
BBC LEARNING ENGLISH

6 Minute English

What your lunch says about you



This is not a word-for-word transcript

Dan

Hello and welcome to 6 Minute English – the show that brings you an interesting topic, authentic listening practice and six items of incredibly useful vocabulary. I'm Dan...

Neil

And I'm Neil. In this programme we'll be discussing the lovely topic of lunch – and what our lunch choices say about us. So, Dan, what are you doing for lunch today?

Dan

Ah Neil, are you asking me to join you? I'd love to, thanks. There's this great little Vietnamese place we have to check out, right next to the office if you just...

Neil

Ah, actually – I was just asking to... open up today's topic. Sorry. You see, I've brought a sandwich.

Dan

Oh, a sandwich. Again! How dull. Well, you're not the only one – a survey from 2012 showed a third of Britons eat exactly the same thing for lunch – every day! And yes, it's mostly sandwiches.

Neil

I had a curry yesterday.

Dan

Well, it's almost lunchtime so we'd better get on with our question, which is: how long is the average lunch break in the UK? Is it:

- a) An hour and a half
- b) 45 minutes
- c) 25 minutes

Neil

Oh, I wish it was an hour and a half, but I'm pretty sure it must be c) 25 minutes

Dan

Well, we'll find out if you're right... just before lunch! All this talk of lunch is actually making me feel a bit **peckish**.

Neil

Peckish is a great word isn't it – it's a slang word for being a bit hungry. Feeling peckish, Dan?

Dan

I am now. Now, about you and your sandwiches Neil. Two slices of bread with filling might be the most popular British lunch choice, but it didn't use to be that way. Listen to food writer Bee Wilson. Which adjective does she use to describe sandwiches?

INSERT

Bee Wilson, Author

They were what you had in an emergency. They were what you had on a long train journey. It was a kind of **makeshift** lunch when you couldn't get anything better.

Dan

So – sandwiches had humble origins as **makeshift** meals. **Makeshift** describes something temporary and low quality – a solution you create when you can't do anything better.

Neil

I can't help feel this is all getting a little personal, Dan.

Dan

There's a sometimes very practical reason to eat a sandwich – like on a train. On a weekday in the office though, there's no excuse.

Neil

If you worked as hard as I did, Dan – you'd only have time for a sandwich!

Dan

Which is just what Bee Wilson was saying – we treat lunchtime as if it were an emergency. It says something about our attitude to work and food in the UK. Next, let's hear from philosopher Julian Baggini with his view on eating the same thing every day.

Neil

And let's teach one more word first – **utilitarian**. It describes something practical and useful, rather than attractive.

INSERT

Julian Baggini, Philosopher

What lunch says about us is that we're still very much stuck in this kind of quite functional, you know, efficient, **utilitarian** attitude of how we should construct our daily lives; and that for all our **embrace** of this great food culture and everything, we haven't managed to make that an everyday thing – it remains something for the special occasions.

Neil

So – he thinks we live in a world where we value being efficient – where we have a functional, **utilitarian** attitude to life.

Dan

Exactly, we're aware of a great food culture, we **embrace** this culture – but only for special occasions.

Neil

Yes – let's look at that word **embrace**. It normally means this... let me just...

Dan

Oh Neil, I didn't know you cared. Neil just hugged me, wrapped his arms around me, **embraced** me.

Neil

Just as we can **embrace** physical things and people – we can also **embrace** ideas.

Dan

Here's an idea I **embrace**, Neil. We should all **embrace** new foods. **Broaden our horizons**.

Neil

To **broaden our horizons** means 'to open our minds and experience new things'.

Dan

Let me **broaden your horizons** right now. Experts from Cornell University say it leads to better **team spirit** if colleagues eat together.

Neil

OK, I get the picture. I should ditch my sandwich and eat with you. In the name of **team spirit** – that is – getting on well with team members – having a feeling of belonging.

Dan

Finally. Vietnamese?

Neil

Oh yes, but not before you tell me the answer to today's question. How long do Brits take for lunch?

Dan

Well the answer was c) 25 minutes. That comes from a survey done by the BBC this year to find out about our modern dining habits.

Neil

25 minutes? It's a crying shame, Dan. But before we have lunch ourselves, let's run over the vocab one more time.

Dan

First up we had **peckish**. It means 'hungry – just a little hungry'. I'm feeling rather **peckish** at the moment, you?

Neil

I think I've gone beyond **peckish**, Dan. Roll on lunch. Next?

Dan

We had **makeshift** – which describes a temporary or low quality solution. For example, last week my team's goalkeeper was sick, so I had to replace him as a **makeshift** goalie.

Neil

Or, another example – when I was a student I used the steel bin in my room as a **makeshift** drum.

Dan

I'm sure the neighbours loved that. Now what about this word **utilitarian**? In the context we used it, it means 'simple and functional, rather than beautiful'.

Neil

Do you think it would be fair to describe your polo shirt as **utilitarian**?

Dan

I prefer classic and timeless. Please.

Neil

But enough of all this banter. You know, I believe we should all just get along.

Dan

Oh, are you going to hug me again? To **embrace** me?

Neil

Not this time, let's stick with the metaphorical meaning – 'to accept a new belief or idea'.

Dan

For example, I wasn't sure about the new website design, but now I fully **embrace** it.

Neil

Very nice. And I **embrace** your suggestion that colleagues should eat together.

Dan

It looks like you've **broadened your horizons**.

Neil

Well, when I taught English in Spain, Japan, Poland and the Czech Republic, it really **broadened my horizons** and taught me about new ways of life. How about you?

Dan

Yes, they say travel broadens the mind – it certainly **broadened my horizons** too.

Neil

Even better – why don't we go travelling together – with the whole Learning English team?

Dan

Yeah! That would be wonderful for **team spirit** –the good feeling of being together. Maybe to Cambodia?

Neil

It certainly would. And that's the end of today's 6 Minute English. Please join us again soon, after our delicious lunch!

Dan

And we are on social media too. Make sure to visit our Facebook, Twitter, Instagram and YouTube pages.

Both

Bye!