



ENGLISH CAFÉ – 99

TOPICS

Ask an American: Losing weight in America

“99 Bottles of Beer on the Wall,” to be someone’s man through and through, doggone, to see one’s share of something, to say something 10 times fast

GLOSSARY

to pass (something) around – to share a bottle, plate, or something else with many other people, so that everyone drinks, eats, or uses something from the same dish or container

* They sat in a circle around the fire, telling stories and passing around snacks.

scale – a balance; a plastic and metal thing that one stands on to see how much one weighs; a device that tells one how heavy a person or thing is

* Trey was surprised when he stepped on the scale and saw that he weighed more than 200 pounds.

to last – to endure; to continue for a period of time; to continue in time

* The party lasted until 4:00 a.m.

recipe – written instructions for cooking or baking something

* This recipe for chocolate cake calls for four eggs.

a little bit – some; not very much; a few

* Dan said he wanted only a little bit of the dessert, but then he ate three pieces!

calorie – a unit that measures the energy in food; a measurement of the amount of energy in food

* A large apple has about 130 calories.

let’s say – for example; for instance; a phrase used to show that whatever follows is an example of what one is talking about

* Let’s say that you get a job that pays \$45,000 per year. In that case, you can easily save \$500 per month for the house you want to buy.

shortening – a fat that is used in baking, especially for cakes and cookies

* How much shortening did you use to make these cookies?



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applesauce – a type of food made by cooking apples without the skin or seeds until the pieces become very small, usually mixed with cinnamon and/or sugar
* Many Americans like to eat applesauce with pork chops.

to check in with (someone) – to speak with someone to let him or her know where one is or how one is doing
* Whenever we travel for business, we're supposed to check in with our boss when we arrive in the other city.

to keep track of (something or someone) – to monitor something or someone; to know the status of something or someone; to know where and how something or someone is
* Kenzie makes lists to keep track of all the things she needs to do each day.

to be (someone's) man – to be someone's very good friend; to be someone whom another person can trust and rely on; to be someone who always supports and helps another person
* When Randy spent all day helping Michael move to his new house, Michael said, "Thanks, Randy. You're my man!"

through and through – completely; entirely; without any exception; 100%
* Melinda is a hard worker, through and through. She never complains when she has to stay late at the office.

doggone – darn; damn; a word used to show that one is frustrated with something or angry at something
* I've been trying for almost 10 minutes, but I can't get this doggone lock to open!

to see one's share of (something) – to have a lot of experience with something in one's own life
* Grandpa always says that he saw his share of death during the war, and he feels bad for today's soldiers.

to hit rock bottom – to be in the worst situation possible; to be at the lowest point in one's life
* Christopher realized that he had hit rock bottom when he found himself stealing money from his mother's purse to buy liquor.



WHAT INSIDERS KNOW

Drinking Songs

A “drinking song” is a song that people sing when they are drinking alcohol or are already “drunk” (have had too much alcohol to drink and can’t think clearly). Drinking songs are usually sung very loudly, and the “lyrics” (the words to a song) are usually “crude” and “vulgar” (rude and impolite). Many people don’t like drinking songs because the lyrics are sexual and sometimes “demeaning to women,” meaning that they say bad things about women. Nevertheless, here are some of the lyrics to some American drinking songs.

“Drunk Last Night” is often sung by sports teams and “fraternity brothers” (groups of young men who live together during college). The lyrics begin like this:

Drunk last night. Drunk the night before,
“Gonna” (going to) get drunk tonight like I never been drunk before,
For when I’m drunk I’m as happy as can be,
For I am a member of the Souse family.
[“Souse” refers to “Dr. Seuss,” the writer of children’s books, which are full of poems that rhyme, like this drinking song.]

Another famous drinking song is “Seven Drunken Nights”, which is based on an old Irish song. There is one “verse” (group of lines in the lyrics) for each of seven nights. The lyrics for the first night begin like this:

As I went home on Monday night as drunk as drunk could be,
I saw a horse outside the door where my old horse should be.
Well, I called me (my) wife and I said to her: "Will you kindly tell to me,
Who owns that horse outside the door where my old horse should be?"

