



TOPICS

Ask an American: Chocolate; dispute versus disagreement versus conflict; using “times” in comparing amounts; use of infinitive “to” phrases as adjective, adverb, or noun

GLOSSARY

comfort food – a food that makes one feel better when one eats it

* After a difficult week at work, Jaime spent the weekend eating all his favorite comfort foods: macaroni and cheese, cornbread, and apple pie.

to melt in (one’s) mouth – for a solid food to become a liquid when it is placed on one’s tongue

* I love the feeling when ice cream melts in my mouth.

sensation – a physical feeling one gets through one of the five senses (sight, hearing, taste, touch, and smell)

* The first time I heard that music, I got the sensation that I was flying.

hot off the presses – recently published, released, made, or manufactured; new

* Did you hear the latest news? Read this! It’s hot off the presses.

to tend to – to often, normally, or usually do something in a particular way

* Patrick tends to sleep in on weekends, but last weekend, he had to wake up early to go to his son’s soccer game.

refrigeration – technology that provides the ability to keep things cold

* In the old days, families didn’t have refrigeration and had other ways of preserving food.

prevalent – common and found easily

* We need better solutions for the social problems prevalent in society today.

to secure – to get, achieve, or obtain something

* Were you able to secure the loan for your new car?



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delectable treat – something that is delicious, but eaten only occasionally, not every day

* Everyone says caviar is a delectable treat, but I don't like the way it tastes.

delicacy – a food that is very good to eat, but isn't served very often, perhaps because it is uncommon or very expensive

* This restaurant is known for cooking delicacies like truffles and veal.

to speak to (something) – to address something in a good way, or to be liked because something creates a positive feeling or sensation

* Your success in school speaks to your persistence and excellent study skills.

soul – the part of a person that is not one's physical body; the part of a person that cannot be seen or touched, but makes up who one is, including one's thoughts, feelings, beliefs, and spirituality.

* Do you believe that the soul lives on after death?

there's nothing better – the best possible thing, when nothing else can provide a better experience

* For relaxation, there's nothing better than a long, hot bath with relaxing music and candles.

dispute – actions or ideas between two or more people, two or more sides, or two or more objects that are different from each other; not agreeing; a formal difference of opinion, often involving legal matters

* The two companies have been in a legal dispute for years about which company has the right to sell the product.

disagreement – actions or ideas between two or more people, two or more sides, or two or more objects that are different from each other; not agreeing

* How often do you and your wife have disagreements?

conflict – actions or ideas between two or more people, two or more sides, or two or more objects that are different from each other; a fight, battle, or war; when one thing gets in the way of another or prevents something from happening, as with time or schedules or with two ideas

* Do you think this conflict will ever end, or will the two countries go on fighting against each other forever?



times – added amounts of something; equal parts of something that with a number amount are greater or smaller than something else

* Why does this computer cost almost five times as much as that one?

WHAT INSIDERS KNOW

Charlie and the Chocolate Factory

Charlie and the Chocolate Factory is a popular children’s book that was written in 1964 by a British author named Roald Dahl. In the book, a man named Willy Wonka owns a large chocolate factory and is very “secretive” (does not give others information). People around the country wonder about Willy Wonka and what can be found inside his factory. One day, he decides to give away “golden tickets” that let children come into the factory for a tour. The book’s main character, Charlie, is a very poor boy who gets a golden ticket and brings his grandfather on the tour.

Inside the factory, the children see many amazing and wonderful things, including a chocolate river, gum that tastes like a “multi-course” (with many parts, such as an appetizer, main course, and dessert) meal, and wallpaper that one can “lick” (taste by putting one’s tongue against) to try different flavors. As the tour goes through different rooms in the chocolate factory, the children get in trouble. For example, one child drinks so much chocolate that he is “sucked” (pulled) into one of the machine’s tubes. In the end, only Charlie and his grandfather are left with Willy Wonka.

Many plays and “musicals” (plays with a lot of singing and dancing) have been made based on the book, but the movies are most popular. Willy Wonka & the Chocolate Factory was released in 1971 and it is probably the version that most Americans are familiar with. In 2005, however, another version came out, this time called Charlie and the Chocolate Factory, which was also a success. The book has also served as the “inspiration” (creative idea for something to be made) for a video game and a ride at an amusement park in the United Kingdom.



