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English Revisited: Tips, Tidbits & Tutorials

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EDITORIAL

GLOSSARY

employed:
used

manner:
way, method

peculiarities:
odd features

There are many ways to express the future in English, each one being employed in a slightly different manner. Getting this right is not always an easy task for learners of English, so we have decided in this issue of our newsletter to re-examine the various verb forms used to express the future. We also provide guidance on writing gender-inclusive business correspondence in our vocabulary section. Lastly, as part of our global Englishes series, we explore the charming peculiarities of Midwestern US English.

John Nixon

Style Guidelines for Writing Official University Texts in English

The University Communications Department has in collaboration with the Language Center developed a number of style guidelines for publishing official university texts in English, e.g. websites and brochures. Please take a look at these useful tips when publishing university documents in English.

[Guidelines](#)

If you are interested in any of the following, please click on the links or [contact us](#).

- [Regular Courses](#)
- [English Graduate Upgrade Certificate](#)
- [Workshops for PhD Candidates](#)
- [Schreibwerkstatt / Writing Center](#)
- [Englischkurse für Uni-Beschäftigte](#)
- [Intercultural Offerings](#)
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A new collaborative international course with the future possibility of studying in New Zealand



Do you have any ideas for future issues or would like to give us feedback? Please contact us.



CURRENTLY
ON OFFER

The Basics of Future Tenses

Here is an overview of the basic verb tenses to express the future in English.

Will versus going to

Will + infinitive and *going to* + infinitive are both commonly used to describe future events. The difference between them is often very subtle and they are easily confused. In general, *will* is used in formal contexts and *going to* is more informal, but in many situations they are interchangeable.

Kevin *will*/Kevin *is going to* meet us there.

Predictions about the Future

If we are making predictions about the future because we have some evidence for it at the time of speaking, we use *going to*.

The sky is looking very dark. It looks like it's going to rain.

We can also use it to describe an event we have been told will happen.

John and Diane are *going to tie the knot*.

In contrast, if we make a prediction based on opinion or past experience we use *will*.

I think the concert will be very well attended.

Future Plans

We use *will* to express officially organized and scheduled events.

The exam *will* start at 9:30.

The present simple is also possible here (timetables).

The exam starts at 9:30. OR The train leaves tomorrow evening.

Moreover, when we express a spontaneous decision, *will* is also the correct choice.

I'll put the link in the chat.

I think I'll make pizza tonight.

When talking about decisions or intentions about the future that are already planned, we tend to use *going to*.

Who's going to cook tonight? Chris is going to do it. He said so last night.

Diane told me that they're going to get married next year.

For discussing future intentions where no definite arrangement has been made, *going to* is also the most commonly used future form.

What is your daughter going to do when she has finished school?

Future and Conditionals

We can use *will* or *going to* in the main clause of an if-sentence if one action is dependent on another.

If we continue like this, we'll have to move out.

If we continue like this, we're going to have to move out.

However, only *will* is used when we describe an event that is followed by another.

If you turn left, you'll see the pub on the left-hand side of the road.

Present Continuous

When reporting an arrangement we often use the *present continuous*.

She's seeing the dentist next week.

Are you meeting your colleagues for lunch on Wednesday?

Shall/Shan't

In future sentences with the subjects I and we, *shall* can also be used in place of *will* (although *will* and *won't* are more commonly used).

When I move house, I *will/shall* have more space for my collection.

Dad *will* help me, so I *won't/shan't* have to do it all by myself.

In legal documents, including for example by-laws, ordinances and university regulations, it is not uncommon to use *shall* instead of *will* in the third person.

All registered students at the university shall remain members of the said institution....

Cheryl Stenzel

GLOSSARY

subtle:

small and difficult to observe or describe

to tie the knot:

to get married

clause:

a grammatical term for part of a sentence with a subject and a verb

on the left –hand side:

Unlike German, English uses "hand side" and not just "side".

The phrase "on the left side" is not proper English.

Either: *on the left* OR *on the left-hand side*

by-law:

a regulation by a city or organization

ordinances:

official orders

The Charm of Midwestern Slang

GLOSSARY

to hail:
to call or praise

cot:
small, foldable bed

quirky:
weird, eccentric

affectionately:
lovingly

emblematic of:
typical of

idiosyncrasies:
unusual features of an individual or group

demeanor:
behavior

to encapsulate:
to express

humility:
modesty

quintessential:
very typical

term of endearment:
word expressing love

camaraderie:
friendship

emergence:
(here) first use

The United States has long been hailed as a melting pot, a nation where diverse cultures and languages blend together. The American Midwest, which includes the states of Michigan, Indiana, Ohio, Missouri, Kansas, Nebraska, Wisconsin, Minnesota, Illinois, Iowa, North Dakota and South Dakota as well as the Canadian border region, is a region shaped significantly by Polish, Scandinavian, and German immigrants. Midwestern English slang emerged, reflecting the influence of these diverse linguistic roots. One notable feature of Midwestern English is its unique vowel pronunciation. Linguists have identified vowel shifts that distinguish the Midwestern accent from other American dialects. For instance, words like "cot" and "caught" can sound notably different in Midwestern speech, showcasing the distinct pronunciation patterns that have developed over time. There are also a number of terms specific to this dialect.

Bubbler: Quenching Your Thirst with a Twist

The "bubbler" is a classic example of quirky regional slang. In the Midwest, especially Wisconsin, a drinking fountain is affectionately known as a "bubbler." The term's origin is a subject of debate, but one theory traces it back to a brand name used by the Kohler Company of Sheboygan, Wisconsin, which manufactured the first widely used drinking fountain.¹

Whether it is a linguistic quirk or a nod to the refreshing bubbles that flow from these fountains, the term "bubbler" is emblematic of the Midwest's endearing linguistic idiosyncrasies.

