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## Preface

Ever since I discovered that  $3 + 4 = 7$  I have always been obsessed by the magic number seven. It's a fascinating number, bigger than 5 and not quite 10. When rolling two standard six-sided dice, seven has the highest probability of being rolled. The word English has seven letters. In this light-hearted look at vocabulary and curiosities for English learners, everything is in handy bites of seven—an easy number to learn and remember.

Use the **power of seven** to help you learn practical English words, phrases, proverbs and more—anytime you have seven minutes to spare!

Good luck!

Josef Essberger, Founder  
[EnglishClub.com](https://www.englishclub.com)

# 1: Seven Colours of the Rainbow

Have you ever seen a rainbow? Sometimes when the sun is shining and it is rainy somewhere at the same time, you can see a rainbow. It's a huge arch of colours in the sky. That arch is caused by the light from the sun being broken up by water droplets in the atmosphere. The sun's light is "white", but the water droplets break it up into **the seven colours of the rainbow**, always in this order:

**RED**

**ORANGE**

**YELLOW**

**GREEN**

**BLUE**

**INDIGO**

**VIOLET**

There is an easy way to remember them (a mnemonic):

- Richard Of York Gave Battle In Vain

These colours are the visible part of the sun's radiation. But there are many other parts that are not visible to the human eye. For example:

- immediately below red is "infraRED"
- immediately beyond violet is "ultraVIOLET" (UV)

[Learn more about colours](#)

## 2: Seven Prefixes

A **prefix** is placed at the beginning of a word to modify or change its meaning. Here are **seven common prefixes** in English, together with their basic meaning and some examples.

### **counter-**

meaning: opposition, opposite direction

example: counter-attack, counteract

### **extra-**

meaning: outside, beyond

example: extracurricular, extramarital

### **hemi-**

meaning: half

example: hemisphere

### **inter-**

meaning: between, among

example: interact, interchange

### **non-**

meaning: absence, negation

example: non-smoker, nonsense

### **post-**

meaning: after in time or order

example: postpone, postcolonial

### **re-**

meaning: again

example: repaint, reappraise, reawake

[More prefixes with meanings and examples](#)

### 3: Seven British and American Spellings

Some British English (BrE) and American English (AmE) words have the same meaning and pronunciation but different spellings. If you are not sure about a spelling, it's best to look it up in a British or American dictionary as appropriate. Here are **seven common differences**, with examples.

#### 1. **ogue/og**

BrE: analogue, catalogue, dialogue

AmE: analog, catalog, dialog

#### 2. **our/or**

BrE: colour, favourite, honour

AmE: color, favorite, honor

#### 3. **ence/ense**

BrE: defence, offence, pretence

AmE: defense, offense, pretense

#### 4. **s/z**

BrE: analyse, criticise, organisation (but z is also used)

AmE: analyze, criticize, organization

#### 5. **l/l**

BrE: enrolment, fulfil, skilful

AmE: enrollment, fulfill, skillful

#### 6. **re/er**

BrE: centre, theatre, metre

AmE: center, theater, meter

#### 7. **miscellaneous**

BrE: jewellery, programme, practise, pyjamas

AmE: jewelry, program, practice, pajamas

Note that in British English:

- “program” is used when talking about computers
- “practise” is a verb and “practice” is a noun

### [Different meanings in British and American](#)

## 5: Seven Informal Contractions

WANNA know what GONNA means? LEMME show you.

Have you seen words like **gonna** or **wanna** and wondered what they mean? Perhaps you've looked in a dictionary and been unable to find them. That's because these words are informal contractions or short forms of other words that people use when speaking informally. They are not exactly slang, but they are a little like slang. In fact, if you look in a big dictionary, you will usually find them. Here are **seven common informal contractions**, with example sentences.

1. **gimme** = give me

Gimme your money.

Don't gimme that rubbish.

Can you gimme a hand?

2. **gonna** = going to

Nothing's gonna change my love for you.

I'm not gonna tell you.

What are you gonna do?

3a. **gotta** = (have) got a

I've gotta gun.

She hasn't gotta penny.

