

Transcript

INTRODUCTION

00:00 Hello and welcome back to the English with Rhys podcast. My name is Rhys. I'm a master's level English teacher from the UK and I'm here to help you level up your English.

So, what is the English with Rhys podcast? If you're new here, you might not be familiar, right? So, I like to talk about lots of different topics. After all, in the real world, you'll be using English in lots of different ways.

So, while grammar practice and vocabulary practice and things like that are very important, you do need practice of real-world speech. So that's what I do here.

Then in the podcast course, we look at everything I said in this episode and we pull out the vocabulary, maybe the grammar, anything that is useful for you to learn from. And indeed, at the end of this episode, I will be giving you five pieces
01:00 of vocabulary that will improve your English.

In today's episode, I want to talk a little bit about holidays, public holidays in the UK. We have a few that I think might be a little bit strange or at least new to you.

MAIN PART

Today is the day after Pancake Day, and that's the first one I want to talk about. If you're not sure what a pancake is, it's pretty much flour and water, maybe some

sugar, you know, something like that, and we just fry it up and it becomes a flat cake like object, piece of food.

In the UK, we put things like lemon juice and sugar on top. Literally sugar on there, and we wrap it up and we eat it. In different households, it can be a little bit different. In my house growing up, we'd put chocolate in there. Maybe we would put berries or even sweets sometimes, you know, candy.

02:00 I don't think that that is very normal, but in my family it was. Very strange. I've told this to some friends, British friends, and they look at me strangely. "Why are you putting sweets in a pancake?". But for me growing up, it was just normal, right?

So, the point of Pancake Day is actually linked to Easter, right? It's 40 days before Easter. And if you're a Christian, you would call it Shrove Tuesday. But, you know, in everyday life, we call it Pancake Day because that's what most people do that day.

The point of pancake day is to use up all of the bad ingredients you have in your house, the junk food, the unhealthy food, and then you go 40 days without eating these bad foods. And this 40 days is called Lent.

03:00 And that takes you all the way up to Easter Day, which we celebrate with chocolate. During Lent, I think the Christian way of doing things is to not eat meat. But I think nowadays, for the non-religious or the not very religious population of the UK, it's just another excuse to quit a habit, a little bit like what you do at New Year's.

So, you might quit junk food. It might be coffee. It could be, you know, alcohol or anything else that could be bad for you. Or you might even begin a habit like jogging every day, going to the gym, reading a book. So, it's just another excuse to do that really.

Once these 40 days are up, like I say, that takes us into Easter. The one that I think most people celebrate is Easter Day, the Sunday. And the way we celebrate that in the UK is with chocolate. We have chocolate eggs.

04:00 So, it's an egg shape made of chocolate. And parents and grandparents and aunts and uncles give these to the children in their families. You might also get chocolate bars, maybe some sweets as well. So, it's a very unhealthy day. And I think kids don't know when to stop. So, they'll just eat chocolate all day and all of the next day until it's all gone. It's crazy. I can't believe it's a thing. It's so unhealthy.

And another big feature of Easter is the Easter Bunny. So much like Santa Claus, the Easter Bunny comes to your house the night before Easter and leaves chocolate eggs around. For some children, he'll make an Easter egg hunt. So, in the morning, the children will have to follow clues around the house to find their chocolate eggs. And for other children, they'll just put all the chocolate in one place. And depending on the family, you could get one Easter egg, you could get 10 Easter eggs, you know, it totally depends on the family.

05:00 We have a couple of Easter movies, but I think they're not very big yet. It's not like Christmas. You can imagine this as "Christmas lite" or like "mini-Christmas" that's about chocolate and not presents.

So that brings us up to the end of March, maybe into April. And then we go quite a long time without a real public holiday. You might have a couple of days where there's a notable event or it might have a name, but nothing really changes until we get to October and we have Halloween.

I think most of you will be familiar with Halloween. America is famous for it, but of course it's much much older. But these days in the UK, I think it's quite similar to what you may have seen on American TV.

So, children go door to door saying, "Trick or treat", and then the people on the other side are supposed to give them sweets. So, another sweet based holiday. But a big difference between the kids today and when I was a kid, you know, like
06:00 20, 25 years ago, is that I don't see many kids trick-or-treating these days, which I kind of think is a shame.

So, when I was a kid, you used to go to every house in your neighbourhood. You know, you'd walk up in your costume, you'd be dressed as something scary, usually like a zombie or a vampire or a ghost. You'd knock the door, and they'd open the door, and you'd say, "Trick or treat", and you'll hold open your bag or basket, maybe like a pumpkin-shaped plastic object. You'll hold that out and the person on the other side will say something like, "Oh gosh, you guys are so scary" or, "Oh, don't you look cute?". And then they'll just give you some sweets.