COMPLETE TRANSCRIPT

You're listening to ESL Podcast's English Café number 256.

This is ESL Podcast's English Café episode 256. I'm your host, Dr. Jeff McQuillan, coming to you from the Center for Educational Development in beautiful Los Angeles, California.

Our website is eslpod.com. You know that already, but did you know that you can visit our ESL Podcast Store, which has some additional courses in English for you? You did? Oh, okay.

On this Café, we're going to have one of our Ask an American segments, where we listen to other native speakers talking at a normal rate of speech – a normal speed. We're going to listen to them and explain what they are talking about. Today they're going to talk about chocolate – that's right, chocolate – and why so many people like it so much, especially here in the U.S. And, as always, we'll answer a few of your questions. Let's get started.

Our topic on this Café's Ask an American segment is one of my favorite foods: chocolate. We're going to listen to some people talking about why they like chocolate so much. Chocolate, you probably know, is made from the cocoa tree that is found in Mexico, Central America, and South America. It's combined with other ingredients – other things such as milk and sugar to make a very sweet treat – a very sweet dessert or a drink. Chocolate was used by many of the peoples of Mexico, Central and South America for thousands of years, perhaps as many as 3,000 years we've been using and eating chocolate. The Aztecs used chocolate. Eventually, chocolate was brought back to Europe and spread to other parts of the world.

Nowadays (in these days) the typical American eats almost five kilos (or five kilograms) of chocolate a year. That's more than 11 pounds of chocolate. But Americans are only 12th in the world in chocolate consumption. Several nations in Europe have an even higher amount of annual (or per year) consumption of chocolate.

Chocolate is often associated with romance. It is very much popular on Valentine's Day, on February 14th, the traditional day to give your loved one (your girlfriend, your wife, and so forth) chocolate. In the U.S. there is more chocolate sold on Valentine's Day than any other day in the year, as you might expect.



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We're going to start by listening to a woman talk about why she likes chocolate. This woman is actually someone who sells chocolate at a store in Washington, D.C., our nation's capital. First we'll listen. Try to understand what you can and then we'll go back and explain what she said. Let's listen:

[recording]

I think it's one of the best comfort foods there is. It's easy to eat; it melts in your mouth. There's a warm sensation.

[end of recording]

She begins by saying, "I think it's one of the best comfort foods there is." "It" is chocolate, in this case. A "comfort (comfort) food" is something that makes you feel better. We like to eat comfort food perhaps when we are having a bad day at work, when we are feeling sad or depressed. Sometimes comfort food reminds us of happier times, the sort of food perhaps we ate as children. We feel calmer after eating them. Comfort foods often have a lot of fat and/or sugar in them, which is perhaps why we like eating them, why they provide comfort. Chocolate is a comfort food for many people, but there are other foods as well. Some Americans would say, for example, that chicken-noodle soup is a comfort food. Again, probably because they had it when they were children, when times were happier perhaps. Macaroni and cheese – macaroni is a type of pasta, that's also a comfort food. There are even restaurants who advertise their menu (the list of what they serve – what you can get at the restaurant) as being one that has comfort foods on it.

So the woman says, "I think chocolate is one of the best comfort foods there is. It's easy to eat; it melts in your mouth. There's a warm sensation." The verb "to melt" (melt) means for a solid to become liquid, typically at a high temperature. So for example, if you have a piece of plastic and you leave it in the sun, depending on the kind of plastic it may melt; you may no longer be able to use it. It will go from being a solid to being a liquid. Or, if you have an ice cube (a piece of frozen water) and you put it in the sun, again, depending on the outside temperature, it will melt, and that will turn it into water.

Chocolate is interesting because its melting point, the temperature at which it melts, is just below the temperature of the human body. So you can hold a piece of chocolate in your hand and it will be solid, but once you put it inside your



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mouth, which is warmer, it begins to melt on your tongue. That's why the woman says that the chocolate melts in your mouth.

Finally, she says that chocolate gives her a warm sensation. A "sensation" (sensation) is a physical feeling you get through one of your senses. The senses are sight, hearing, taste, touch, and smell. When this woman eats chocolate, she gets a feeling or a sensation of warmth from the taste of the chocolate. Let's listen to her one more time:

[recording]

I think it's one of the best comfort foods there is. It's easy to eat; it melts in your mouth. There's a warm sensation.

