to family and “relatives” (people related to you by blood). One well-known saying is: “Blood is thicker than water.” This saying means that being related by “blood” (the red liquid that goes through people’s bodies) to someone is more important than other things, especially in a difficult situation. For example, a woman wants to leave her successful company to her children after she dies, but believes that none of her children are good in business. She might say, “I know that my son James isn’t the best choice to be the next company president, but blood is thicker than water. I would rather leave the business to a family member than to a stranger.”

Another well-known expression related to family is: “The apple doesn’t fall far from the tree.” This saying means that the children (or grandchildren) have the same characteristics as their parents. It can be used for good or positive characteristics. For example: “When Damon was in college, he was a great runner. The apple doesn’t fall far from the tree. His daughter is only 12-years-old, but she has won every race she has ever competed in.” It can also be used for bad or negative characteristics. For instance: “I heard that their son was in jail. The apple doesn’t fall from the tree. Both of his parents had problems with the law when they were teenagers.”

A saying that has a similar meaning is, “Like father like son.” If you find out that both the father and the son are good at fixing cars, you may use this expression, “Like father, like son.” Although it isn’t as common, you can also use the saying, “Like mother, like daughter.”



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COMPLETE TRANSCRIPT

You're listening to ESL Podcast's English Café, number 68.

This is the English Café, episode 68. I'm your host, Dr. Jeff McQuillan, coming to you from the Center for Educational Development in beautiful Los Angeles, California.

On today's Café, we're going to have another one of our "Ask an American" segments, where we're going to interview and talk to someone to give you a chance to hear some different voices on ESL Podcast. It's always good to listen to different voices and try to understand different types of English and, as always, we'll answer a few questions. Let's get started!

Be sure to take a look at our website at eslpod.com, and download the Learning Guide for this episode. The Learning Guide contains all of the vocabulary, sample sentences, definitions, culture notes, additional explanations of words and a complete transcript of this episode.

Our first topic today is going to be another installment of a new segment that we are starting on the English Café. An installment, "installment," is a addition - an additional part or an additional one of a series of things. So for example, you can have a television show and the television show could be four parts - four sections - and each section might be called an installment.

Well, this is a installment of a new segment, or section, of ESL Podcast's English Café, where we are going to interview other people and ask them to tell us something of interest, and then we'll talk about the language that they used. We had a very good reaction from our first attempt at doing this a couple weeks ago in English Café number 66, so we're going to try it again today.

Now, I was back in Minnesota for the Christmas and New Years holidays and I had a chance to talk some people - to interview and record some people when I was there. One of the people I talked to was my mother. My mother and father both live in Minnesota, along with the rest of my family - or most of my family. So, I asked my mother if she could talk a little bit about something that she knows a lot about. My mother had 11 children. I am the youngest of 11 children, so I come from a very big family. I asked my mother to tell us little bit about what are the difficult things - what were some of the challenges that she had in raising, or bringing up, 11 children.



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We're going to listen to what she says first; it will last about three minutes. It might be a little difficult for you to understand because she sometimes speaks a little fast. But after we listen to it, we will go back and listen to parts of it again and explain any difficult vocabulary.

She's going to begin by talking about what were some of the problems in raising so many children. She's going to talk about my brothers and sisters, and how they were parts of different groups in our family. She's also going to talk about how they found their first house, the house where I lived in - I grew up in - and she'll talk about what she thinks is important in coming from a big family.

Again, just listen; try to understand what you can, and then we'll talk about it. Here's my mother, Mary McQuillan.

[start of recording]

Mary: Well, I don't think anybody goes into their marriage thinking they're going to raise 11 children, that's for sure! But, it was a challenge. The biggest challenge was their health, or lack of good health because their father had many allergies and I had many allergies, and you get that altogether, you're up for a lot of problems sometimes.

Jeff: Yeah.

Mary: But, they were all the - it was like three groups: the oldest four, there was two singles, and then a set of twins, and then the next were three, and then there was four, and they were all within a year of each other, as they - their little group. So, they, themselves, kind of kept together as groups, you know.