I remember one time when I was a kid, I knocked on this one door with my brother and I think we must have been about ten and six. I was the ten-year-old. We said, "Trick or treat", but they didn't have any sweets, but they were having a

07:00 little party, so they came back with a hot dog. They cut the hot dog in half and put half a hot dog in each of our baskets.

It was just- Thinking about it now is so strange. But there is a reason that people feel like they must give sweets. And there is a dark side to Halloween. Some children, when they don't receive sweets, feel like they have to get some revenge. After all, we say, "Trick or treat", right? The treat is sweets. "If you don't give us a treat, we'll give you a trick". So, it could, honestly, be throwing eggs at someone's house, for example. Really terrible behaviour. Of course, no parent is condoning this, but kids, often teenagers, will do it. Just to be honest with you, a small group will do it. It's not like every teenager is doing this. And I think most teenagers think it's terrible behaviour, but it happens.

08:00 So, if you have a house, if you're an adult, you feel some pressure to give out sweets. So, that's a shame. It kind of takes the magic away from the holiday. But that aside, these kids come home and they have a big bag full of sweets.

Again, it's crazy how many holidays we have that are surrounded by junk food and sweets. I can't believe we're all still alive in this country. But yeah, you come home with a big bag of sweets and you'll spend days and days eating them. You maybe skip meals; you'll have sweets for breakfast. Oh, terrible.

And our next holiday in the UK actually comes 5 days later on the 5th of November. It's called Bonfire Night. It might be called Guy Fawkes Night, Firework Night. There are a few names. I think Bonfire Night is the most common name. And it has quite a strange history. So, it is linked to something in British history.

So, hundreds of years ago, there was a guy named Guy. That was his name, Guy
09:00 Fawkes. He and his team disagreed with government policy and they wanted to plant a bomb beneath a government building. But as they were down there, they were caught, basically, and they put him on this sort of stretching machine and they tortured him. They pulled his arms and legs and stretched them and stretched them and stretched them and, in the end, of course killed him.

So, we like to remember that day by... Okay, have a guess. Okay, you're not going to get it, but we built a big fire using all of our leftover cardboard and wood and paper. Usually, a whole street or neighbourhood will get together and create a giant fire. And some people will create a fake human, maybe with a football head, like a scarecrow body, something like that. And they'll put that fake human on the fire. And that guy is Guy Fawkes, and we light him on fire.

10:00 Okay, so it's really horrible when you think about it. And at the same time, we have fireworks going off, and fireworks represented the explosions that should have happened that night.

There are no special foods or anything like that, but you do spend it outside. A lot of local councils, which is kind of the government of the city, have decided that these bonfires that neighbourhoods share are not okay. They're not safe. And they will set up community bonfires in like a stadium, like really controlled. And they have these fireworks shows which are very impressive.

At the end of the day, fireworks are very expensive. So, paying the ticket price to go to a show is the more affordable option, and you do see a better show to be honest.

11:00 After bonfire night, I think our next big one would be Christmas. And, I think I don't need to talk much about Christmas. I think in the UK, it's very similar to other countries. You know, Christmas Eve, Santa Claus, or as we call him, Father Christmas comes to your house. He leaves presents, you know, he flies away with his reindeer, all of that good stuff. The only difference that I can think of, and I said this in a previous episode, was that at Christmas lunch, we wear Christmas hats.

So, we have these things called crackers. It's basically a toilet paper tube with some little, really cheap, toys and a hat and a joke, a really bad joke inside. You sort of pull those at the start of your meal, put on the hat, everyone tells their terrible jokes, and then you eat your meal.

12:00 The day after that is very British. We call it Boxing Day. Not many people can agree on why we call it Boxing Day. Some people think it's the fighting sport, you know, boxing. Some people say it's to box things up, you know, give to charity, maybe. I feel that people don't really agree on what Boxing Day means.

And it's pretty much just a day where you do nothing. The kids play with their new toys. You know, the adults basically get over Christmas, organise themselves again. You're not expected to do much.

Our next holiday is only a few days later, just a week after Christmas. We have New Year, of course. And again, not much different to the rest of the world. I think New Year is pretty much celebrated the same in most places.

We have a party. We count down to 12:00. We drink some champagne. We go to bed. That's all it is.

And that brings us back to the beginning of the year. And I think our first big one then would be Valentine's Day, which we've just had. And you know, couples give each other cards, flowers, chocolates, go on a date, just that really. There's nothing to explain much.

