



English Learning for Curious Minds



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Episode #102

Daylight Saving Time

30th Oct, 2020

[00:00:00] Hello, hello hello, and welcome to English Learning for Curious Minds, by Leonardo English.

[00:00:11] The show where you can listen to fascinating stories, and learn weird and wonderful things about the world at the same time as improving your English.

[00:00:21] I'm Alastair Budge and today we are going to be talking about Daylight Saving Time.

[00:00:29] Depending on what country you live in, last Saturday evening, or Sunday morning, the last Sunday in October, the clocks might have gone back one hour.

[00:00:40] Your mornings are now a little lighter, but it gets dark an hour earlier.

[00:00:46] So today's episode is going to talk about the history of Daylight Saving Time, why do the clocks change twice a year, why some people love it, why others hate it, and how long is this system going to go on for.



Daylight Saving Time

[00:01:03] Before we get right into that though, let me quickly remind you that you can get all of the bonus episodes, plus the subtitles, the transcript, and the key vocabulary for this episode and all of our other ones over on the website, which is leonardoenglish.com.

[00:01:20] This is also where you can also check out becoming a member of Leonardo English, and join a community of curious minds from all over the world, doing meetups, exchanging ideas, and generally, improving their English in a more interesting way.

[00:01:35] So if that's of interest, and I certainly hope it is, then the place to go to is leonardoenglish.com.

[00:01:43] OK then, time, and specifically, Daylight Saving Time.

[00:01:49] The clock is, of course, a man-made invention, but time isn't.

[00:01:55] The earth turns around on itself every day, but it's us that decided to put [labels¹](#) on how far around the Earth has turned, and to call the time that the sun is in the middle of the sky 'midday', 12pm, and to split the day up into different units of time.

¹ a word or phrase used to describe something



Daylight Saving Time

[00:02:16] In [agrarian](#)² societies, societies that were dominated by farming, what the time was, or what the clock said, didn't matter so much. You did things at the best time to do them.

[00:02:29] Chickens wake up when the sun gets up, animals don't care whether you call that time 4am or 4pm.

[00:02:39] But measuring time in hours has been in existence since the Ancient Romans and Ancient Greeks, way before the invention of the mechanical clock, which came at the start of the 14th century.

[00:02:54] For the Romans, who kept time with water clocks, there were always 12 hours in the day, no matter how many minutes of sunlight there actually were.

[00:03:06] In the summer when there were more than 12 hours of sunlight, an hour would be shorter than 60 minutes, and in the winter when there were fewer than 12 sunlight hours, there would be more than 60 minutes in an hour.

[00:03:23] This meant that there were always 12 hours of daylight, but hours were different lengths.

[00:03:30] Confusing, right?

² relating to farming



Daylight Saving Time

[00:03:32] As societies started to move away from everyone working in the fields, and appointments needed to be made and kept, there was the need for a better official system of [timekeeping](#)³.

[00:03:47] The time used to be set in each town.

[00:03:51] One person would be responsible for measuring when the sun was in the middle of the sky, and would set the town's clock as 'noon', as 'midday'. Then that person would go around and set everyone else's clocks [accordingly](#)⁴.

[00:04:08] But of course a big problem with this was that every town had its own different mini time zone. 12pm in one town was different to 12pm in a town just 100 km to the east or west, which made arranging things difficult when you were dealing with anyone who wasn't in the same place as you.

[00:05:03] In the United States, for example, as the rail network expanded across the country the train stations had to observe 75 different time zones.

[00:05:15] It wasn't until 1876 that a Scottish-born Canadian, a man called Sir Sanford Fleming, suggested that there should be a worldwide system of time zones.

³ the system of keeping the time

⁴ as a result of something



Daylight Saving Time

[00:05:27] Each 15 degree [slice](#)⁵ of the Earth would be split into a different hourly time zone, so there would be 24 different time zones, making life a lot easier for everyone.

[00:05:07] 15 times 24 equals 360 and there are of course 360 degrees.

[00:05:45] By 1900 almost every country had adopted this system, splitting the world into different areas that observed one of the 24 different time zones.

[00:05:58] There were a few [exceptions](#)⁶.

[00:05:28] India, for example, uses a 30 minute [offset](#)⁷, they don't exactly fit within the 1 hour time zone.

