



ESL Podcast 55 – A Family Party

GLOSSARY

hometown – the town where one was born and grew up; the city one lived in as a child

* Mitchell lives in Chicago now, but he lived in Fort Wayne when he was a child and he still considers Fort Wayne to be his hometown.

in town – at a certain city; visiting a certain city for a brief period of time

* Patrice did not live in Cleveland, but she was in town for a week to visit her friend.

get-together – an informal social event where many people who know each other meet; an arranged meeting among a group of people

* Garth planned to have a get-together with some friends who used to go to the same school he attended.

family reunion – an event where all the members of one's family, including distant relatives, meet, talk, and socialize

* There were many people at the Ellers family reunion, and many of the relatives there were meeting each other for the first time.

immediate family – the family members who one is most closely related to; one's spouse (husband or wife), children (sons and daughters), siblings (brothers and sisters), and parents (mother and father)

* Yvonne had a small immediate family, which only consisted of her father and one brother.

to show up – to come to an event or place; to appear

* Theo did not expect his girlfriend to show up at his baseball game, so he was surprised when he saw her there.

potluck – a meal for which each guest brings an item of food to share with the other guests

* The church held a potluck after the service ended, and many of the church members brought their favorite foods to share with everyone else.

dinner party – a formal dinner; a formal gathering where guests are served an evening meal

* The guests at the dinner party were very pleased with how good the food was.



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catering – food that is brought to an event by a restaurant, cook, or other professional supplier of food

* Since the company picnic included so many people, the company arranged for catering instead of asking the employees and their families to bring dishes to share.

casserole – a type of food in which different foods, including meat, rice, pasta, and/or vegetables, are combined and cooked together in one container

* The casserole was made with chicken, pasta, broccoli, and cheese, all combined into one baking dish.

chips and dip – crispy, baked slices of potato and a thick, creamy sauce used to place the potato slices in briefly before eating them

* Isabelle's parties are always simple, with a few good friends and simple food, like chips and dip.

cake – a sweet dessert food that is similar to bread, but lighter and sweeter; a sweet baked food made from ingredients like flour, eggs, sugar, and butter

* Curt wanted to bake a sweet chocolate cake for his mother's birthday, but he did not have any eggs.

dessert – a sweet food eaten after a meal

* After the meal was over, the kids enjoyed ice cream for dessert.

guest of honor – the person for whom an event is organized to celebrate or recognize; the visitor who is being celebrated or honored at an event

* Juliana was the guest of honor at the art gallery reception.

childhood – the period of time when one was a child; the years one lived before becoming an adult

* Thunderstorms were a childhood fear of Trent's, but after Trent became an adult, he no longer thought that they were frightening.

anecdote – a story; the retelling of an event that happened in the past, usually when the event is funny

* Latrisha told her friends a funny anecdote about something that had happened to her last week.

overwhelming – difficult to accept because of the large size or demanding nature of something; causing a feeling of helplessness

* The amount of work Don needed to complete was overwhelming and he did not know if he could finish all of it by the deadline.



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CULTURE NOTE

Dog Days of Summer

We often refer to the hot days between early July and early September as the dog days of summer. Why “dog” and not “cat” or some other animal? In “ancient times” (very long time ago), people “associated” (connected in their minds) hot summer weather with one of the brightest stars in the night sky, Sirius, which is also called the Dog Star. People believed that because Sirius was close to the sun during the summer months, that caused the “sweltering” (feeling uncomfortably hot) temperatures.

Not surprisingly, “comedians” (people whose job is to make people laugh) like to make jokes about the hot weather. A very common type of joke goes like this:

Comedian: “It’s hot outside.”

Audience: “How hot is it?” (with the entire audience shouting it at the comedian “in unison” (at the same time))

Comedian: “It’s so hot that + [punchline, the funny part of a joke]...”

Here are a few punchlines from popular comedians that may make you laugh or at least “chuckle” (laugh a little; laugh quietly), and help you get through the dog days of summer.

- “It’s so hot that I saw a chicken lay a fried egg.”
- “It’s so hot that I saw two trees “fighting over” (competing for) a dog.”
- “It’s so hot that I discovered that I need only two fingers to drive my car.”
- “It’s so hot that hot water now comes out of both “taps” (faucets).”
- “It’s so hot that when it falls below 95 (35 degrees Celsius), I feel “chilly” (a little cold).”



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COMPLETE TRANSCRIPT

Welcome to English as a Second Language Podcast number 55 – A Family Party.

This is English as a Second Language Podcast episode 55. I'm your host, Dr. Jeff McQuillan, coming to you from the Center for Educational Development in beautiful Los Angeles, California.

In this episode, we're going to discuss attending a family party. Let's get started.

[start of story]

I visit my hometown about once a year. This year, I was in town for about five days and there was a family get-together. It wasn't a family reunion since it was just my immediate family, but still, there was a total of about 45 people who showed up.

Our family parties are always held at the home of one of my brothers or sisters. It is always a potluck. We never have formal dinner parties so we never need catering. At the potluck this past weekend, some people brought casseroles, some brought chips and dip, and some brought cookies and cakes for dessert. I usually don't have to bring anything since I'm the guest of honor.

There is always a lot of talking and laughing at our family parties. Someone always brings up old childhood memories or a funny anecdote from the old days. A family get-together as big as ours can be overwhelming for some people. When they ask me what it's like to be part of such a big family, I always tell them one thing: It's noisy!