Have you gotta car?

3b. **gotta** = (have) got to

I gotta go now.

We haven't gotta do that.

Have they gotta work?

4. **init** = isn't it

That's smart, init?

Init strange?

5. **kinda** = kind of

She's kinda cute.

Are you kinda mad at me?

6. **lemme** = let me

Lemme go!

He didn't lemme see it.

7a. **wanna** = want to

I wanna go home.

## 6: Seven Teens

What's a **teen**, or a **teenager**? People sometimes talk about teenagers when they really mean young people. For example, you might read: "This is a club for teenagers from 12 to 16."

Time to get accurate. Someone who is twelve years old is NOT a teenager. Someone who is thirTEEN years old is a teenager. How old is a teenager? A TEENager is between 13 and 19. Note **the seven teens**:

11 eleven

12 twelve

**13 thirTEEN**

**14 fourTEEN**

**15 fifTEEN**

**16 sixTEEN**

**17 sevenTEEN**

**18 eighTEEN**

**19 nineTEEN**

20 twenty

21 twenty-one

Note the following usage:

- They are in their teens. (They are aged 13 to 19.)
- They are in their late teens. (for example They are 17 to 19.)
- early teens
- mid teens
- a teen idol: an idol for teenagers
- a teenybopper: a young teenager (especially girl), who follows the latest fashions in music and clothes
- a preteen: a person aged 10 to 12

# 11: Seven Continents

**There are seven continents.** The word continent comes from the Latin *terra continens*, meaning continuous land. Like countries, continents are proper nouns. That means they are names and the first letter must be a CAPITAL letter. Even for the adjective, the first letter is always a capital.

Continent: **Africa**  
Adjective: African  
Person: an African

Continent: **Asia**  
Adjective: Asian  
Person: an Asian

Continent: **Australia**  
Adjective: Australian  
Person: an Australian

Continent: **Europe**  
Adjective: European  
Person: a European

Continent: **North America**  
Adjective: North American  
Person: a North American

Continent: **South America**  
Adjective: South American  
Person: a South American

Continent: **Antarctica**  
Adjective: Antarctic  
Person: -

Strangely, we have a word for somebody who comes from the planet Mars (a Martian), but there is no word for somebody who comes from Antarctica!

NB: The English-speaking countries mostly teach the seven-continent model. However, six-, five- and four-continent models are also taught in some countries.

[More about continents and countries](#)

## 14: Seven Units of Time

Here are **seven units that we use to measure time** and use every day (with their normal abbreviation in brackets):

**second** (sec)—There are 60 seconds in one minute.

**minute** (min)—There are 60 minutes in one hour.

**hour** (hr)—There are 24 hours in one day.

**day**—This is the period of time from sunrise to sunrise (equivalent to twenty-four hours).

**week** (wk)—There are 7 days in one week.

**month** (mth)—There are 28, 30 or 31 days in one month.

**year** (yr)

There are 365 days in one year.\*

There are 52 weeks in one year.

There are 12 months in one year.

\* Every 4 years there are 366 days in the year (the so-called “leap year”).

Note that people often use the following terms:

“24 hours” to mean one day

“48 hours” to mean two days

“72 hours” to mean three days

## 17: Seven Days of the Week

Everybody knows that **there are seven days of the week**. But do you know that there are only five weekdays? And of course the weekend has two days. Here are the seven days of the week. Note that the first letter of each day is always a CAPITAL.

**Monday**

**Tuesday**

**Wednesday**

**Thursday**

**Friday**

**Saturday**

**Sunday**

Now note that we call five of those days “weekdays”. They are:

- Monday, Tuesday, Wednesday, Thursday, Friday

The the other two days make the “weekend”:

- Saturday, Sunday

All of these days are usually abbreviated as follows (the most common abbreviations being the ones with 3 letters):

Mo., Mon.

Tu., Tue., Tues.

We., Wed.

Th., Thu., Thur., Thurs.

Fr., Fri.

Sa., Sat.

Su., Sun.