[00:05:36] So, that is how the world got split up into time zones, but there was another problem for some countries further away from the equator, where the amount of sunlight varies greatly depending on whether it's summer or winter.

[00:05:52] As the Earth is on an angle, it's not directly straight, this 23.5 degree angle causes us to have seasons - it means that the further away you are from the equator, the near or further you are away from the sun based on what month you're in.

[00:06:10] I'm sure you know this, but the consequence of this that is relevant to us today is about the amount of daylight that countries get based on the time of the year.

⁵ a thin piece

⁶ something that isn't included in a rule

⁷ the difference from the main time zone



Daylight Saving Time

[00:06:22] Countries in the Northern Hemisphere get more daylight in the summer months, and less daylight in the winter months, and the further north or south you go, the more extreme this is.

[00:06:35] If you live near the equator you've probably never really experienced this, but I have family from right at the north of Scotland, and I can assure you that it is quite weird to go out for a walk in the moonlight at 4pm in December, and in the same place to be able to read your book by sunlight at 10pm in June.

[00:06:59] Given that businesses, schools, and general life was operating by the clock, with fixed starting and ending hours to the day's activities, during the summer months in the Northern hemisphere people would get up after the sun was up, in effect sleeping while there was perfectly good daylight to be had.

[00:07:21] Various different people had proposed the idea of doing something about this, of changing the clocks during the summer months to allow for more time after work for [leisure](#)⁸ activities.

[00:07:35] In fact, the actual idea of putting the clocks forward in summer, and then back in winter was proposed by two men at roughly the same time, but on opposite sides of the world.

⁸ time when you aren't working



Daylight Saving Time

[00:07:49] George Hudson was in New Zealand, and he was a [keen](#)⁹ collector of insects.

He thought that by [shifting](#)¹⁰ the clocks forward in summer people like him would be able to have more [leisure](#) time outside to do things like collect insects.

[00:08:07] Meanwhile in Britain a man called William Willet, who is strangely enough the great great grandfather of the lead singer of the band Coldplay, he was reportedly a [keen](#) golfer and he noticed the same thing.

[00:08:23] In the summer he would often have to stop playing golf because it got dark, but most people were still asleep when the sun came up.

[00:08:33] How about just moving the clocks forward during the summer [to make the most](#)¹¹ of the daylight?

[00:08:40] Note that these proposals were both made by people quite far away from the equator - for anyone who lives close to the equator, this just isn't a [phenomenon](#)¹² that you experience.

[00:08:53] Their proposals soon started to [catch on](#)¹³, and the first city to observe Daylight Saving Time was Port Arthur in Ontario, Canada.

⁹ very interested, wanting to do something a lot

¹⁰ moving

¹¹ to get the greatest advantage from something

¹² something that exists can be felt, especially something that's unusual

¹³ become popular



Daylight Saving Time

[00:09:04] In the spring the clocks would go forward one hour, and in the autumn they would go back, which is what just happened last week.

[00:09:13] At the [outbreak¹⁴](#) of the First World War the Germans adopted Daylight Saving Time as a way of conserving fuel, of saving fuel.

[00:09:23] If there was an hour of extra daylight in the summer months this would mean that they would save coal, as people wouldn't need to burn it to generate power.

[00:09:33] The same logic was soon adopted by most European countries, as well as the US, as they were all looking to conserve energy and focus everything on the war effort.

[00:09:46] When the war ended in 1918 several countries [ditched¹⁵](#) Daylight Saving Time, they got rid of it, [reverting¹⁶](#) to one, single time zone throughout the year, but in the past 100 years it has been [abolished¹⁷](#) and then re adopted by various countries at different times, for different reasons.

[00:10:09] Today, in 2020, some form of Daylight Saving Time is observed by roughly 70 different countries around the world, but it has remained a source of [controversy¹⁸](#).

¹⁴ a time when something starts happening

¹⁵ stopped using

¹⁶ going back

¹⁷ getting rid of, stopping doing

¹⁸ a large amount of disagreement about something



Daylight Saving Time

[00:10:22] Its [proponents](#)¹⁹, the people who support it, say that the extra hour of daylight in the summer is good for our mental and physical health. More daylight hours mean more time for [recreational](#)²⁰ activities, for hobbies, things such as collecting insects or playing golf, or just more traditional activities like playing sports or being outside with friends and family.

