



ENGLISH CAFÉ – 95

TOPICS

Ask an American: Getting into an MBA program
to spell out something, about to break, breakdown, conscience versus conscious

GLOSSARY

any number of (something) – many; a lot of; a large number of

* The financial advisor told us that there are any number of reasons to begin saving money while you are young.

marketing – the work of advertising, promoting, and selling products to customers

* Good marketing requires knowing why your customers are interested in the products.

accounting – the work of tracking financial transactions; the process of recording the money that a business receives and spends

* If you like numbers and finance, you might enjoy a career in accounting.

undergrad/undergraduate – a student who is studying at a university to earn a Bachelor's degree; a student in the first four or five years of study at a university

* The undergraduate students like to study on this floor of the library.

to be admitted – to have one's application be accepted so that one is invited to study at a university or college; to be successful in becoming a member of an organization

* I was admitted to Yale University, but I didn't have enough money to study there.

GMAT – Graduate Management Admission Test; an exam that most people must take to apply for an Master's in Business Administration (MBA) degree

* The GMAT tests your verbal, math, and writing skills.

TOEFL – Test of English as a Foreign Language; an exam that non-native speakers of English take to show American universities and colleges how well they know English

* What score did you get on your TOEFL?



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to be right out of (high school/college) – to have graduated recently; to have finished high school or college a short time ago

* Keisha got an impressive job as a finance director right out of college!

to set (oneself) apart from (someone) – to show that one is better than another person in some way; to do something that makes one appear to be better at something than another person is

* Larry's good grades set him apart from the rest of the applicants for the scholarship.

deadline – the date when something is due; the date when something has to be finished and given to another person

* The deadline for applying to Nebraska University is March 31.

to spell (something) out – to say each letter in a word, so that people know how it should be written

* - Can you please spell out your last name?

- Sure. It's U-R-Q-U-I-Z-O.

to be about to break – to have an emotional or mental collapse; to lose emotional or mental control; to almost be broken, but still work; to be near the end of something's useful life

* After losing his job, Wallace felt that he was about to break and decided to ask his family for help.

breakdown – sudden emotional or mental collapse; the moment when something completely stops working

* Xavier's car had a breakdown in the middle of the desert, so he had to wait a long time for someone to come and help him.

conscience – the feeling that what one is doing is right or wrong; an internal guide that helps one decide what one should or shouldn't do

* Ruby lied to her mom, even though she knew her conscience would bother her about it.

conscious – awake and aware of what is happening around oneself

* After the accident, Dana was conscious, but she couldn't move her body or talk.



WHAT INSIDERS KNOW

Dilbert

Dilbert is a very popular “comic strip” (drawings in a row of boxes that are printed in the newspaper every day). The artist, Scott Adams, uses “office satire,” meaning that he uses humor to “criticize” (say negative things about) what happens in offices.

The main “character” (drawn person in the comic strip) is Dilbert, who is an engineer at a technology office. His boss is known simply as “Pointy-Haired Boss,” because his hair stands up in two large points, and he is a very bad manager. When the other characters are “mismanaged” (managed poorly) by the boss, they often make funny, ridiculous decisions in their jobs.

Many of the words and phrases in Dilbert have become part of American popular culture. For example, the comic strip uses the word “induhvidual” instead of “individual.” The word “duh!” is used informally to mean that something another person said or did is very obvious or stupid. So an “induhvidual” is a person who doesn’t know what’s going on.

Dilbert also makes a lot of “references to” (mentions of) “cubeland,” which is the area in a large office building that has many “cubicles.” A “cubicle” is a small area with four short walls where a person works when he or she doesn’t have an office. Many people complain about working in “cubeland” because it is impersonal, noisy, and “crowded” (without very much space).

Finally, Dilbert “coined” (created or made) the word “frooglepoopillion” to mean a very, very large number. In the comic strip, one day the company realized that it owed more money than could be counted, so it decided to say that it owed a frooglepoopillion dollars.



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COMPLETE TRANSCRIPT

You're listening to ESL Podcast's English Café number 95.

This is English Café episode 95. I'm your host, Dr. Jeff McQuillan, coming to you from the Center for Educational Development in beautiful Los Angeles, California.

On this Café, we're going to have another one of our "Ask an American" interviews. Today we will be interviewing Kevin about his Masters in Business Administration program – his study of business at a graduate level in the United States. We're going to find out what he had to do to get into, or be admitted to, the program. And as always, we'll answer a few of your questions. Let's get started!

A reminder, as always, that you can get the complete transcript for this episode by downloading the Learning Guide from our website at eslpod.com. It might be especially useful for this kind of episode, when we have someone speaking at a little faster speed.

We interviewed Kevin about his experience in getting an MBA. He's going to begin by telling us what an MBA is – give us a definition. Kevin will be speaking at a normal speed, so he'll be speaking a little fast. But don't worry, we're going to go back and talk about what he said and give you another chance to listen to it.