[More about days of the week and months of the year](#)

## 20: Seven Units of Length (Imperial/US)

There are two systems of measurement in the English-speaking world: the newer metric system and the older imperial/US system. Here are **seven units of length using the imperial/US system**.

These are the most common units that we use day by day:

**inch** (in or ")—There are 12 inches in one foot and 36 inches in one yard.

**foot** (ft or ')—There are three feet in one yard.

**yard** (yd)—Approximately equal to a person's step, or a person's outstretched arm from nose to fingertip, or one metric metre.

**mile** (m, mi)—There are 1,760 yards in one mile.

These are three other less commonly used imperial units of length:

**thou** *also* **mil**—There are 1,000 thou in one inch. (Typically used in engineering.)

**fathom** (ftm) (depth)—There are 6 feet in one fathom. (Mainly used to measure the depth of water.)

**furlong** (fur)— 220 yards. (Archaic. Mainly used in horse racing.)

## 21: Seven Roman Numerals

You know that  $2 + 2 = 4$ . But do you know that  $v - ii = iii$ ?

The numbers that we normally use in English (1, 2, 3 etc) are called "Arabic numerals". But we sometimes use another system for writing numbers — "Roman numerals". The Romans used letters of the alphabet to represent numbers, and even today you will occasionally see this system used for page numbers in books, clock faces, dates of movies etc. **There are seven letters used for Roman numerals:**

**I** = 1

**V** = 5

**X** = 10

**L** = 50

**C** = 100

**D** = 500

**M** = 1000

In general, letters are placed in decreasing order of value, for example XVI = 16. Letters can be repeated one or two times to increase value, for example XX = 20, XXX = 30. Letters cannot be repeated three times, so ~~XXXX~~ is not used for 40. In this case, XL = 40 (50 minus 10).

Here are two examples of the use of Roman numerals:

- The Introduction is on page vii.
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[Roman/Arabic numerals 1-1000 with converter](#)

## 28: Seven Proverbs

A **proverb** is a short, traditional saying in general use. It usually expresses some obvious truth or familiar experience. There are proverbs in all languages. Here are **seven proverbs that are well known** in English.

### **You can't tell a book by its cover.**

We need to read a book to know if it's good or bad. We cannot know what it's like just by looking at the front or back cover. This proverb is applied to everything, not only books.

### **Where there's a will there's a way.**

If we have the determination (the will) to do something, we can always find the path or method to do it.

### **Don't cross your bridges before you come to them.**

Don't worry about problems before they arrive.

### **It was the last straw that broke the camel's back.**

There is a limit to everything. We can load the camel with lots of straw, but finally it will be too much and the camel's back will break. And it is only a single straw that breaks its back - the last straw. This can be applied to many things in life. People often say "That's the last straw!" when they will not accept any more of something.

### **Bad news travels fast.**

"Bad news" means news about "bad" things like accidents, death, illness etc. People tend to tell this type of news quickly. But "good news" (passing an exam, winning some money, getting a job etc) travels more slowly.

### **You can't take it with you when you die.**

When we die we leave everything on earth. We don't take anything with us. Even the richest people cannot take their money with them after death. This proverb reminds us that some material things are not really so valuable as we think.

### **Still waters run deep.**

Some rivers have rough surfaces with waves. That's usually because the water is shallow and there are rocks near the surface. But deep rivers have no rocks near the surface and the water is smooth and still. This proverb means that people who are calm and quiet on the outside, often have a strong, "deep" personality inside.

### **EnglishClub Wordchecker**

**straw** (noun): dried stalk of grain; piece of dry grass

## 29: Seven Quotes

A **quote** or **quotation** is usually a short text—one or two sentences—spoken by one (usually famous) person and repeated or at least known by others. Every language has its famous quotations, and they range from highly amusing to deadly serious. Often they express a deep truth in a short, clever way—even the amusing ones.

Here are **seven of my favourite quotations**, arranged (very loosely) from humorous to serious. Have a look at them and try to understand them. Do you agree with them?