In the drinking song, on each of the seven nights, the man comes home drunk and sees something in front of the house, so he asks his wife whose it is.



COMPLETE TRANSCRIPT

You're listening to ESL Podcast's English Café number 99.

This is the English Café episode 99. I'm your host, Dr. Jeff McQuillan, coming to you from the Center for Educational Development in beautiful Los Angeles, California.

Welcome to our 99th episode. The number 99 reminds me of a famous song that many Americans know, called "99 Bottles of Beer on the Wall." We'll talk about that today. We're also going to do our "Ask an American" section, where we will listen to a native speaker talking about a topic. Today's topic is losing weight; something that many Americans need to do. Me, too! And finally, we'll answer some of your questions. Let's get started.

When I was child growing up, sometimes in school we would take trips on a bus. Sometimes these were long trips – an hour, two hours – going to some event or visiting some place. One of the things that we used to do as children – and many American children do – is to sing a song so that the time goes by more quickly. To entertain yourself, you can sing a song. There's one song – it's a kind of counting song, I guess – that's called "99 Bottles of Beer," like what you would drink.

Now, this is a strange song for children to sing, but we sang it, and many children do, on trips like this, or on long trips in a car with their parents. It's a very simple song; you start at 99 and you count down (you go backwards: 99, 98, 97). And, the words to the song are very simple: "99 bottles of beer on the wall (meaning on a shelf on a wall), 99 bottles of beer. Take one down and pass it around." To "pass something around" means to give it to other people, in this case, to share it with other people. So, you take one down and you pass it around, now you have 98 bottles of beer, so the next part of the song is "98 bottles of beer on the wall," and so forth.

The song, when sung, sounds like this – only better, since I can't sing very well (Jeff sings): "99 bottles of beer on the wall, 99 bottles of beer. Take one down and pass it around, 98 bottles of beer on the wall. 98 bottles of beer on the wall, 98 bottles of beer. Take one down and pass it around, 97 bottles of beer on the wall..." and so on, and so on. I won't sing down to number one!

Now, when you get to number one, the last line is kind of interesting (Jeff sings): "No more bottles of beer on the wall, no more bottles of beer. Go to the store



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and buy some more, 99 bottles of beer on the wall." You notice that the last line is "No more bottles of beer on the wall," so you "Go to the store and buy some more, 99 bottles of beer on the wall," because you bought 99 new bottles.

It's really kind of a drinking song, I guess, but it is something that children often sing; I know I did when I was a child. Maybe I was just a little different – I don't know!

Today we're going to do another one of our "Ask an American" segments, where we listen to a native speaker talking at normal speed, and then I will go back and explain what they're saying.

Today's topic is on being overweight; being, what we may say, too fat, though that's not a very nice way to talk about it. You don't want to say someone is "fat," you want to say they're "overweight" (too much weight).

It turns out that 66% of Americans – two-thirds of Americans are overweight, and many of those are what we would call "obese" (obese). To be "obese" means that you are really overweight; you are so overweight that you will start to have problems with your health. That is to be "obese."

We're going to listen to part of an interview on the Voice of America with a woman – a 59-year-old woman – who is trying to lose weight. And the story begins with this woman saying that she was 59 years old, and she stepped on the scale one morning and she discovered how overweight she was.

Let's listen to her. Again, she's going to speak fast, but we'll go back after and talk about what she said.

[recording]

I was 59, and I was approaching my 60th birthday, and I stepped on the scale one morning and the numbers went up to 179 and then the scale broke. And, I'm only 5'1", I'm a very short woman, and I said, "That's it! You're going to make changes, and those changes are going to last you for the rest of your life."

[recording stops]

Pretty fast, right? She talks very fast. Well, let's talk about what she said. She starts by saying, "I was 59, and I was approaching my 60th birthday." To be "approaching" means to be coming close to. She says, "I stepped on the scale"



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(scale). The “scale” is the little machine that tells you how much you weigh, how many pounds or how many kilos you weigh.

So, she says, “I stepped on the scale one morning and the numbers went up to 179 (179 pounds) and then the scale broke.” It stopped working because she was so overweight. She then says, “I’m only 5’1” (five feet, one inch), I’m a very short woman, and I said, ‘That’s it (meaning that’s enough, this is gone too far)! You’re going to make changes,’” she says, “and those changes are going to last you for the rest of your life.” When we say something is “going to last you,” as a verb, we mean it is going to continue, it is going to still be with you. So, you’re going to make changes that will continue for the rest of your life.