Jeff: Right, right.

Mary: The oldest four: they all played ball and this sort of thing. We lived in a neighborhood where there were other large families, and they played together real well - you know, got along pretty good.

Jeff: Uh hmm, yeah.

Mary: And as far as the hardest chore, I would say was, of course, laundry - was a big thing. We had two sets of laundry equipment, one on first floor, one in the basement.



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And when we finished off the third floor - the oldest four - lived up there. And then there was the other two boys in one bedroom, the two girls in a bedroom, and then the youngest in the other room.

So we had - we were lucky to find a big house, and we only found that big house because one day we were living on living on Lafond across from Hamline Playground, and your father was out riding around the neighborhood and he - this man came out and was just nailing a “for sale” sign on the house, on Minnehaha. He stopped the car and got out, went and talked to the man, asked him what he wanted for it, looked at the house, came over and got me, and we went and looked at it and we bought it.

Jeff: Hmm, is that right?

Mary: Because it had these four big bedrooms, and we moved in. We lived with it as it was for a few years, and then he had a carpenter come in and remodel the kitchen and finish off the third floor. So then, we were in business, we had lots of room.

Jeff: Right, right.

Mary: But, I think the biggest thing was keeping them to stay friends, not to fight over things.

Jeff: Yeah.

Mary: You know, little things. But that - I think that was the biggest thing, was keeping them so that they not only got along with their own selves - their own family - but it taught them how to get along outside the family.

Jeff: Yeah.

Mary: Be good to yourselves and be good to your family. Push comes to shove, your family are the only ones you got.

[end of recording]

We just listened to my mother talking about being the mother of a large family - 11 children. She starts the interview by saying:



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[recording] “Well, I don’t think anybody goes into their marriage thinking they’re going to raise 11 children, that’s for sure!”

She says no one “goes into marriage thinking they’re going to raise 11 children.” To go into something here means to start something or to enter into something. We also use that expression, to go into, when we are talking about your career or your job. For example, “I am going to go into computer science,” that means I’m going to study and work in that area or that field. Here, my mother is just saying I’m going to go into means I’m going to start, in this case, marriage.

She also ends that segment by saying, “that’s for sure!” That’s a common expression when you are saying something that you think everyone will agree with or you - you are very certain about - you know this is true. She then says:

[recording] “The biggest challenge was their health, or lack of good health because their father had many allergies and I had many allergies, and you get that altogether, you’re up for a lot of problems sometimes.”

She says some of her children had a lack, “lack,” of good health. To have a lack of something means not to have something or not to enough of something. The biggest challenge or the most important, most serious challenge she said was that my father and my mother both have allergies. Allergies, “allergies,” are when your nose or your throat becomes bothered or irritated by certain things, usually in your environment. For example, I often sneeze - to sneeze is (sneeze sound) - I often sneeze during the springtime; I have allergies to some of the plants here in Southern California.

She also uses the expression “you’re up for.” To be up for means to be ready for something - be prepared for something. It can also mean that this is something that is going to happen to you in the future. “You should be up for problems” - you should be prepared because you will be having problems in the future.

Next, Mom talks about the different groups in my family, and she says:

[recording] “The oldest four, they all played ball and this sort of thing.”

To play ball is a general expression we use meaning to play sports, such as baseball or basketball or football. Because so many sports end with that word, ball, we use it as a general expression. To play ball means to play some sort of team sport. She then says:



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[recording] “The hardest chore, I would say was, of course, laundry - was a big thing. We had two sets of laundry equipment.”

A chore, “chore,” is a job - something you have to do, usually in your house such as cleaning, cooking. The biggest chore my mother had was laundry, “laundry.” Laundry refers to washing and drying clothes, and she said we had two sets of laundry machines in order to wash all of the clothes for the family.

She then describes how my father found such a large house for all of us to live in. He was driving around the neighborhood and he saw a man nailing or putting a sign - a “for sale” sign - in front of the house, and so my father then:

[recording] “He stopped the car and got out, went and talked to the man, asked him what he wanted for it, looked at the house...”