Here's Kevin telling us what an MBA is:

[recording]

An MBA program is a Masters in Business Administration. It's obviously a little higher-level courses than your undergraduate courses, and you can study any number of topics in the business school – marketing, accounting, finance.

[recording stops]

Kevin tells us that an MBA is a Masters in Business Administration. This is a graduate degree, meaning you have to have a Bachelor's degree first. We call the Bachelor's degree the undergraduate program. Kevin says the MBA is "obviously a little higher-level than your undergraduate courses," meaning they're more difficult at the graduate level.



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He also says that “you can study any number of topics in the business school.” The expression “any number of” here just means a lot or many; it’s just another way of saying many. “I have any number of places I could go on vacation” – I have many “options,” many possibilities.

He lists three of those possibilities: marketing, accounting, and finance. “Marketing” has to do with letting other people know about a company – your company. “Accounting” and “finance” are related to the money: how much money comes in, making sure that you are keeping good records, and so forth.

Let’s listen again to this definition:

[recording]

An MBA program is a Masters in Business Administration. It’s obviously a little higher-level courses than your undergraduate courses, and you can study any number of topics in the business school – marketing, accounting, finance.

[recording stops]

Kevin now describes to us how you are admitted to an MBA program. “To be admitted” means to be accepted, when they say, “Yes, you can come to our school.” He’s going to describe what you need to get into an MBA program in most universities in the United States. He’ll tell us the tests that you have to take, how his admissions – his application – was a little different than some other students. He’ll talk a little bit about the application, whether you have to do an essay. He’ll also mention something about an interview that he did, and why he did it.

This is a little longer section. Let’s listen, and then we’ll come back and explain it:

[recording]

Well, the first thing you have to do, of course, is to graduate from undergraduate – an undergraduate program. Then, you also have to take the GMAT for U.S. students, and the TOEFL for international students. GMAT is an assessment test, much like the SAT is. It just gives you a score and rating on how well you might do in a Master’s program.



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The admissions process for me was probably a little bit different because I had taken the GMAT right out of undergrad, and I just knew that at some point I'd go to get my Master's in something. So, I had already taken it a long time ago, which was lucky 'cause there's no way I could have passed it before – or at that time when I wanted to get my Master's! (laughs)

But yeah, you – so, you have to have those things, but then, you also apply to the school, and, you know, every school has some kind of application. I don't recall having you do any kind of essays, but a lot of schools do have you do essays. I did an interview, although it wasn't required, but I felt like it was important for me to go and meet the admissions people to show them who I was and what my purpose was in getting into the MBA school because my grades weren't great – my GMAT score wasn't great! (laughs) So, I had to have something to just kind of put myself apart from some of the other people who were applying to the program.

And then, the process – I applied pretty late. I applied probably in February – February and I think I got accepted in June.

[recording stops]

Kevin begins by talking about the requirements for getting into an MBA program. He begins by saying that you need “to graduate from undergraduate.” He's using the verb “to graduate” here to mean to complete your education. He says you need “to graduate from undergraduate.” “Undergraduate” means undergraduate degree or an undergraduate program. So, he's saying you need to first have your Bachelor's degree.

Kevin says that you have to take the GMAT to get admitted into an MBA program. The GMAT stands for the “Graduate Management Admissions Test.” This is a test that is given to students who want to go into an MBA or a graduate management program. It is like the SAT, the “Scholastic Achievement Test.” It has a section about math and a section about reading comprehension, usually.

In addition, if you are an international student – if you are not from the United States and do not speak English as your first language, you have to take the TOEFL, the “Test of English as a Foreign Language,” which is required by most U.S. universities for international students to show that their English is good enough to study at the university.



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Kevin then describes the “admissions process,” the steps that he had to take to get into his MBA program. He says, “The admissions process for me was probably a little bit different because I had taken the GMAT right out of undergrad.” Kevin took this test – the GMAT test – “right out of undergrad.” “Undergrad” is short for undergraduate program – his Bachelor's degree. So, he took the GMAT “right out of,” meaning right when he completed – just after he finished his undergraduate.

That expression, “right out of,” is usually used to talk about a student who is graduating from a program. You could say, “He's right out of high school,” that means he just graduated from high school a few months ago, for example.

Kevin said that he “knew that at some point” – at some time in the future – “I'd go to get my Master's in something.” So, when he graduated from his Bachelor's degree program, he took the GMAT right away, even though he didn't go into a graduate program immediately.

He continues, “So, I had taken it,” the GMAT, “a long time ago, which was lucky 'cause,” meaning because, “there's no way I could have passed it before – or at that time when I wanted to get my Master's!” What Kevin is saying here is that because the test was somewhat difficult, it was good that he took it right when he finished his undergraduate, when he still remembered, for example, the math that he needed to do the exam. When he went to get into the Master's program, it had been two or three, maybe four years since he graduated, so he wasn't – or would not have been able to remember very much. So that's why he says that it was lucky he took it right out of undergrad, because he did better on the test because he was able to remember things that helped him on the test.

