

The British English Language Podcast



Improve your British English language skills with Amy

Podcast 1 - What is Great Britain ?

Hey everyone and welcome to my brand new podcast - The British English Language Podcast ! This podcast is designed specifically for intermediate level English language students who have an interest in learning British English as opposed to American English. My name is Amy and I am a 34-year-old conversational English language coach for intermediate level students. I'm originally from the beautiful city of Oxford in England but my love for languages, travel as well as other cultures has led me to make my home on the gorgeous island of Ibiza, Spain.

These podcasts are designed for you to practise your listening skills whilst becoming accustomed to the British accent, with typical British words and phrases, spoken in a natural and fluid way. You'll find a transcription for each podcast on my website - www.britishenglishlanguage.com - And I encourage you to listen to each podcast episode a second time whilst reading the transcription to help further your level of comprehension.

During these podcasts I will be discussing different topics which I hope you find interesting so that learning English can be an enjoyable as well as beneficial process. I will often be discussing topics related to the British culture and Britain in general to give you a deeper understanding of this globally influential power country.

So I thought it would be useful to make my first podcast defining what exactly is Great Britain ?! Now that might seem like a silly question, but you may be wondering what's the difference between Great Britain and the United Kingdom (or the UK), for example ?

It can be quite confusing when talking about Britain and the UK but they are basically the same thing. The two terms are used interchangeably in every day conversation and I will be doing the same during this podcast as well as future podcasts too.

Great Britain is a geographical term referring to the islands of Britain, also simply known as Britain. The United Kingdom, on the other hand, is purely a political term, meaning the independent country that encompasses/incorporates all of Great Britain including the region of Northern Ireland.

By the way, 'On the other hand' is a typical English phrase which is used to introduce the second of two contrasting points or facts.

So. Great Britain is a collection of islands (hence the name the British Isles) off the western main body of Europe. Its closest neighbours are France, Belgium, The Netherlands and Ireland.

The UK of course does belong to the continent of Europe however, as I'm sure most of you know, it will be officially leaving the European Union on the 1st January 2021, which is actually only a few weeks away from now. Be careful not to get confused, the UK is not leaving the continent of Europe, just the unique economic and political establishment that consists of the 27 European countries known as the European Union.

OK so, Great Britain is made up of four different countries within the British Isles. These countries are (in order of population size) England, Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland. The island of Ireland is split in two. Ireland (or southern Ireland) and Northern Ireland. Ireland is a separate country which does not in fact belong to the United Kingdom. It does however belong to Europe and there their currency is the Euro. In England, Scotland and Wales we use the British pound, officially known as the pound sterling.

Other, much smaller islands that make up the British Isles include the Channel Islands, the Isle of Wight, the Isle of Man, the Hebrides, as well as over 6000 others.

Interestingly and, although such close neighbours, the four countries that make up the UK are all very distinctive, with their own subcultures, governments, climates, landscapes and, for example in the case of Wales, even their own language.

According to Google, the population of the United Kingdom is 66.65 million. Almost 9 million of those live in England's capital city, London. The UK is made up of counties which might be the equivalent of other countries' states. Within these counties are districts, cities, towns, villages, hamlets and, of course, the countryside. A hamlet is the name of the smallest sized populated area. They are often found scattered around the countryside and they may only consist of five or six houses.

As most of you will know, because it's one of the things that the UK is most famous for, the British climate can be generally pretty wet ! During my travels around the world I usually meet people who think that the British climate is only grey and miserable and wet. But this definitely isn't true ! Our summers are relatively short but we do have some lovely sunny and warm, sometimes even hot, days ! Of course, thanks to the abundance of rain,

Britain is famous for its beautiful green countryside. Where England's landscape consists mainly of populated towns and cities with agricultural and relatively flat countryside, wild, mountainous landscapes can be found in Scotland, and lush green valleys and mountains in Wales.

Although Britain is a monarchic state, the UK is run by an elected parliament which is led by a Prime Minister, and today that Prime Minister is Boris Johnson. There are various different political parties involved in the British government including the Conservatives, the Labour Party, as well as everything in between. Britain is a democratic state but this is where I stop talking about politics because it really isn't my favourite subject to discuss. Hopefully though you get an idea of the very basic governing of this country and I invite you to do your own research if British politics is something that interests you.

One more thing I had to mention in this podcast about 'what is Great Britain?' is of course the Royal Family. Again, the British Royal Family is not something that particularly interests me apart from the incredible influence and wealth that is associated with it. It is quite astounding to me and truly blows my mind. The phrase 'blows my mind' is used when describing something which is particularly shocking/surprising. It describes something that is so incredible that your mind can't even comprehend it. Anyway, another mind-blowing fact is that the current head of the Monarchy, Queen Elizabeth II is the longest reigning queen in history. At 94 years old she has reigned almost 69 years on the throne, and in 2017 Elizabeth II became the first British monarch to celebrate her Sapphire Jubilee.

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