Let’s listen again now:

[recording]

I was 59, and I was approaching my 60th birthday, and I stepped on the scale one morning and the numbers went up to 179 and then the scale broke. And, I’m only 5’1”, I’m a very short woman, and I said, “That’s it! You’re going to make changes, and those changes are going to last you for the rest of your life.”

[recording stops]

If you have tried to lose weight, you know how difficult it can be sometimes. Let’s listen to this woman talk about how she lost weight. She’s going to talk about how she cooks and how she started doing different things with her old recipes (the instructions about how to make a certain kind of dish – certain kind of food).

Once again, listen, then we’ll go back and explain:

[recording]

I started experimenting, ‘cause I do like to cook. And, I took some of my old recipes that I really liked a lot and just changed them a little bit and took out the calories. Let’s say I make a cake, I just don’t want all the calories so I replace the shortening with applesauce, and then I kept it not as sweet as before. But, I also added a lot more fruits and vegetables to my diet.

[recording stops]



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Here's what she said. She said that she “started experimenting, ‘cause I do like to cook.” “Cause” is a short form of because, and in normal conversation, especially if you are talking as fast as this woman, sometimes we use the shorter form.

She says that “I took some of my old recipes (recipes – instructions about how to make and prepare certain kinds of food) that I really like a lot and just changed them a little bit.” A “little bit” means a small amount: “I made a small change.” She says she “took out the calories.” To “take out” here means to remove (to get rid of; to eliminate). “Calories” (calories) is a unit of measurement, we would call it, a way of measuring something. Food that has more calories will usually make you fatter than those that have less calories. So, a pizza – a pepperoni pizza, for example, like the one I had for lunch – has more calories than a salad with just vegetables, assuming they're about the same size, of course. So, “calories” is a way that we measure how much a food will affect you, in some ways. Technically, it has a definition that is related to heat and burning energy, but we won't talk about that here. The way it's usually used has to do with how it will cause you to gain weight, in this case.

The woman continues, “Let's say I make a cake.” That expression, “let's say,” means for example. “Let's say I make a cake, I just don't want all of the calories so I replace the shortening with applesauce.” “Shortening” is a kind of fat that you use to make certain kinds of baked goods like cakes and cookies. “Applesauce” is the liquid that comes from an apple that's chopped up (that's cut up), and it's a thick sauce. The woman says that she replaces the shortening with applesauce, “and then I kept it not as sweet as before.” “I kept it” means I made it – I made sure, in this case – that it was not as sweet as before. “But,” she says at the end, “I also added a lot more fruits and vegetables to my diet.”

Let's listen one more time:

[recording]

I started experimenting, 'cause I do like to cook. And, I took some of my old recipes that I really liked a lot and just changed them a little bit and took out the calories. Let's say I make a cake, I just don't want all the calories so I replace the shortening with applesauce, and then I kept it not as sweet as before. But, I also added a lot more fruits and vegetables to my diet.

[recording stops]



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The woman later starts a group of people to help them lose weight, mostly senior citizens – what we usually call nowadays just “seniors,” who are people, depending on who you ask, over the age of 55 or 60 or 65. Not 40, that's not a senior citizen. I'm not a senior citizen yet!

She started a group of people to help them lose weight. In this last segment, she talks about how they used to communicate with each other so that it would help them lose weight. The name of the program that she mentions (the name of this group) was called the “Meltdown” program. “Meltdown” is usually an accident at a nuclear power plant, but here, I think it is being used to mean to become smaller. Let's listen:

[recording]

So, we checked in with each other nearly every day. I kept track of our weight and submitted that to the Meltdown once a week, so they all had to report their weight losses to me once a week.

[recording stops]

She says that “we checked in with each other nearly every day.” To “check in” with someone means to communicate with them, to call them usually. She says, “I kept track (track) of our weight.” To “keep track” means write it down or to somehow make sure that you know. She “submitted that (she gave that to the Meltdown group), so they all had to report their weight losses to me once a week.” Their “weight losses” is how many pounds they lost each week. This is a common way that some weight loss groups operate, where you write down everything you eat, and then you have to give a report once a week. The idea is that this will motivate you to continue because other people are watching you as well.