[end of recording]

Next, this same woman is going to talk about the differences between different kinds of chocolate: fresh chocolate, or chocolate that has been made recently, and chocolate that was made a while ago. Let's listen:

[recording]

You can definitely taste the difference between something that's just been poured, hot off the presses, to having sat for three months, six months, (as) some of the larger corporations tend to do.

[end of recording]

She is comparing two types of chocolate. The first has just been poured and is hot off the presses. "To pour" means to take liquid from one container, such as a glass, and put it into another container, such as a bowl. Well here, in the making of chocolate it starts off as liquid and then becomes solid, so to say the chocolate has just been poured means to say that it was made very recently. She uses the expression "hot off the presses." "Hot off the presses" is usually used to talk about the news, in particular the newspaper. Newspapers and magazines, in the year 2010 for those who are listening to this in the future, are, or were if you're in the future, printed on machines called printing presses. The press is the machine you use to put the black ink on the typically white paper. The Gutenberg press was the first printing press. To say is something is "hot off the presses" when talking about the news means that it has just been printed, it has



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just been released. They say that it is still hot off the presses because, of course, the machines would be warm and the paper coming out of them would be warm, just like something coming out of the oven that you were baking. So, to be “hot off the presses” means to be very recent, and that’s the meaning that she’s using it here. She’s not talking about news; she’s talking about chocolate, but chocolate that has been made very recently.

She compares this new, freshly made chocolate to chocolate that has sat for three months or six months. Normally the verb “sat,” which is the past tense of the verb “to sit,” is used when talking about animals, including humans. But in this case, it means that it has been sitting in one place – stored in one place, and often it is used to indicate that it has been a long time. “This paper has sat on my desk for two weeks,” meaning it has been there too long. Well, she says that chocolate sometimes sits for three or six months, which, I guess, is a long time for chocolate. That’s what she says, and believe her because I believe everything I read!

Well, to go back to our quote: She says you can definitely (you can absolutely, without any doubt) taste the difference between something that’s just been poured, hot off the presses, to having sat for three months, six months as some of the larger corporations tend to do. She actually doesn’t say the word “as,” but that’s what she means. She’s saying that some of the larger corporations – that is, some of the larger companies – tend to sell their chocolate long after it was made. “To tend (tend) to do (something)” means to often or normally or usually do something. For example, I tend to drink tea in the morning, meaning I drink it most mornings, but sometimes I might choose some other drink such as juice. Right now, however, as I’m recording this episode I am definitely drinking some tea. Ah! Good tea, too.

Where were we? Ah, chocolate. Yes. So, some of the larger chocolate companies – some of the larger corporations that make chocolate – tend to have their chocolate sit for three or six months before they actually sell it. And that, we now know, is not as good as the chocolate that is hot off the presses! Let’s listen one more time:

[recording]

You can definitely taste the difference between something that’s just been poured, hot off the presses, to having sat for three months, six months, (as) some of the larger corporations tend to do.



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[end of recording]

Next we'll listen to a man who works in the chocolate industry – the business of making chocolate. He's going to talk about why chocolate became so common and popular in the United States. Let's listen:

[recording]

It's the advent of refrigeration that has really made the availability of chocolate very prevalent throughout the United States. I think chocolate has secured its place as a delectable treat for a number of societies and a number of countries, and so I think that we're just one of many countries who enjoy the delicacy that is chocolate.

[end of recording]

He starts by saying that is due to, or because of the advent of refrigeration that chocolate became so popular in the U.S. "Advent" (advent) is the coming of something, in this case the invention of something, and that something was refrigeration. "Refrigeration" is the ability to keep things, especially food, cold. "Refrigeration" comes from the verb "to refrigerate. We also have in a typical kitchen a "refrigerator," where you keep your food cold. He begins then by saying, "It's the advent of refrigeration that has really made the availability of chocolate (the ability to get chocolate) very prevalent throughout the United States." If something is "prevalent" (prevalent) we mean it is common, it is easily found. Chocolate is very prevalent in the United States – or throughout the United States, which just means in every part of the U.S. You can find chocolate in grocery stores, in many restaurants, at gas stations, in convenience stores, in the second drawer to the bottom of my desk – all of these are places where you can find chocolate