[00:10:49] It's also good at keeping down crimes - [assaults](#)²¹, robberies, and so on, which are helped by the cover of darkness.

[00:10:58] The longer evenings are also thought to reduce traffic accidents. If it's easier to see, well, it's easier to avoid other cars and pedestrians.

[00:11:08] Some businesses love it as well. Not just golf courses though - anything that benefits from people having more time to go out in the evening, so shops, restaurants, and so on.

[00:11:20] And the candy industry in America loves it, as it means kids can go out for longer at Halloween.

[00:11:28] So far so good.

[00:11:30] But why the [controversy](#) then?

¹⁹ people who want to do something

²⁰ related to recreation, an activity done for pleasure

²¹ violent attacks



Daylight Saving Time

[00:11:33] Well, the original argument for Daylight Saving Time is no longer really a [factor](#)²².

[00:11:40] Remember, it was to save energy, and nowadays any energy that is saved through having an extra hour where you don't have to turn the lights on in the evening is [outweighed](#)²³ by having an extra hour where hotter places need to use air conditioning.

[00:11:57] Although I should point out that this was never a problem for me in the north of Scotland.

[00:12:02] It's not just that the original 'saving power' argument isn't valid, there are people who are [vehemently](#)²⁴ against it, even nicknaming it 'Daylight Slaving Time'. So, 'slaving' not 'saving'.

[00:12:16] Firstly, just the fact that we have to change is not only a big [annoyance](#)²⁵ for many people. People hate change, and having to adjust to a new time twice a year is a bit [annoying](#)²⁶.

²² an important point, a reason

²³ to be more important (than something else)

²⁴ very strongly

²⁵ something that makes you angry

²⁶ see 'annoyance'



Daylight Saving Time

[00:12:31] The change itself is thought to cause hundreds of millions of dollars in lost [productivity](#)²⁷ - when the clocks go forward in spring people struggle to adjust to getting up an hour earlier.

[00:12:45] It's also dangerous.

[00:12:48] On the Monday after the clocks go forward in spring there is a [spike](#)²⁸ in car accidents, an increase in car accidents, of 17%, and there's an increase of 25% in the number of heart attacks.

[00:13:04] Not great, right?

[00:13:06] Just as there are some industries that are huge [beneficiaries](#)²⁹ of Daylight Saving Time, there are others that hate it.

[00:13:15] TV companies don't like it, because people are outside instead of sitting on their sofa watching TV.

[00:13:23] And farmers, in general, don't like it.

[00:13:26] As we know, animals don't observe Daylight Saving Time, their daily [rhythms](#)³⁰ are based on the sun. If you are a farmer and you used to wake up at 6am,

²⁷ the rate at which workers produce goods

²⁸ sharp increase

²⁹ people or groups who benefit from something happening

³⁰ regular movements



Daylight Saving Time

then one day the clocks go forward, this means you now need to wake up at 5am, because your animals don't care that the clocks have gone forward.

[00:13:48] The further away from the equator you go, the more [acute](#)³¹ the problem is, the more severe the problem is.

[00:13:55] If you need sunlight to do your job then Daylight Saving Time can mean that you end up having to work for an hour longer into the evening. If you have kids that finish school at 4pm let's say, but you were only able to start your day at 10am because the clocks went forward, well you might have one hour less time to spend with them.

[00:14:18] There are constant [proposals](#)³² to change Daylight Saving Time, from getting rid of it altogether to staying on it forever.

[00:14:27] The larger the country, especially the longer it is from North to South, the less sense there is in a '[one-size-fits-all](#)³³' approach.

[00:14:37] If we take the example of the UK, there is a movement to keep Daylight Saving Time for the whole year.

[00:14:45] For the south of England it would probably be fine. In the winter months daylight would start around 9am but the evenings would be longer.

³¹ severe, bad

³² suggestions

³³ suitable for everyone



Daylight Saving Time

[00:14:56] But when it would come to the North of Scotland, the sun wouldn't rise until 10am in the winter.

[00:15:02] This isn't just a [theoretical](#)³⁴ idea; the whole of the UK moved to permanent Daylight Saving Time between the years of 1968 and 1971, but we have since gone back to Daylight Saving Time for the summer, and 'normal', universal, time for the winter.

[00:15:24] For those of you who need to arrange things like phone calls with people in different countries, it can get even more confusing with Daylight Saving Time, and looking at where countries are on the map it doesn't always make a lot of sense.