Let's listen one more time:

[recording]

We checked in with each other nearly every day. I kept track of our weight and submitted that to the Meltdown once a week, so they all had to report their weight losses to me once a week.

[recording stops]



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If you have been listening to the ESL Podcast and English Café for a long time, I hope that these “Ask an American” sections are becoming easier for you to understand as we listen to native speakers.

Now let's answer a few of your questions.

Our first question comes from Oliver in France. Oliver has been reading the Harry Potter books in English, and he came across (or saw an expression) that Harry uses in the sixth book. Harry says, “I am Dumbledore's man, through and through.” Dumbledore is the leader (or the headmaster, we would call him) of Harry Potter's school; Hogwarts is its name – in case you are not a Harry Potter fan.

Well, there are two expressions here. One is to be “someone's man.” When you say you are “someone's man,” you mean that you are loyal to that person. You will protect that person; you will be a good friend to that person. It is someone, perhaps, that is older than you or someone that you have a lot of respect for. It could also be your boss, in some cases.

You often hear this word in politics, when someone is trying to get elected and you are someone who supports that person. For example, if I were to run for governor of California against Arnold Schwarzenegger, you could say, “Well, I'm Jeff McQuillan's man” – I am supporting Jeff McQuillan. I'm not actually going to try to become governor. It might be fun!

The other expression we have here is “through and through.” When someone says something “through and through,” we use this usually as a kind of adverb to mean completely or entirely. You could say, “I'm a baseball fan through and through” – I love baseball, I am a complete fan; I watch every game of the Dodgers. I do, too!

The usage of “through and through” in the Harry Potter book then, “I'm Dumbledore's man, through and through,” means that I am completely (or entirely) committed and loyal to Dumbledore. Say that word ten times fast: Dumbledore, Dumbledore! That's an expression we use when you have a word that is difficult to pronounce that you mispronounce, we sometimes say, “Say that ten times fast,” mean try to say that quickly and you will have problems.

“Through and through,” then, means completely or entirely. You could say, “I was walking home and it began to rain, and now I'm wet through and through” – completely, entirely.



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Fatima (or Fa-tee-ma – Fatima), from I'm not sure where, asks the meaning of the word “doggone” (doggone).

This is an informal word – an old word – that usually means that the person is angry or upset, but they don't want to use a bad word. They don't want to use a swear word or a vulgar word, so they say, “doggone.” You could also say, “darn” (darn). We use “darn” and “doggone” instead of saying the word “damn” (damn), which is considered not a polite word to use in public. If you are waiting for a bus and it is late, or a subway train, you could say, “Where is that darn train?” or, “Where is that doggone train?” “Doggone,” however, is very old-fashioned; it's not used very much anymore at all.

Finally, Eric (Eric), from France also, says he was listening to a song by a country singer, Wynonna Judd, called “Rock Bottom.” And in the song, she uses the sentence: “I have seen my share of hard times.” What is the meaning of this expression, to “see your share of” something?

To “see your share of hard times,” or to “see your share of” anything, means that I have experienced it many times. I have experienced it, perhaps, too many times. It's often a negative thing. For example, “I have seen my share of students who don't do their homework” – I have seen many of them – I have seen too many of them. “I have seen,” then, means I have experienced. “My share” means my part or my portion of something. So, “I have seen my share of hard times.” “Hard times” would be difficult times; times that give you problems, situations that have caused you problems.

The name of the song is called “Rock Bottom,” and there's another idiom: to “hit (hit) rock bottom.” To “hit rock bottom” means to come to the worst possible situation. We sometimes use this word when we are talking about alcoholics (people who drink too much), and they have problems and more problems and more problems, until finally, they “hit rock bottom.” They're at the worst possible situation, and then, they change and become better. Well, we hope! That's to “hit rock bottom.”

If you are an ESL Podcast fan through and through, you can email us and ask a question. We'll try to answer it on our Café. Our email address is eslpod@eslpod.com.

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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