You Betcha: The Affirmative Midwest Attitude

Midwesterners are known for their polite and friendly demeanor, and one phrase that encapsulates this warmth is "You betcha." This is an affirmative response that conveys agreement, enthusiasm, and a touch of humility. Picture a friendly exchange like this:

Person A: "It's a beautiful day, isn't it?"

Person B: "You betcha! Couldn't ask for better weather."

"You betcha" is a quintessential expression of Midwestern positivity and hospitality.

Gal: A Term of Endearment

In the Midwest, folks have a charming way of referring to someone, especially a woman or girl, as "gal." Many Midwesterners refer to all women as "gal" and might say, I have a new

"gal pal" rather than "I have a new friend". This term of endearment is a testament to the region's friendly and neighborly spirit. Whether you are meeting someone for the first time or catching up with an old friend, "gal" adds a touch of charm and camaraderie to your conversation.

Hot Dish: Comfort Food with a Side of Culture

A potluck is a social gathering or meal in North America where each guest brings a dish of food to be shared among the group. It is the luck of the 'pot' what will be available. A staple at a Midwestern potluck is a hot dish containing layers of ingredients like meat, vegetables, and starches, often smothered in cheese all baked to savory perfection in a single dish.

Cheers with a Brewski (or Brewsky)

After you have filled your plate at the potluck, you might reach for a brewski! The Germans and Poles who settled in the Midwest brought with them their beer culture; in fact Milwaukee is known as "brew city" due to the many breweries headquartered there. Mix the large number of breweries and a large Polish population, and you get a brewski. Although the actual emergence of the word is quite recent, it was first referenced in the Oxford dictionary in 1977²

Midwestern English slang offers some non-traditional vocabulary, which you might want to include in your next visit to the United States. These unique expressions reflect the region's friendly, down-to-earth, and communal nature. So, whether you are a seasoned Midwesterner or just passing through, embrace these charming linguistic quirks, and you will find yourself fitting right in. So the next time you are in the Midwest and someone offers you some hot dish and a brewski – just answer 'you betcha'!

To hear Midwestern slang, watch this video:

<https://youtu.be/7OR7yPK4wEw?feature=shared>

Footnotes

¹ Foran, Chris. 2020. "Where Did the Term 'Bubbler' Come From, and Are We the Only Ones Who Say It?" Journal Sentinel. February 25, 2020.

² https://www.oed.com/dictionary/brewski_n?tab=factsheet#135633625

Gender Inclusivity in Business Correspondence

GLOSSARY

non-conforming:
not typical of a standard

approach:
way/method

salutations:
ways of greeting

courtesy:
polite act

recipient:
s.o. who receives sth.

as a last resort:
when everything else is not possible

bias:
personal preference or inclination that is often prejudiced

In today's business world there is an increased awareness of and sensitivity to gender-inclusive language, which is reflected in the openings and closings of business e-mails and letters.

To begin with, here are some terms used to describe people who identify outside our common binary categories of *female/woman* and *male/man*:

gender-inclusive (synonym of gender-neutral), non-binary, gender fluid, agender, gender non-conforming, gender queer, or intersex.

In an inclusive workplace we need to pay attention to how our colleagues and business partners signal they want to be referred to. We are all used to the gendered way of writing business email or letters. So let us compare this traditional approach with the inclusive gender-neutral way.

Gendered Business Correspondence

Salutations:

Dear Ms Harrison (the most modern courtesy title for a woman and without any punctuation in British English)

Dear Mrs Harrison (only use Mrs if you know she wants her marital status to be revealed)

Dear Mr Harrison

If you do not know who you are writing to, i.e. you have not got your business partner's name and you want to be quite formal, use:

Dear Sir or Madam

The body of the letter:

If you want to indicate your gender or marital status in your business correspondence, you can add Ms, Mrs or Mr in brackets after your name at the very end:

.... (body of your letter)

Kind regards

Julia Smith (Mrs)

Similarly, when you write an email include Ms/ Mrs/Mr in your email signature.

Alternatively you can also add pronouns:

.... (body of your letter)

Kind regards

Julia Smith (**she/her**)

The inside address (= the recipient)

Ms Nancy Harrison
41 Lucilla Avenue
Ashford
TN23 35

Gender-Neutral Business Correspondence

Salutations:

Dear Peter Harrison (full name)

Dear Dr Harrison (you use an academic title instead of gender)

Dear Mx Harrison (gender-neutral form)

Dear Peter (first names only are commonly used in English unlike in German)

Good morning/Hello/Hello everybody (quite informal)

Dear colleague/student

Dear IT Manager (you use your business partner's position; all parts are capitalised)

As a last resort if you do not know who you are writing to and want to formally refer to the company in general:

To Whom It May Concern (all parts should be capitalised as you do with names)

The body of the letter

When you write to someone who you know defines themselves as non-binary, you can use the full name/first name when you refer to them in your correspondence, together with the personal pronouns *they, them, themselves, their and theirs* even though you are only referring to one person. (Alternative pronouns can be found in [issue 26 of our newsletter from 2021](#)).

I will pass on your email to Christine, who will contact you once **they** are back in the office.

When it comes to jobs we also need to be careful and avoid words which clearly indicate gender. Instead of *chairman* we should write *chair* or *chairperson*. Another way of avoiding gender indication is to put the noun into the plural, e.g. *nurses and their job*.

The inside address (= the recipient)

Mx Nancy Harrison or Nancy Harrison
41 Lucilla Avenue
Ashford
TN23 35

In business try to be as clear as you can about your own and your colleagues' gender identity to avoid misunderstanding, and to create an inclusive working environment without discrimination and gender bias.