[end of story]

We're talking about, in this episode, a family party that I went to this past weekend. I was visiting my hometown. Your "hometown" – all one word, "home" and "town" – is the place where you were born, where you were raised, where you grew up. I visit my hometown, which is St. Paul, Minnesota, by the way, about once a year. And this year I was in town for about five days. When we say "in town," we mean at that particular place. So, if someone asks you, "How long are you going to be in town?" they mean, "How long are you going to be visiting here or staying here?"



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I was in town for about five days and there was a “family get-together.” “Get-together” is a hyphenated word. The verb “to get” with the word “together” means to put things together. Well, a “get-together” is a party or a meeting. It’s a group of people who are coming together, usually for some social reason. My get-together, my family get-together, “wasn’t a family reunion.” A “family reunion” is when Grandma, Grandpa, your uncles and aunts and cousins – anyone with your last name or related to you – all come together in a big party.

“This wasn’t a family reunion,” I said, “because it was just my immediate family.” Your “immediate family” is your mother, your father, your brothers and sisters, and usually your brothers’ and sisters’ husbands or wives. Those would be your “in-laws.” Your brother-in-law is married to your sister. Your sister-in-law is married to your brother. And they may have children; those would be your nieces and nephews. That is the immediate family. Or, some people just talk about the father, the mother, and the children as immediate family. An “extended family” would include other parts of your family: Grandma, Grandpa, uncles, and that sort of thing.

I said there were “45 people who showed up” to the get-together. That’s true, by the way. I’m not making that up. “To show up” means to come to an event. If you’re going to have a party, people would “show up” to your party. You can “show up to a meeting” – that means you go to the meeting. Sometimes we say, “Be sure to show up,” meaning be sure to go to that event.

The family parties that we have are in the house of one of my brothers and sisters, and “it is always a potluck.” A “potluck” (potluck) is a meal in which everyone brings something different and we all share each other’s food. So, one person brings a salad, another person brings meat to cook hamburgers, or pizza, or some other sort of dish. Someone brings dessert, someone brings something to drink, someone else brings other things like chips, and so forth.

These are not “dinner parties.” I said that we don’t have “formal dinner parties.” A “dinner party” is a little bit more formal event, where you sit down and someone comes and brings the food to you. At a “potluck,” usually you have your own plate, and you go up to a table where all the food is and you get your own food.

This was not a formal dinner party, so we didn’t need “catering.” “To cater” a party, or “to cater” an event – a wedding, a funeral, a Bar Mitzvah, anything like that – means to provide the food. Usually, a professional cook and the cook’s helpers come, and they cook the food and serve you the food. They are responsible for all the food and drink – that is catering. When I got married – how many years ago? A long time ago – we had “catering” at our wedding. We had



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someone cater the wedding. They took care of all the food and so forth. At least, I think that's what happened. I don't remember very clearly.

In any case, I said that some people at our get-together brought "casseroles." A "casserole" (casserole) is what we call, in my state of Minnesota, a "hot dish." A casserole usually has some sort of what we would call a "starch" (starch), such as rice or pasta or potatoes. And this is mixed in with meat, often ground beef or ham or turkey or chicken, and usually some sort of cream soup, like cream of mushroom or cream of celery soup. You mix it all together and then you put it in the oven and bake it at, I don't know, 400 degrees for about 30 minutes, and then it's all ready to eat. That's a casserole.

I said that some people brought "chips and dip." "Chips" means potato chips, or it can mean "tortilla chips," which are chips popular in Mexico that are made with fried tortillas. You can eat chips with "dip" (dip). "Dip" can be anything that you put a potato chip or a tortilla chip into. It could be "salsa," which is chopped up tomatoes, onions, and other things. Or it could be some sort of "cream dip" – there are all sorts of possibilities. All of it is bad for you, of course, and that's why it tastes so good.

Cakes for dessert were also brought. Of course, you know what a "cake" is: you cut a cake on your birthday. People bring cakes for "dessert," which comes at the very end of a meal – the best part of the meal.

I mentioned that I did not bring anything, however, because I was the "guest of honor." Actually, my wife and I were both the "guests of honor." To be the "guests of honor" means that the party was being thrown – and notice we use the verb "to throw" for a party – the party was being thrown or being organized for me and my wife. So, we were the "guests of honor."

I said that in my family get-togethers, there's always a lot of talking and laughing, and that someone always brings up "childhood memories or a funny anecdote from the old days." "Childhood" – all one word (childhood) – means things related to when you were a child. And an "anecdote" is a story, often a funny story about something. So, you can have an "anecdote" about what happened to you yesterday, and usually the anecdote is funny or entertaining somehow.

Finally, I said that a big family get-together "can be overwhelming for some people." "To be overwhelming" is when something is much more than what you expected. It can even cause you to become a little confused or nervous or anxious. When you are "overwhelmed" with work, for example, you have too much work. And that's the basic meaning of overwhelming.



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Now let's listen to our story, this time at a normal speed.

[start of story]

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[end of story]

Thanks to our great scriptwriter, Dr. Lucy Tse, for all of her hard work. And thanks to you for listening.

From Los Angeles, California, I'm Jeff McQuillan. Come back and listen to us again here on ESL Podcast.

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