

**Kedves Olvasó!**

Az Új Szó és a British Council együttműködésében hat héten keresztül – a SME napilapban korábban sikeresen megjelentetett - angol nyelvtanfolyamot közlünk 12 lelkében. Hetente kétszer – csütörtökön és szombaton – ezen az oldalon érdekes témákat talál, melyek segítségével nemcsak szókincset bővítheti, hanem angol nyelvtani tudását is tökéletesítheti. Minden lecke egy kvíz kérdést is tartalmaz. Ha 2008. május 29-ig a [quiz@britishcouncil.sk](mailto:quiz@britishcouncil.sk) e-mail címre elküldi mind a 12 helyes választ, átruházható tanfolyamot illetve nyelvtankönyveket és szótárakat nyerhet. A játékot 2008. június 2-án értékeljük ki. A játékszabályokról és a díjakról a [www.britishcouncil.sk](http://www.britishcouncil.sk) címen talál további információkat.

Reading Article

## Black sheep and the mysterious Uncle Bob

I'm an English teacher working in Russia, and for some reason I really don't like that classroom topic - Talk About Your Family. Perhaps it's because everyone studied English from the same book at school. So all the students say, "My family consists of five members. Me, my mother, my father, my brother and my dog..." And so on. As if all families are exactly the same.

It's such a shame, because our families are unique. All families have their stories, their dramas, their private jokes, nicknames and phrases. They're the place where our personalities were made. How often have you heard someone with young children complain "Oh no, I think I'm turning into my parents...?"

The other day I found myself turning into one of my grandparents. I was trying to get my daughter (1 year and 8 months old) to eat her dinner and I said "That'll make your hair curl." Now, I don't think that green vegetables give you curly hair, or even that curly hair is a great thing to have. It's just a phrase I heard from my Granddad a hundred times when I was small. It had stayed in my mind, half-forgotten, until the time I could use it myself. I wonder if he heard it from his own grandparents? How many other old-fashioned phrases like this stay inside families, when the rest of the world has forgotten them?

**Shaking the family tree**

Talk about your family? "Well...they're just there", we say. Our families are so ordinary

**History in miniature**

Start someone talking about their family stories and they might never stop. You'll

to us that we even think they're boring. Not a bit of it! Families are the most exotic things on earth. If you dig enough in your own family, you're sure to come up with all the stuff you could want for a great novel. Surprising characters, dramatic or funny stories passed down for generations, or a face from the past you recognise - maybe in your own. Someone or something unique to your family. Or, as genealogists like to say, "Shake your family tree - and watch the nuts fall out."

My mother started tracing our family tree a few years ago, not expecting to get far. But, digging in old records and libraries she got back three hundred years. She turned up old stories and a few mysteries. What happened to the big family farm? Where did the family fortune go in the 1870s? More to the point - where is it now?

I'm the traveller in my family, and I like to think I got it from a great-grandfather on my Dad's side. He was an adventurous soul. My two favourite family heirlooms are a photo of him on a horse in a desert landscape (1897 in Patagonia) and a postcard home from Portugal complaining that his boat was late because of the Revolution in Lisbon. "Dreadful business, they seem to have arrested the King..." he says. If you look at your family, you open a window on the past.

find the whole history of your country there, too. When my mother, still putting the family tree together, asked me for a few names from my Russian wife's family, my wife got on the phone to her own mother. Just to check a name or two. But they were still talking an hour later, and she'd filled 5 pages of A4 paper. And so I was introduced to: someone who lived through the siege of Leningrad (but forgot how to read in the process), a high official in the Communist Party, and some rich relations who used to go to Switzerland for their holidays before the Revolution. There was also a black sheep of the family (or "white crow" as they say in Russian) who left his wife and children and disappeared in the Civil War - though nobody in the family knows which side he fought on. All these people seemed impossibly exotic to me.

**Who wears the trousers?**

To go back to that English class then, let's get rid of the phrase "my family consists of..." and look at some more interesting ways to talk about families. English is rich in idioms to talk about family life. We've mentioned the black sheep of the family - that's someone who didn't fit in, or caused a family scandal. If you're loyal to your family, you can say blood is thicker than water or keep it in the family. If you share a talent with another family member, you can say it runs in the family. You might have your father's

eyes or your mother's nose. If you're like one of your parents, you can say like father, like son or you can be a chip off the old block.

Who wears the trousers in your family? (Who's the head of your family?) You might affectionately talk about your bro, your sis or your folks (parents). Or if you like Cockney slang, what about her indoors or the missus to talk about your wife? Though both these phrases make feminists reach for their guns.

If you want to get more technical, you can discuss the benefits of the nuclear family: a small family, just parents and children living in the same house. If grandparents or other relatives live there too, then you have an extended family. In English we talk about the average nuclear family with the phrase 2.4 children.