Kevin continues: “so, you have to have those things, but then, you also apply to the school, and, you know, every school has some kind of application.” Kevin is saying that you have to take these tests, but you also have to “fill out,” or complete, an application for the school.

He says, “I don't recall having you do any kind of essays.” Notice he says, “I don't recall having you do any kind of essays.” This is a somewhat unusual but common expression: “I don't recall you having to” would be: “I don't remember that people getting into the program would have to.” So, he's not talking to “you” specifically, he's saying “in general.”

He didn't have to do any essays. He says, “a lot of schools do have you do essays,” they require that you write an essay. He says he “did an interview,



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although it wasn't required." The reason he did the interview was that he wanted to "meet the admissions people to show them," to demonstrate to them, "who I was and what my purpose was in getting into the MBA school." The reason he wanted to do the interview, he explains, was "because my grades weren't great," meaning they weren't very high – they weren't very good: "My GMAT score wasn't great!" So, he did not have good "academic credentials," he didn't have good grades – good scores – so he wanted to do the interview. He says, "I had to have something to just kind of put myself apart from some of the other people who were applying to the program." He wanted to do something that would "put him" or "set him apart," meaning it would make him "stand out," it would make him be more noticeable. They would remember him, because, of course, most universities get more people applying than they can accept, so they have to reject some people.

Finally, Kevin says that he "applied pretty late," meaning he didn't send his application in until very late in the year. He says, "I think I probably applied in February and I think I got accepted in June." Many American universities have deadlines. A "deadline" is the last day that you can do something. They have deadlines about when you can "submit," or send in, your application. February is somewhat late; normally the deadline is in December or January. Kevin did not find out that he was "accepted," that he was admitted, until June, and then he started school in September.

Let's listen to that section again now:

[recording]

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[recording stops]

I want to thank Kevin for participating in our “Ask an American” series. Now let's answer a few of your questions.

Our first question comes from Fabio (Fabio) in Brazil. Fabio wants to know how you ask someone to give you numbers spelled out as words. So, the numbers “one two three” written as “one hundred twenty-three,” four words (123).

A couple of ways you can ask that question, one is: “Could you spell that number for me?” Or, “Could you spell out that number?” You could also say, “Could you write out that number?”

When we are writing a check from your bank, you usually have to write the numbers down, and then you have to write out the numbers on another line. So you have to write the words for the numbers. So, either of those questions, “Can you spell out that number,” or, “spell that number,” “Could you,” or, “Would you write out that number?”

Atsushi (Atsushi) has a question about the expression “about to break. He heard in a song the line: “I'm about to break.”

In this case, “to break” means to lose control, to lose your patience, not to be able to do something any longer. For example, this person may start to cry or leave the place where they are or get very angry. That is how we would use the verb in talking about a person: “He's about to break.”

You can also use this expression if you are, for example, “interrogating,” you're asking questions. You're the police, for example, and you have a criminal, you



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want to get the criminal “to break,” you want to get them to finally tell you the truth.

“Breakdown” is related to this idea. “Breakdown,” a noun, means to have a complete emotional collapse. To lose control, that would be a “breakdown.” So, they’re related to this idea of “about to break”: “He is about to break,” he is about to lose control. For example, “I’ve been working three jobs to help my family, and I’m about to break.” Or, “Lucy wrote 50 scripts last night, and then she had a breakdown,” she can no longer work because of the emotional and mental stress. Just an example, she only wrote 49 scripts last night!

Our final question is from Saw (Saw) from the country of Myanmar. Saw’s question has to do with the difference between “conscience” (conscience) and “conscious” (conscious). “Conscience” versus “conscious.” You note a slight difference in the pronunciation: “conscience” – “conscious.”

“Conscience” is the feeling or idea you have about what is right or wrong. It’s related to being ethical or being moral. Some people say, “He doesn’t have a conscience,” meaning he doesn’t have an idea about what is right and what is wrong. We also have the expression “a guilty conscience,” if you did something wrong. So, “Yesterday, I ate a piece of cake that my wife made, now I have a guilty conscience because I didn’t tell her.” I feel badly because I’ve done something wrong. You could also say, “I’ve gone against my conscience.”

“Conscious” means to be awake or to be aware of things around you. For example, “The doctor gave me some drugs so that I would not be conscious during my medical exam,” which is true, this happened to me! You could also say, “I could go with you to the party tonight, but after working all night, last night, I don’t think I’d be conscious for very long,” meaning I’d fall asleep. So we have “conscious” and “conscience.”

If you have a question, you can email us. Our email address is eslpod@eslpod.com. We can’t answer everyone’s questions, but we will certainly try to answer as many as we can here on the Café.

From Los Angeles, California, I’m Jeff McQuillan. Thanks for listening. Come and listen to us next time again on the English Café.

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