**"It is a secret in the Oxford sense. You may tell it to only one person at a time."** Oliver Franks (1905-92)

**"The head cannot take in more than the seat can endure."** Winston Churchill (1874-1965)—on the subject of long speeches

**"Only the insane take themselves seriously."** Max Beerbohm (1872-1956)

**"To be uncertain is uncomfortable; but to be certain is ridiculous."** Johann Wolfgang von Goethe (1749-1832)

**"Say what you have to say in the fewest possible words."** Arthur Bryant (1899-1985)

**"Those who cannot remember the past are condemned to repeat it."** George Santayana (1863-1952)

**"When words lose their meaning, people lose their freedom."** Confucius (551 BC - 479 BC)

### EnglishClub Wordchecker

**condemned** (verb): sentenced as a punishment; forced to suffer

**endure** (verb): suffer patiently; tolerate

**insane** (adjective): seriously mentally ill

**seat** (noun): a person's buttocks

[More quotes by topic](#)

## 30: Seven Tips for Resumes

When you apply for a job, you are usually asked to send a CV or resume. This is a history of your education and work experience. Here are **seven tips for CVs and resumes** in English:

### **Tip 1: Use design that demands attention**

Employers don't have time to read through each of your job descriptions to know if you have the skills they need. The design of your CV must do it for them. Your CV should be concise, well-organised and relevant. It should emphasise the most important and relevant points about your experience, skills and education.

### **Tip 2: Use "power words"**

To control the image that an employer has of you, use power words that match the position you want. Certain words are used frequently by recruiters in their job descriptions. You should study recruiters' advertisements and job descriptions and use these words in your CV and covering letter.

### **Tip 3: A number is worth 1,000 words**

Numbers are alive and powerful. They create images in our minds. General statements are easy to ignore. Be specific! Use numbers when describing your duties and achievements.

### **Tip 4: Put important information first**

List important information at the beginning of your job descriptions. Put statements in your CV in order of importance, impressiveness and relevance to the job.

### **Tip 5: Sell benefits, not skills**

Holiday companies don't sell holidays. They sell relaxation, adventure, sun, sea and sand (the benefits of a holiday). You should not sell your skills (many other people have the same skills). You should sell the benefits of your skills. When you write your skills and past duties, you can explain their benefits to the employer.

### **Tip 6: Solve the employer's (hidden) needs**

Employers want people who can solve problems, not create them! Your CV and cover letter should show how you can solve the employer's problems and needs.

### **Tip 7: Target the job**

You will have more success if you adjust your CV and cover letter for the specific skills an employer is seeking. This means that you would write one CV for one particular job and a different, modified, CV for another job.

## 32: Seven Extraterrestrial Planets

The planet Earth on which we live is part of the solar system. The Sun is a star at the centre of the solar system, and Earth and **the seven extraterrestrial planets** (and other bodies) revolve around it. Here are the planets of the solar system (including Earth), starting from the closest to the Sun.

**Mercury**—the fastest planet, named after the Roman messenger to the gods

**Venus**—the brightest planet, named after the Roman goddess of love and beauty

[Earth]

**Mars**—the red planet, named after the Roman god of war

**Jupiter**—the largest planet, named after the Roman king of the gods

**Saturn**—thought by the Romans to be the slowest planet, named after their god of time

**Uranus**—named after the Greek god of the sky and father to Saturn

**Neptune**—a deep sea-blue colour, named after the Roman god of the sea

### EnglishClub Wordchecker

**extraterrestrial** (adjective): outside or beyond Earth

[More about the planets and their names](#)

### 33: Seven Eponyms

Many words in English come from a person's name. They have entered the English language so completely that they no longer take a capital letter. Such words are called eponyms. Here are **seven eponyms that we frequently use.**

**casanova**—a man who easily charms and seduces women (Giacomo Casanova [1725-1798] was an Italian author and adventurer with a reputation as a womanizer. He was interested in casual relationships, and wrote about his affairs with many women.)

**hoover**—vacuum cleaner; a machine for cleaning house interiors (William Henry Hoover [1849-1932] was an American businessman who founded The Hoover Company, making vacuum cleaners. The business expanded to Europe, where "hoover" became synonymous with vacuums and vacuuming.)