She said he asked him what he wanted for it, meaning how much it was. And, my mother looked at the house, and then they bought the house. She then describes how they remodeled, or fixed and changed the house, and they finished off, or completed, the attic of the house, which is the very top of the house, what we called the third floor. And then she says:

[recording] “So then, we were in business, we had lots of room.”

And “then, we were in business,” that's a common expression to mean then we were ready. She doesn't mean they were in business, like a business that you work for. It's an expression that means we're ready, now everything is prepared - we're in business.

She ends the interview by talking about how important it was to teach me and my brothers and sisters to be friends and not to fight, and she ends with some good advice that you would expect from a mother. She says:

[recording] “Be good to yourselves and be good to your family. Push comes to shove, your family are the only ones you got.”

That expression, when push comes to shove, “shove,” means when things are difficult - when you are in a tough or difficult situation, this is the thing or person that you have to rely on or dependent on, and in this case, it's the family. To shove means to push a person, so push and shove are similar ideas, where you're moving someone, usually against their will, often when it's a fight. “There



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was pushing and shoving,” meaning the people were starting to fight. Maybe they were waiting in line to buy the new Nintendo game, and that happened here in the United States when some of the new electronic games went on sale.

Well, I hope you enjoyed listening to this short interview with Mom, so thank you Mom. And now, we'll turn and answer a few questions from you.

Our first question comes from Moyao, “Moyao call” from Japan. Moyao's question has to do with the difference between the word criteria, “criteria,” and standard, “standard.”

Criteria is actually the plural of criterion, which is “ion” at the end instead of “ia.” Many people, however, just use the word criteria for singular and plural; that's becoming more common. Criteria is a rule or a principle that you use to judge something else. For example, “The criteria for this job are that you are able to speak English and have a college degree.” If you don't meet those criteria - notice we use the word meet, the verb, “meet,” meaning that you have obtained or satisfied this requirement - if you don't meet those criteria then you cannot get the job. So, that is how we are going to determine or judge whether or not you get the job.

A standard is often used the exact same way. Usually as a noun, it's something related to a government agency or an official organization such as a school. The school has certain standards for its students, and it's a list of things that each student must know before they get their high school diploma. This has become very popular in the last ten years here in the United States, that each school and each state has certain standards, and the government organizations - other government organizations - also have these rules that every one is supposed to follow. Criteria tends to be a little more specific, and is related usually to making a judgment or assessing something.

Our next question comes from Columbia, from Alejandra, “Alejandra.” Alejandra wants to know the difference between the words through and throughout. This is a good question.

Through is often used as a preposition to mean to move from one place to another. “He walked through the door” - he went from one side and went and moved to the other side. The word through can also mean by the means of. “I am going to make a lot of money through investing in the stock market.” That is the means or the way that I am going to do something.



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Throughout, with an “out” at the end, means in all the different places or in all situations, for example, “It is raining throughout California today.” That means it's raining in almost all the different parts of California. It can also mean at different or at all different points in time. For example, “Throughout the month of January, we are going to have a big sale at our store” means during this time of January - at every day in January - we will have a sale.

Our final question comes from Marie, “Marie,” in France. Marie wants to know what the meaning of the expression to call it quits. “I'm going to call it quits” means I'm going to stop - I'm going to end - I'm going to stop doing what I am doing. “I work until five o'clock in the afternoon, then I call it quits,” “quits.” I call it quits - I end - I stop working.

It's not possible to say, “I called it to quit,” or “I called to quit to it” because this is an idiomatic expression - it's just the way that this expression is used. If you said, “I called to quit,” that would mean that you called on the telephone and talked to your boss and said that you were going to quit your job - you were going to leave the company. That's something completely different. To call it quits then means to stop, and you have use quits, with an “s,” not just quit.

We're very interested in your opinions and comments about some of our new sections on ESL Podcast, such as interviewing different people, what we call the “Ask an American” series. If you have questions that you want to ask someone and have us interview someone here in Los Angeles or in other places, email us. Our email address is eslpod@eslpod.com. We'd love to get your feedback on our new sections in the Café.

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

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