13:00 I've always thought Valentine's Day was a little bit mean. I feel like people who are in a couple already, you know, they have something nice there. I think if you're single and you don't enjoy being single, it's a terrible day, right? You just see everyone else with their boyfriends and girlfriends, husbands and wives, and then you're there with no one. I think it's kind of sad. But yeah, also a lot of people don't care and just ignore it, right? Which is what we should be doing really.

The only other thing we have in the UK is something called bank holidays. Bank holidays are just what they sound like. The banks don't work on these days. I think it's about eight days a year. And because the banks are not working, a lot of other businesses also close their doors on these days.

So, a lot of people just have it as a long weekend. Bank holiday is I think always a Monday. So, you just get a three-day weekend. And it's not like some other

14:00 countries where you then have to work on Saturday. No, it is a day off for real. I don't have that. I work for myself, but also, I quite like my job to be honest.

A lot of people really enjoy having that extra day off. You know, the UK has a big drinking culture, which is kind of unfortunate, but it means that the British people get an extra day of drinking into their calendar. Yeah, just telling it as it is.

And then each country in the UK also has its own holiday. So in Wales we have St David's Day, England has St George's Day, Scotland has St Andrew's Day and then Ireland, both Northern Ireland and the Republic of Ireland together have the most famous one, St Patrick's Day.

I can only tell you really about St. David's Day because that's the one I've experienced again and again. It's just a day for celebrating your culture. So, my
15:00 country has a second language which is Welsh. So, our country's language is actually our second language because almost everyone speaks English and not many people, if I'm being honest, speak Welsh. They can speak a little. I can speak a little, but I can't have a conversation.

But it's a day to celebrate your Welshness. So, we wear traditional Welsh clothes. Maybe we wear a daffodil or a leak, which are our national symbols, play a bit of Welsh music. If you're in school, maybe you'll, you know, draw the Welsh flag, which is pretty cool, I have to admit. We have a dragon on our flag. Hard to beat that. So, just a day to celebrate our Welshness.

I think it is not a day off school. It's not a day off work. But if you are off for whatever reason, then all of the big cities do something. In Cardiff, which is the

16:00 capital of Wales, there is a parade. I also went to the National Welsh History Museum last year and they had sort of uh, dancing and songs and things like that all about Welsh heritage. Pretty cool stuff, I have to say.

I believe England doesn't really celebrate their day, St George's Day, but I think Scotland and both Irelands are really into their days.

And I think that brings us to the end of UK holidays. I can't think of anymore. I think all of the other ones you could find just have a name, but they're not really celebrated. You've got things like National Chip Day, I'm sure, and stuff like that. Nobody knows when they are.

You've got Pi Day, which is March the 14th, 3.14. Again, not really celebrated, but maybe should be. Maybe we should all eat pie that day because pie is pretty delicious. But yeah, nothing else.

17:00 If you're enjoying the podcast, but you'd like to get more out of it, check out the Podcast Course. Every podcast episode has been made into a full lesson with vocabulary, grammar, and listening exercises. You don't want to miss it. Click the link in the description.

IN CONCLUSION

Now, let's focus on today's vocabulary. There was actually a theme with the vocab today. I used a lot of phrasal verbs with up.

The first one was 'fry up', which means to cook something quickly in oil. If you remember, I talked about pancakes and how we make them. I said that we just fry it up. Or another example could be, "She fried up some vegetables for dinner".

Our next phrasal verb with up is 'use up', which means to finish something completely. Again, with the pancakes, I said that the point was to use up all the
18:00 bad ingredients in your house. Or you could say, "We've used up all of the printer paper".

Our next one is 'give up'. And 'give up' doesn't just mean to stop trying. It can also mean to just stop doing something. So, I said, "You might give up junk food for Lent". Or you could say, you know, "Don't give up on your goals".

Our next phrasal verb is 'set up', which means to organise or arrange something. So, when I talked about Bonfire Night, I said that local councils will set up community bonfires. Or to use it in a totally different context, you could say, "I need to set up a meeting with my manager".

And our last piece of vocab today is 'box up'. And that means to put things in
19:00 boxes. I talked about Boxing Day and how it might mean to box things up and give them to charity. You've probably boxed up things before, especially if you've ever moved. Perhaps you boxed up your books before moving house.

And if you would like to learn more vocabulary as well as get listening practice and target language practice, then you can do that in the Podcast Course. I highly, highly recommend it. There are lessons for every single podcast episode. If you'd like to check that out, there's a link in the description.

By the way, guys, I would love to hear from you. What are some holidays that you celebrate in your country? Maybe something that we don't celebrate in other countries. I think that would be an interesting conversation. Let me know in the comments.

I'd also like to thank my dedicated members. That's Alina, Deisy, and Marcela.

20:00 These guys get a free conversation class with me every month. So, if you want to get a free class with these guys and me, then just click the link in the description and become a dedicated member today.

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