



Coffee and Conversation for ESL Listening



with Donielle and Khrystyna

Episode 31: Smile-Worthy News

Hi! If this is your first time listening to our podcast, this is an opportunity for upper-level English learners to practice listening skills and learn new vocabulary by listening to authentic conversations.

In today's episode Donielle and Khrystyna need a break from the top news stories of the day, so they're scouring¹ the interwebs² to find stories to discuss that are uplifting or funny.

Here are the news stories discussed in the episode along with links referenced and some vocabulary found in the articles (this vocabulary was not used in this episode's discussion):

<p>Thanksgiving Text Mix-Up</p> <p>CBS News People Magazine – See photos through the years</p>	<p>mishap: a small mistake or amount of bad luck [something] is around the corner: happening soon make the best of it: deal with a bad situation as well as possible</p>
<p>Senior Citizens' Adventure</p> <p>People Magazine</p>	<p>make it [to a place]: Manage to arrive at a destination, usually indicating that it was through some difficulty or complication</p> <p>Discriminate: Treat someone differently (in a negative way) based on their ethnicity, gender, age, or disability</p>
<p>An Unconvincing Story</p> <p>CNN</p>	<p>switch: reverse direction or exchange places with book [someone]: formally charge them with a crime apprehend: arrest someone for a crime</p>
<p>Controversial Art*</p> <p>AP News</p>	<p>well-off: describing someone who is wealthy</p> <p>take [something] for granted: fail to properly notice or appreciate someone or something that should be valued</p> <p>*Update: the piece of art referenced in this story was sold for \$6.24 million on November 20, 2024.</p>

¹ In this context, *scour* means to do a search through a large area

² A humorous way to refer to the internet

You can also read the [transcript](#) for this episode.

See the following pages for vocabulary and language focus from this episode.



Vocabulary: Words and Phrases Used in the Conversation

hang in there	Informal: persist; continue despite difficulties or discouragement <ul style="list-style-type: none"> I've been going through a difficult time, but <u>I'm hanging in there.</u>
in [one's] neck of the woods	Informal: in one's neighborhood, town, or area where they live. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> How is the weather <u>in your neck of the woods?</u>
have the blues	be depressed or feel sad
uplifting	positive in a way that encourages the improvement of a person's mood or spirit.
bombarded	attacked constantly or repeatedly; but used metaphorically to mean being overwhelmed by a continuous, large volume of something (e.g. information, questions, news, etc.)
hold yourself accountable	taking responsibility for your actions and behaviors, and fulfilling your obligations without making excuses
interject	when speaking, to insert something (a comment, etc.) in the middle of a topic
up [one's] game	Informal: improve one's skills at something. (also: step up one's game) <ul style="list-style-type: none"> The scammers are always <u>upping their game.</u>
wholesome	promoting good physical or emotional well-being; genuinely positive, uplifting, and heartwarming, often evoking feelings of joy, kindness, and innocence. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> It's one of the most <u>wholesome</u> viral stories on the internet these days.
[be] coming up on	an event, date, or time is approaching or happening soon <ul style="list-style-type: none"> We're <u>coming up on</u> Thanksgiving.
nursing home	residential facility providing a high level of long-term care for persons, such as the elderly, who are unable to care for themselves. NOTE: for other residential facilities that are for seniors, but who are still able to live somewhat independently, we might call it a "retirement home" or an "assisted living facility"
rock out	Ph. Verb: to perform or dance to rock music loudly and with a lot of energy
sneak out	Ph. Verb: to leave somewhere discreetly and without causing much attention (Past tense: sneaked out, or more commonly: snuck out)
headbanger	a fan of hard rock or heavy metal music
reluctant	showing a hesitation or unwillingness to do something. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> The two men were <u>reluctant</u> to go home.
bust out	Ph. Verb; Informal: escape, especially from a jail
stand out	Ph. Verb: be easily noticeable as different from the rest in a group <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Two elderly men might <u>stand out</u> at a heavy metal concert.
stick around	Ph. Verb; Informal: remain in a place <ul style="list-style-type: none"> I'll <u>stick around</u> for bingo, and then I'll bust out.
granted	transition word to acknowledge a point that might seem to contradict your main statement. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> It's funny to imagine elderly people at a heavy metal concert. <u>Granted</u>, heavy metal started a long time ago, so early fans would probably be elderly now.