[00:15:40] Spain is 1 hour ahead of the UK but almost all of the country is to the west of London, where Greenwich Mean Time comes from.

[00:15:50] What happens if I'm in Chile and I need to call Morocco? There are 3 time zones in Chile, the clocks go back 1 hour in April, and Morocco observes Daylight Saving Time all year round, apart from during Ramadan, where the clocks go back so that people observing Ramadan can break their [fast](#)³⁵ 1 hour earlier.

[00:16:11] You can quickly see how this all gets pretty complicated, which is one of the main reasons that there are movements to get rid of it altogether.

³⁴ based on ideas, not reality

³⁵ a fast is a period where you do not eat



Daylight Saving Time

[00:16:22] Indeed, there was an EU [directive](#)³⁶ to get all member countries to either adopt year round Daylight Saving Time or universal time, normal time, and from 2021 all EU countries will have to choose which to go for. Some countries look like they'll go for universal time, winter time, all year round, and others for summer time.

[00:16:49] The UK says it has no plans to get rid of Daylight Saving Time, which could well lead to a time difference between Northern Ireland, which is part of the UK, and the Republic of Ireland, which is not. It would of course be pretty weird to have one small island on two different time zones for half the year, but this is a real possibility.

[00:17:15] Discussions on what to actually do about this have [stalled](#)³⁷, given COVID-19, but there are no easy answers.

[00:17:24] So, you may well have woken up on Sunday morning and [counted your lucky stars](#)³⁸ because you got an extra hour in bed.

[00:17:33] But this change is very controversial, and this may be one of the last years that you have to do it.

[00:17:41] At least you can count yourself lucky that you don't work in one of the residences of the Queen of England.

³⁶ an official instruction

³⁷ stopped using

³⁸ be grateful for being lucky



Daylight Saving Time

[00:17:48] There are reportedly 1000 different clocks in her different palaces around the country and her staff need to go around every one of them in the early morning, twice a year, setting them to the right time.

[00:18:04] You're not going to win any prizes for guessing what they think of Daylight Saving Time.

[00:18:11] OK then, that is it for today's episode on Daylight Saving Time.

[00:18:16] I hope it's been an interesting one, and that you've learnt something new about this change that affects 70 different countries, and that we still haven't really figured out the answer to.

[00:18:27] And as a final reminder, if you are looking to improve your English in a more interesting way, to join a community of curious minds from all over the world, and to unlock the transcripts, subtitles, and key vocabulary, then the place to go is leonardoenglish.com.

[00:18:44] You've been listening to English Learning for Curious Minds, by Leonardo English

[00:18:49] I'm Alastair Budge, you stay safe, and I'll catch you in the next episode.

[END OF PODCAST]



English Learning for Curious Minds | Episode #102

Daylight Saving Time



Key vocabulary

Word

Definition

Labels

a word or phrase used to describe something

Agrarian

relating to farming

Timekeeping

the system of keeping the time

Accordingly

as a result of something

Slice

a thin piece

Exceptions

something that isn't included in a rule

Offset

the difference from the main time zone

Leisure

time when you aren't working

Keen

very interested, wanting to do something a lot

Shifting

moving

To make the most

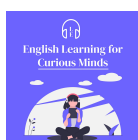
to get the greatest advantage from something

Phenomenon

something that exists can be felt, especially something that's unusual

Catch on

become popular



Daylight Saving Time

Outbreak	a time when something starts happening
Ditched	stopped using
Reverting	going back
Abolished	getting rid of, stopping doing
Controversy	a large amount of disagreement about something
Proponents	people who want to do something
Recreational	related to recreation, an activity done for pleasure
Assaults	violent attacks
Factor	an important point, a reason
Outweighed	to be more important (than something else)
Vehemently	very strongly
Annoyance	something that makes you angry
Annoying	see 'annoyance'
Productivity	the rate at which workers produce goods
Spike	sharp increase



Beneficiaries	people or groups who benefit from something happening
Rhythms	regular movements
Acute	severe, bad
Proposals	suggestions
One-size-fits-all	suitable for everyone
Theoretical	based on ideas, not reality
Fast	a fast is a period where you do not eat
Directive	an official instruction
Stalled	stopped using
Counted your lucky stars	be grateful for being lucky

We'd love to get your feedback on this podcast.

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