Then there are idioms that have left the family (flown the nest) and gone on to have a life of their own. You can't teach your grandmother to suck eggs. It means you can't tell your elders anything they don't know already. But why would anyone want to suck eggs anyway? Now here's a really strange one. A Londoner is telling someone how to get a new passport. "Get four pictures taken, pick up a form in the post office, hand it in with your old passport and ...Bob's your uncle." It means "the problem is solved". But I'd love to know who the original Bob was, and why he was such a useful uncle to have.

Vocabulary

5 words/phrases from the text

- nickname:** a name that substitutes one's real name
- old-fashioned:** of a style that is no longer in fashion
- fortune:** great amount of money and riches
- heirloom:** a family possession handed down through generations
- scandal:** disgraceful action

Vocabulary

Vocabulary gap fill. Now use the 5 words/phrases to fill the gaps in the sentences below:

- This ring was made in 1850, it's an ..... passed on from mother to daughter.
- His name is John but his ..... is curly because of his hair.
- Mum, those shoes are ..... can't I have some nice fashionable ones please?
- Tom's father lost the family's ..... in a card game and they have been poor ever since.
- The minister resigned after a ..... involving illegal drugs.

Reading Comprehension

Answer the 5 questions using information from the article.

- Why doesn't the writer like the topic of families in an English class?
- What is the writer's opinion of families?
- What did the writer inherit from his great-grandmother?
- What do Russians call a family member who is out of favour?
- How many children does the average British family have?

Grammar

### Future Plans

We use different verb forms to talk about our plans for the future - depending on what kind of plan it is.

**will**

We use **will** to talk about plans decided at the moment of speaking.

*I forgot to phone my mum. I'll do it after dinner. He decides to phone his mum when she is speaking - she didn't have a plan.  
I can't decide what to wear tonight. I know. I'll wear my black dress.  
There's no milk in the fridge. I'll buy some when I go to the shops.*

**going to**

We use **going to** to talk about plans decided before the moment of speaking.

*I'm going to phone my mum after dinner. I told her I'd call at 8 o'clock. He decided to phone his mum before he speaks - he already had a plan.  
I'm going to wear my black dress tonight. I need to pick it up from the cleaners.  
I know there's no milk. I'm going to get some. It's on my shopping list.*

**present continuous**

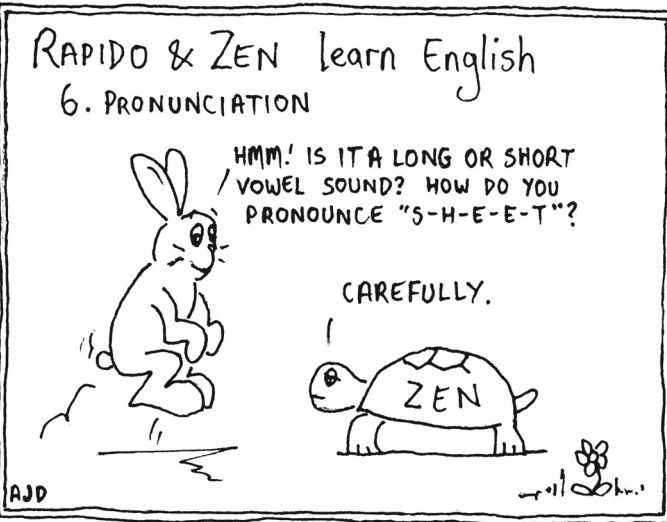
We can also use the **present continuous** to talk about future plans. We usually use it when the plan is an 'arrangement' - more than one person is involved and we know the time and place.

*I'm meeting Jane at 8 o'clock on Saturday.  
We're having a party next Saturday. Would you like to come?  
Are you doing anything interesting this weekend? We often use the present continuous to ask about people's future plans.*

Exercise

Complete the sentences with an appropriate form of the verb in brackets.

- It's really hot in here. I (open) a window.
- It's Emma's birthday tomorrow. I (bake) her a cake.
- I'd love to go out with you tomorrow but I (go) to the cinema with James.
- I want to do more with my free time. I know! I think I (start) taking French lessons.
- I (have) my hair cut on Saturday morning. I (have) it cut really short.



**Family - black sheep - key**  
**Vocabulary** 1. heirloom, 2. nickname, 3. old-fashioned, 4. fortune, 5. scandal  
**Comprehension** 1. Because students always say the same thing, 2. He thinks families are exotic, 3. He inherited a love of travel, 4. A white cow, 5. 2.4  
**Grammar** 1. will/ll open, 2. am/ll going to bake, 3. am/ll going to have, 4. will/ll start, 5. am/ll having



### Megrendelőlap

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Részletes információk a [www.britishcouncil.sk](http://www.britishcouncil.sk) honlapon. British Council, Panská 17, Pozsony, [info@britishcouncil.sk](mailto:info@britishcouncil.sk)