Vocabulary: Words and Phrases Used in the Conversation

swap	Informal: exchange one thing for another
be pulled over	be stopped by police while driving. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> The driver <u>swapped</u> seats with his dog after <u>being pulled over</u>.
go down	Ph. Verb; Informal: happen or take place, especially in a way that is notable, surprising, or entertaining. It conveys the unfolding of events as they occur. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Can you imagine watching all that <u>go down</u>?
make a run for it	suddenly start running in order to escape from somewhere <ul style="list-style-type: none"> The man saw that his story wasn't working with the police, so he decided to <u>make a run for it</u>.
go off	In reference to the activation of a noise-making device, such as an alarm, siren, or horn that <ul style="list-style-type: none"> My car horn <u>went off</u>.
exert	to make a physical or mental effort <ul style="list-style-type: none"> It makes no sense to run; you're just <u>exerting</u> yourself unnecessarily.
duct tape	a wide cloth adhesive tape originally designed for sealing joints in heating or air-conditioning ducts, but often used for general repair jobs
adhesive	a substance, such as glue, to make objects stick together.
take on new life	Idiom: Become more active, interesting, etc. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> It's an old story, but I discovered that it has recently <u>taken on new life</u>.
backup (adj.)	an alternative or secondary option, ready to be used in case the primary choice fails. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> After the original banana was removed from the wall and eaten, a <u>backup</u> banana was installed.
here's the kicker	Informal: used to introduce the next part of a story or situation that had a surprising or unique turn of events. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> [after telling the strange story about the expensive piece of art] <u>Here's the kicker</u>: the person who buys it doesn't even get the actual piece of art.
takes the cake	is the most outrageous or disappointing <ul style="list-style-type: none"> I thought people making millions of dollars for viral videos was ridiculous, but this <u>takes the cake</u>.
inherently	part of the natural or essential character of something; by its nature <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Bananas are <u>inherently</u> funny.
slapstick	comedy based on deliberately clumsy actions and humorously embarrassing events <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <u>Slapstick</u> comedians drop a banana peel and someone would slip and fall.
hype	extensive publicity or promotion of something that exaggerates its importance, quality, or benefits. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Sometimes there is so much <u>hype</u> over something that a lot of interest is created for something that isn't even valuable.

Talking About Initials and Abbreviations

During this conversation, we made a few references to initials or abbreviated forms that are commonly used as a shorter way to say longer phrases. For example, people often say “FYI” instead of “For your information.” And it’s common to say “info” instead of “information.”

Initialisms are initials pronounced as each individual letter. (FYI, IRS, FAQ, ATM, etc.)

Acronyms are initials that are pronounced as a single word (NATO, NASA, PIN, RAM, etc.)

- For initialisms and acronyms, we can say: *[initials] stands for [word represented by each letter].*
Example: *FAQ stands for “Frequently asked questions.”*

Abbreviations are shortened forms of longer words and generally not capitalized (legit, congrats, sub, app)

- For abbreviations, we can say: *[abbreviation] is short for [full word]*
Example: *app is short for application.*

The following initials and abbreviations were used in this episode.

AKA stands for: <i>Also known as</i>	Mostly used to refer to people who are known by more than one given name (e.g. celebrities, criminals). In this episode, it was used as a humorous way to say “in other words” or “another way to refer to this”
FYI stands for: <i>For your information</i>	used to share information that’s interesting or useful, without expecting or requiring any immediate action.
DUI stands for: <i>Driving under the influence</i> [of an intoxicating substance]	a driving offense – also called DWI, which stands for driving while intoxicated.
legit is short for: <i>legitimate</i>	exactly as presented or intended, not false.

Join the Conversation

- Would you have accepted a dinner invitation from a text mix up like the one you heard about in the first story? Why or why not?
- What did you think about the story of the two senior citizens **sneaking out** to go to a heavy metal concert? How do stories like this break traditional expectations of what older people can or should do?
- Take a look at the image of *Comedian* by Maurizio Cattelan. What do you think is the reason for all the **hype**? Note that it sold at auction for \$6.24 million. What are your thoughts on that purchase? Why do you think someone would pay that amount for it?
- Which story did you think was the most interesting and why?
- Do you have any vacations or big events **coming up** that you’re looking forward to?
- Did you ever **sneak out** of a place? Tell the story.
- In the episode, it was discussed how scammers are always **upping their game**. What are some of the most recent ways you’ve noticed scammers using to deceive people?

Thanks for checking out our podcast!

We are enjoying these discussions, and we hope that you are finding them helpful!



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