The gentleman in our quote thinks chocolate has secured its place in many societies and countries. He says, "I think chocolate has secured its place as a delectable treat for a number of societies and a number of countries." "To secure (something)" means to obtain something, to get something, perhaps to achieve something. You could say, "I secured a position at the university as a professor. Now, I never have to work again." Just kidding! Well here, we're securing the place of chocolate – that is, we're making sure that chocolate is, in fact, popular. It secured its place – its role – as a delectable treat. A "delectable treat" is one



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that is delicious; “delectable” means good tasting, it has a very good taste. A “treat” (treat) is a special food that tastes very good, but that we don’t eat all the time. Sometimes if your child has been good, you may give him or her a treat – a piece of candy or some broccoli as a treat. Try broccoli, I think that would be very popular; I have a lot of experience with children! Anyway, some people eat chocolate every day so it isn’t a treat to them, just part of their regular diet. Most doctors and nutritionists (people who study and who help people eat right) recommend that chocolate should just be a treat sometimes, not something you eat every day.

Because, then, of refrigeration, chocolate has become a delectable treat for a number of (meaning several; many) societies and countries. He ends his quote by saying, “so I think that we’re just one of many countries (here in the U.S.) to enjoy the delicacy that is chocolate.” A “delicacy” (delicacy) is something that is very good to eat but is somewhat rare; it’s hard to find, it’s expensive. Frog legs are a delicacy in France. Shark fin soup is a delicacy in many Asian countries. These are foods that people do not eat every day, but they really enjoy them when they can. Let’s listen again now to this quote:

[recording]

It’s the advent of refrigeration that has really made the availability of chocolate very prevalent throughout the United States. I think chocolate has secured its place as a delectable treat for a number of societies and a number of countries, and so I think that we’re just one of many countries who enjoy the delicacy that is chocolate.

[end of recording]

Next we listen to a few people explain why they like to eat chocolate. First we’ll listen to a woman.

[recording]

I like having chocolate. It speaks to your senses more than any other kind of sweets.

[end of recording]



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She says, “I like having chocolate (I like eating chocolate). It speaks to your senses more than any other kind of sweets.” When we say something “speaks to (something),” in this case your senses, we mean that it addresses something in a good way; it is liked because it creates a positive feeling or sensation. You might say, “This novels speaks to me. It speaks to my soul.” It is something that seems to be addressed to me; it is important, it makes me feel good. This woman believes that chocolate speaks to your senses more than any other kind of sweets. Something that is a “sweet” is something like candy or chocolate that has the physical taste – sensation – of sweetness. Let’s listen to her one more time:

[recording]

“I like having chocolate. It speaks to your senses more than any other kind of sweets.”

[end of recording]

Finally, we’ll listen to a man talk about why he likes chocolate. Let’s listen:

[recording]

It’s good for your soul and it’s good for your stomach, and it makes you feel good and there’s nothing better when you are happy or depressed. Have a pound of chocolate!

[end of recording]

We have here a real philosopher! He says that chocolate is good for your soul. Your “soul” is the part of the human person that is not your physical body. Not everyone believes in the soul. The soul cannot be seen or touched, but it’s somehow is the essence, the most important part of who you are. It is your true identity: your thoughts, your beliefs, often related to your spiritual or religious ideas. When he says that chocolate is good for your soul, he means it makes you feel better, maybe even makes you a better person. I’m not sure that’s true. He says also that chocolate is good your stomach, meaning it tastes good, and it makes you feel good and there’s nothing better when you are happy or depressed. The phrase “there’s nothing better” is used to talk about the best possible thing, the best thing in this situation. It doesn’t matter whether you are happy or depressed, chocolate will make you feel good. That’s what he’s saying.



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At the end he says, “Have a pound of chocolate!” meaning you should eat chocolate; he’s encouraging people to eat chocolate. Let’s listen one more time:

[recording]

It’s good for your soul and it’s good for your stomach, and it makes you feel good and there’s nothing better when you are happy or depressed. Have a pound of chocolate!

[end of recording]

Let’s go have some chocolate and answer some of your questions at the same time!

