

St Augustine's Centre, Halifax, UK
English for Life in the UK

Season 2 - Episode 12 - Things to do during lockdown
January/February 2021

(Music)

Mark Hello, and welcome to the podcast of **English for Life in the UK**. Today, we're going to follow on from last week's episode where we were talking about the Coronavirus and the vaccines and we did a little bit about how to look after yourself, during lockdown. We decided - because we'd got lots of ideas - of our own, but also from other people, about what they've been doing during lockdown - that we'd do a whole episode on it. So today we're going to share with you, some ideas we've got, some things we know other people are doing, including some of our students, during lockdown, to keep themselves busy, to look after themselves and to keep working at their English - to improve their English, as well.

So - lots of ideas like that. And I'm joined today - the same as last week actually - by Phoebe and Christine. Christine - how're you today?

Christine I'm very well, Mark and I've had a busy day. I've been knocking on neighbours' doors, because we're collecting money for people in our local post office who're retiring, after 35 years, so we're all clubbing together¹ to get them a farewell present. So that's what I've been doing.

Mark That's great. And also - Phoebe. Phoebe - how are you?

Phoebe I'm good, thank you. I've had a very busy week, at work, this week, so I'm looking forward to relaxing at the weekend.

Mark That's great. That's great. OK. So we're going to throw lots of things at you, in terms of ideas, for things you can do, and Phoebe - I think you're going to kick us off².

Phoebe Yes. Well, the first thing I was going to suggest is something I do myself and I would recommend - and it's listening to the radio and listening to podcasts. If you have a radio, you can tune in for free. There's lots of great channels. I like to listen to the radio while I'm working, but it's good because you can have some talk, but can also listen to some music as well. So, that might be good for some of our listeners who are learning English, and if you are in the UK, can download the BBC Sounds App from your 'phone and just search for BBC Sounds. And they have all the BBC radio stations that are

¹ clubbing together = contributing to a joint/shared fund - usually, between friends or members of the same club - to buy an agreed treat.

² kick us off = make a start, as in football, for example

available in the UK and any programme that they air³ on the radio, is also on the App, and you can listen to it whenever you want.

One programme I listen to is *Woman's Hour*, and this is usually on at 10.00 am in the morning, but if I'm working I can't listen, so I listen later. And I like *Woman's Hour*, because it has such a range of topics; they might be talking about the news, or something topical - for example, you know, they've probably been talking a lot about the election in America, recently. And they talk about changes that are happening in the UK - very interesting interviews, with fascinating people, who might be artists or writers or actors or activists. Honestly, there's such a diverse range.

(3 minutes: 51 seconds)

Mark I think it's important to say as well, although it's called *Woman's Hour*, actually, I listen to it quite regularly, and there are lots of things of interest to men, as well, so ... and, of course, just listening to the news, on the radio, you will find that difficult, depending on your level of English. But don't feel you need to understand everything. If you can just pick up the gist of what's happening - the idea of what's being said, and a few key words, and just let the English language flow over you a little bit. I think radio is very good for that.

Phoebe Yes - and if you listen through certain apps - for example - on Spotify, you can slow down the podcast that you're listening to, which is really helpful, if you're still learning English.

And so, related to the radio, is also TV, which is obviously a fantastic way to relax and if you're wanting to learn some English, watch the TV that is spoken in English. Obviously, there is so much available - one programme I would recommend is *The Great British Bake Off*, and this is a "reality TV"⁴ show. It's a competition between ten bakers and, every week, they bake three different things and it's fun to watch, because I love cooking and baking, and it always makes me hungry.

Christine I love it too - I really enjoy watching that. They're so kind to each other. It's not like a competition, where they're vying⁵ against each other - they seem ... everybody seems to help each other.

Mark We've had quite a few suggestions from some of our students and listeners about things they've been listening to. And so, this is people whose English is not necessarily well-developed, but they have still enjoyed listening ... sorry, watching certain TV

³ air = broadcast

⁴ reality TV = programming that features 'ordinary' people, who are not paid celebrities or known personalities, or "stars"

⁵ vying = from the verb "to vie" - be in rivalry/compete with each other

programmes. So - for example - *Poldark* - which is a historical drama, set, I think, in the South West of England, and *Anne with an E* which, I think, is based in America, and one of our students has also been watching *Game of Thrones* which I would have thought was quite difficult, when your English is not well-developed, but he says he's loving it.