**jumbo**—something very large (In the late-1800s, a giant African elephant named Jumbo was transported to England and kept in the London Zoo. It was the largest elephant in captivity, and its popularity resulted in its name entering the English language.)

**pasteurization**—the exposure of food to very high temperatures in order to kill bacteria that can cause food to spoil (Louis Pasteur [1822-1895] was a French chemist who discovered that you could prolong the taste of beer and wine by heating it up and killing off the bacteria.)

**sandwich**—two slices of bread with some other food between them (John Montague [1718-1792], the 4th Earl of Sandwich in England, was a gambler who didn't like to leave the card table to eat. When he played cards he would place his lunch meat between two slices of bread to avoid getting greasy hands.)

**volt**—a standard unit of electromotive force (Alessandro Volta [1745-1827] was an Italian physicist who invented the first electrical battery, the "Voltaic pile", in 1799.)

**wellingtons**—knee-length waterproof boots made of rubber (Arthur Wellesley [1769-1852], the 1st Duke of Wellington in England, asked his shoemaker to redesign his military boots to be more comfortable. His new calfskin boots had no tassels and were cut without a strip at the top. After his defeat of Napoleon, "Wellington boots" became highly fashionable.)

[More about eponyms](#)

## 34: Seven Wonders of the Ancient World

A **wonder** is something beautiful or exceptional that gives us a feeling of surprise or admiration. **The Seven Wonders of the Ancient World** were amazing buildings and structures in distant history. Here is the generally accepted list:

1. **The Great Pyramid of Giza** (modern Egypt) - The Great Pyramid of Khufu (Cheops) at Giza, outside modern Cairo, is often called the first wonder of the world. This pyramid was built around the year 2560 BC and is the only Ancient Wonder to survive today.
2. **The Hanging Gardens of Babylon** (modern Iraq) - These beautiful gardens were probably built by King Nebuchadnezzar around the year 600 BC to please his queen, Amuhia. Their terraces perhaps rose as high as 300 feet.
3. **The Statue of Zeus** (Jupiter) at Olympia (modern Greece) - This was a colossal 40 ft high figure in gold and ivory. It was built by Phidias in the 5th century BC.
4. **The Temple of Artemis** (Diana) at Ephesus (modern Turkey) - This was a beautiful building, started about 350 BC, built in honour of the Greek goddess of hunting. The temple was destroyed by invading Goths in AD 262.
5. **The Mausoleum at Halicarnassus** (modern Turkey) - This was a famous tomb built by Queen Artemisia around the year 353 BC in memory of her husband, King Mausolus. This tomb is the origin of the modern word "mausoleum".
6. **The Colossus at Rhodes** (modern Greece) - This was a huge bronze statue of Helios (Apollo), about 105 ft high. It was created by the sculptor Chares, who apparently worked on it for 12 years, finally completing it in 280 BC. It was destroyed during an earthquake in 224 BC.
7. **The Pharos of Alexandria** (modern Egypt) - This was a lighthouse built by Sostratus of Cnidus during the 3rd century BC on the island of Pharos. It was destroyed by an earthquake in the 13th century.

## 35: Seven Interjections

**Interjections** are very common short exclamations like **oh!**, **well** or **ah**. They express feelings but have no grammatical value. We use them more in speaking than in writing. Here are **seven interjections that we use every day**.

### **ah**

expresses...

pleasure: *Ah, that feels good.*

realization: *Ah, now I understand.*

resignation: *Ah well, it can't be helped.*

surprise: *Ah! I've won!*

### **er**

expresses hesitation: *Lima is the capital of...er...Peru.*

### **hey**

calls attention: *Hey! look at that!*

expresses surprise, joy etc: *Hey! What a good idea!*

### **hmm**

expresses doubt: *Hmm. I'm not so sure.*

### **ouch**

expresses pain: *Ouch! That hurts!*

### **uh-huh**

expresses agreement: *Shall we go? / Uh-huh.*

### **well**

expresses surprise: *Well I never!*

introduces a remark: *Well, what did he say?*

[Longer list of interjections](#)