Our first question comes from Alok (Alok) in India. Alok wants to know the differences in the terms “dispute,” “disagreement,” and “conflict.” All three words mean that there is some difference between two or more people, or two or more organizations. There’s some issue or situation about which they have different positions – different ideas. For example: “Susanna and Juan had a conflict over their interpretation of company policy.” “Hassan solved the disagreement he had with his friend.” “The neighbors had a dispute over who owned the tree that grew between their houses.” All three words could be used interchangeably in these sentences: “Susanna and Juan had a disagreement.” “Hassan solved a dispute.” “The neighbors had a conflict.”

There are, however, differences in the way we use these three words. “Disagreement” means not agreeing. It can be used to describe two different ideas on something, or it can have a stronger meaning, meaning an argument. This can be used formally or informally. It’s often used about small differences of opinion: “We had a little disagreement over what we should have for lunch today, my wife and I.”

“Dispute” is a more formal word used often in legal matters, where you have an argument in which the people involved are not happy, especially an argument that may go on for a long period of time: “There was a dispute between the two countries over who owned the island in between them.” Or, “There was a dispute between the man and the woman about their children when they decided to get a divorce.”



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“Conflict” is often used for a war, a battle, a fight, something involving two countries or two military groups: “There was a conflict in the Middle East.” Or, “There was a conflict in Southeast Asia.” Politicians, especially here in the U.S., often talk about conflicts when describing what are really wars, but they don’t want to use the word “war” so they say “conflict,” but everyone knows what that means. “Conflict” can also be used to describe when one thing is in the way of another, or prevents something else from happening such as with your schedule: “I have a meeting at 2:00 and my boss wants to talk to me at 2:15.” I have a conflict; my meeting will last longer than 15 minutes, so I can’t do both things at the same time. We also have an expression, “a conflict of interest,” which is used to describe when somebody shouldn’t be deciding on an issue because they have some personal gain involved in the decision. University professors should not date students who are in their class because that’s a conflict of interest. The professor has two different roles, and one will interfere with the other.

Our next note comes from Parham (Parham), originally from Iran, now living in Canada. The question has to do with the word “times” (times) when comparing different amounts of something. For example: “This pen is four times more expensive than this pencil.”

You can use either “than” or “as” with “times” when you are making comparisons: “This pen costs four dollars; this pencil costs one dollar.” The pen is four times more expensive than the pencil. If you use it with the word “than,” the word “than” has to follow some comparison word such as “bigger,” “smaller,” “more,” or “less”: “This building is three times taller than one next to it.” If you’re using the word “as” after “times” it’s used a little differently. Instead of having a comparative adjective like “bigger,” “smaller,” “higher,” “lower” as we do with the word “than,” here in using “as” you use a regular adjective such as “big,” “small,” “high,” “low” by itself, it’s not a comparative adjective like “higher” or “lower.” That’s because the word “as” is already a comparison; it’s indicating a comparison: “This pen is four times as expensive as this pencil.” “This house is three times as big as the other house.” You don’t need to use a comparative adjective because the word “as” already has that meaning.

Jimena (Jimena) from an unknown country, a secret country, wants to know why sometimes in English when you have what we call an infinitive phrase – that’s the infinitive form of the verb, the “to” form such as “to walk,” “to carry,” “to look” – plus other words that are complements, or go with the verb. For example: “to check my email,” that could be an infinitive phrase.



Sometimes, however, we don't use the word "to" even though it's supposed to be an infinitive phrase. For example: "The first thing we did was stand in line." You could also say, "The first thing we did was to stand in line." "The first thing she did was to call her friend." "The first thing she did was call her friend." Both are correct.

When do you use one and when do you use the other? When do you use the word "to" and when do you not use the word "to"? Well, unfortunately there isn't a good rule, and it will depend on the native speaker you're talking with. Some native speakers think that you should use the "to" because it sounds clearer. Others will think that using the "to" sounds awkward in some situations. We're talking now again about infinitive phrases, phrases like "to look for a newspaper," "to call my friend." In these cases, the "to" is sometimes used and sometimes not depending upon how the speaker thinks it sounds. So unfortunately, there isn't a good rule.

If you have a question for ESL Podcast, all you have to do is to email us...all you have to do is email us. Our email address is eslpod@eslpod.com.

From Los Angeles, California, I'm Jeff McQuillan. Thank you for listening. Come back and listen to us next time on the English Café.

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