Phoebe I think, one of the fantastic things, as well, about watching programmes, in a different language is, it can take you to all these different places. You know, I've never been to America, but I can watch American TV shows and you know, learn more about them. The same with *Poldark* - you know, it's so interesting to see different parts of the UK, in different time periods, as well.

(6:47)

Christine When we're stuck inside for most of the day, I like to watch shows that take me outside. For example, at the moment, they have *Winterwatch* on BBC. It's filmed in different parts of the country, looking at birds and animals and plants. It's really interesting.

I've found myself ... I know I've done quite a lot more reading, during lockdown, than I usually do. I read lot of books and certainly, here in Halifax, in Calderdale, the library is still open and, although it has limited opening [hours], I can go and get books I like and I know one of our students has said they've been reading children's books. And so, although she can't read English very well - so she couldn't manage a full novel - she can manage a children's book, and is thoroughly enjoying that.

As well as reading books, I often download an audio-book because our local library, and most libraries in the UK, as well as offering printed books, they offer electronic books. So, either ones that you can view on a screen or ones that you can listen to - an audio-book. So an e-book is the one on the screen or an audio-book is the one you can listen to. You have to be a member of the library. It's important that you join, but when you've got your membership card, you can just download an App. All the instructions are there on the library website, what to do. I downloaded an App to my 'phone, in fact, and then, I can just search the catalogue and choose e-books to read, or audio books to listen to.

Phoebe I think this time that we have now, at home, can also be an opportunity for us to try new things, or maybe try things we haven't done for a while. I think it's a great time to sort of be a bit more creative, as well. I, for example, have got more time now for cooking, which I love to do; and I like to try different foods from different cuisines around the world and a couple of websites I use, that I would recommend to any listeners who enjoy cooking - are the BBC Good Food website, which has a fantastic range of recipes, and also, sometimes, clips⁶, as well showing you how to make these dishes. I also use a website as well called "Mob Kitchen" - so that's M-O-B - mobkitchen.co.uk and they have such incredible recipes, from around the world.

⁶ clips = short films/videos

Christine That sounds lovely, Phoebe - I'm going to look out for Mob Kitchen. On the BBC one, BBC Good Food: if I find I've got an ingredient, that I'd forgotten about - like, I found this giant celeriac that I'd bought and forgotten about, and I just go to the BBC Good Food website and I type in celeriac recipes and I get a whole selection - it's really good.

(10:11)

Phoebe That's a great idea, Christine - I'm going to do that, next time. And I also follow these websites on social media - you know, on Instagram and FaceBook - and so sometimes, I just see these ideas for new recipes, that I want to try while I'm on social media.

Mark A number of our students have been doing creative things. There are artists amongst them that have been painting and drawing, and sculpting, making things. We've had people who have been doing writing and that was something I want to talk about because it's something I tried. I don't regard myself as necessarily a good writer but I decided to have a go at just writing a little bit about an event from my life - something that was important to me, at a particular stage of my life, and I just sat down and started writing and I found it came quite easily. And I think we would recommend for students, to do that in your own language. It's important that you keep your skills in your own language, obviously. And I think doing some writing in your own language, particularly some biographical stuff - stuff about your own life - and your own experiences, that's a very creative and important thing to do.

Christine I've started - not writing, or not much writing - but actually drawing cartoons. Somebody suggested I do this every day. I just think of something important: first of all, I make a list of five things that I've observed - I've seen - that day, then I pick one of them and draw a picture of it and very, very quickly, only in three or four minutes.

Phoebe That's such a good idea, Christine. Because I feel like I'm not a great artist myself, but if I do want to do some drawing, I never know what to draw. So that's such a great way to think of something to draw.

(12:15)

Christine And the drawings are just for me and they're not meant to be great drawings, they're just meant to remind me of happy times, during the day, so I love that.

Mark One of the other areas which we mentioned last week, is it's important to keep active to do some things that are good for your health and that keep you fit. We know that lots of people go regularly for walks. That's important. We live in an area ... we're lucky to live in an area that's surrounded by beautiful countryside, so it's possible to do that, but even if you're just walking around the roads and observing what's happening and the changes in the seasons. Most people will have some kind of sporting activity that they could do. Running is obviously a thing you can do. Cycling, if you've got a bike, or could get hold of a bike. We've had a scheme at the St Augustine's Centre where we've been getting old bikes and reconditioning them and then giving them out to people who want to go cycling.

And then there's a lot of exercise you can do in your own home and there are lots of websites that show you how to do daily exercise. To do Yoga - I, for example, do a ten-minute Yoga everyday - Pilates, other things of that sort.

Christine I do something called *Qigong* each week - a Chinese exercise - really love it - it's supposed to keep me very healthy. But I pay for that - that's something ... I had ... I used to go to a *Qigong* class before. But many things are available on-line - free of charge.

Phoebe I've been doing free Yoga through an app called *Down Dog*. And they also have a range of apps for meditation, they have one for Pilates and they have made their app free until, I think, until the end of February. Tell the app how easy or difficult you want the yoga to be, so mine will definitely be at the beginners' level.

Christine A lot of exercises also on television - I know Joe Wicks - he's become quite famous - he does regular exercises, initially for children, for school children, but also he does some for adults, each week.

One thing I find I've been finding difficult in lockdown, is not spending time with other people and I want to do that. So, during this last year, every Saturday night, I would invite a group of friends to come with me to a, ... say the theatre, or say the cinema, just to do something - then we'd each either watch a film, or the National Theatre put out free productions - on-line productions of plays - and so we would watch that on a Saturday night. But that ... We'd do that, each in our own homes. But then we'd agree at such a time, after we'd watched it, we'd meet up in a Zoom⁷ room. It was as though we'd been out together, because we'd talk about what we thought of the film or the play, or whatever it was, that we'd watched. I really enjoyed it.

With a group of friends who I usually meet - we would meet up every week, in a Zoom room again, and take turns to be the quiz master - so somebody would come with questions or pictures. It was good fun, just spending time with a group of friends.

(16:07)

Mark So let's finish with just a few other ideas of things that people could be doing. One of the things is, because at the moment, schools are not open in this country, or not for most children anyway, the BBC has been putting on-line lots of educational lessons - so lessons in all sorts of subjects - science, and the arts and history, and all sorts and because they're at different age levels, for those of you who are learning English and are at a particular level - you could probably find some on-line lessons that were at an appropriate level of English for you. So that was one suggestion that I got.

Christine Good idea, Mark. They have a whole range of programmes and they're usually produced very well. I heard from somebody who was, everyday, taking a photograph of the same plant. I think it was a tree. And just watching it come into bud. Watching it

⁷ zoom is an app and software which allows you to meet a number of people by video on-line.

change through the seasons, and I think I might do that. I might just take a picture from my window everyday, and see how the weather changes and see - ... I have a garden, or I have some plants at least, and I can see a hillside, on the other side - and see how that changes day to day. I'd like to do that.

Mark Another activity that I like to do is stargazing. It's not that I'm an expert in knowing about which stars are which and planets - but I think when you've got clear skies, just spending 5 or 10 minutes watching the sky and seeing again, noticing the differences over time, what changes. And obviously, related to that, watching sunsets and sunrises; and watching the moon change its size and shape, over the seasons, that's an activity that I find quite restful and gives me a nice calm feeling when I'm doing that.

Christine One thing you can do, in shops - instead of buying vegetables, you can buy seeds. In our local whole food shop, you can buy seeds for sprouting and if you buy these seeds and put them in water - and change the water everyday - you can watch them grow, come into full plants if you let them, but you can eat them as they're still seedlings - shoots - bean shoots, and they're quite delicious.

Mark One of our students said they'd done that with something called snow peas - not sure I know what they are, but they - they were able to watch them grow - actually see them grow, day by day, change. That's seemed a nice idea to me.

Phoebe Well, there's been so many ideas there that we've shared - definitely a few that I might take up myself, as well. So it would be good to hear. Yeah - listeners: if you ... let us know what you've been getting up to and if you take up any of our ideas - if you start growing some snow peas - let us know.

You can email us - englishforlifeintheuk@gmail.com and if you missed any of these ideas, and you want to go back - you can look out for all the transcripts on our website which is : staugustinescentrehalifax.org.uk All the podcast transcripts are available there and we'll include the links as well to some of the websites that we've mentioned, and TV programmes - apologies they might not work all around the world. So you may have to google some things.

Mark Yeah. That's great, Phoebe - thank you. These activities are things that we would recommend you do in your own language. Some of the ones are ones where you would be able to practice your English. And we wish you well with all of that. The most important thing is that you look after yourselves, during this time.

(Music) (20:35)

Mark As a bonus section for this week's podcast I have interviewed one of our students about what he's been doing during the lockdown.

Arsalan Good afternoon, my name is Arsalan Ghasemi and I'm from Iran. I have been in the UK one year and six months.

Mark We've been discussing this week what people have been doing during this difficult period where everybody's locked down and can't do very much. So tell us what have you been doing to keep yourself busy and keep yourself well.

Arsalan Well, to be honest, I see this time as an opportunity to improve my English so during lockdown I have been taking English class with the St Augustine's, like on-line grammar class and "Life in the UK" classes and, sometimes, I watch videos on [the] YouTube channel like *English with Lucy* and *English with Misa*. There are a lot of videos, if you want, about everything in English. As well, I listen to podcasts - as you know - the podcast [you] make [made] by your group, Mark - it's amazing! I have to say we all appreciate it, because it's very useful.

Mark And I think - have you been doing some volunteering at the Centre?

Arsalan Yes, of course - I'm a teacher's assistant, with Helen, for Beginners' English class. I have done some carpentering [carpentry] work for the centre, St Augustine's Centre.

Mark That's great - we really appreciate your involvement, Arsalan - it's brilliant. What about keeping yourself fit and healthy? Is there anything you've been doing for that?

Arsalan Yes - absolutely. You know if we ... **how can I say?** ... we really get depressed, if we do not keep ourself busy, during the lockdown and that's why I do exercise. I run for an hour, four to five days a week. As we say, this is a proverb: **if I'm not mistaken**, we say : 'A sound⁸ mind in a sound body'.

Mark Very good. Very good, Arsalan - that's a good example of you - your improving English. That's brilliant. Listen - thank you very much, Arsalan. Thank you for your time.

(Music) (24:00)

Mark **Language Support**

This week I'm just going to pick on a couple of things that Arsalan said during my interview with him.

He wasn't quite sure how to say something. He said: "**how can I say it?**" and then he went on and said it. And then later, when he was trying to tell me a proverb, he said "**if I'm not mistaken**", and then he said it. So those are two good examples of how you can let the person you're talking to, know that you're not quite sure you've got it right, but you hope that you have.

⁸ sound = sound has several meanings; here, it means 'free from damage or weakness', (i.e. adjective); the most common use of "sound" is as a noun, meaning "a noise"

So - "**how can I say it?**" or "**if I'm not mistaken**" and then say what it is you wanted to say, so I thought I'd add a few more that you could use like that.

You could say, "**I'm not sure how to say this but ...** " and then you can say, have a go at saying, what it is you want to say.

And obviously, if somebody says something to you that you don't understand, then you can always say:

"Could you say that again, please?"

"Sorry I didn't understand that"

"Sorry I didn't get that"

All of those are ways of just making the person realise that you didn't completely understand. You could also say:

"could you say that again, more slowly, please?"

- so you're asking them to slow down - or:

"could you repeat that, please, a little more slowly?"

Any of those are good and acceptable ways for you to just help yourself and help the other person you're talking to, know where you're at, with your language.

So I hope that's helpful. That's it for this week. We'll be with you again, very soon.

Goodbye for now, Stay safe.

(Music) (end) (26:40)

Websites referred to in the podcast include:

<https://www.bbc.co.uk/sounds>

BBC Woman's Hour - <https://www.bbc.co.uk/programmes/b007qlvb>

<https://thegreatbritishbakeoff.co.uk/>

BBC Winterwatch - <https://www.bbc.co.uk/programmes/p012msk2>

BBC Good Food - <https://www.bbcgoodfood.com/>

<https://www.mobkitchen.co.uk/>

<https://www.downdoggyoga.com/>

Education on the BBC - <https://www.bbc.co.uk/bitesize>

<https://englishwithlucy.co.uk/a>