

English support
Business House (PO Box 618)
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News & Tips

from

English support

NB: If you received this newsletter by e-mail, it is (hopefully) because you have expressed a wish to do so. If this is not the case, and/or you do not wish to receive it in future – *please let us know!*

No. 49 – December 2008

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Dear friends

We want to thank all our readers for your support and your help in making this fifth year of *English support* the best yet!

The work keeps coming in and we are very conscious of the fact that your recommendation is a major factor in our success. So a big THANK YOU to all of you who have told your friends, work colleagues, bosses and others about us, and a very MERRY CHRISTMAS to you all!



Come and help us celebrate!

English support will be holding an open house arrangement to celebrate our fifth birthday.

The company officially started on 1st January 2004, so strictly speaking our fifth birthday falls on New Year's Day.

But we had this sneaking feeling not many people would be able to come then, so we are holding it three weeks later on **Thursday 22nd January** (by which time they should be over the worst of it).

The programme will include welcome drinks, a little talk on the past five years, a buffet "high tea" (that means standing up in this case) with lots of very English things to eat and drink, a bit of entertainment from "the office staff" (and maybe others), and finally closing remarks on the next five years, before we finish.

So we are very much hoping you'll come and join us! ☺

OPEN HOUSE
An afternoon's entertainment starring
Claire Clausen
Michael de Laine
Lawrence White
(and hopefully others, too)
on
Thursday 22nd January
roughly between the hours of 3 and 6 pm
at
English support
Business House
Jernbanegade 23 B
Roskilde
Denmark
(that's the bit sticking out of the top of Germany)
Please let us know you're coming!

I'm sure there's a moral in there somewhere...

A reader drew my attention to this rather nice story that appeared on the website of the BBC.



All road signs and other public notices in Wales appear in both English and Welsh. So when officials at Swansea Council wanted to put up a road sign barring heavy lorries from a road near a supermarket, they sent off an e-mail asking for the Welsh translation.

A reply came back in Welsh, and they duly set it up on the sign. Unfortunately, what it actually said was: "*I am not in the office at the moment. Please send any work to be translated*".

From the workshop...

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Regard and regards

The fundamental meaning of the verb, *to regard*, is *to look at*, as in “*He regarded her with deep attention*”, but this usage is not very common nowadays, and should be used with extreme care by non-native speakers.

Much more common is the *metaphorical* usage with *as*. Here it means something like *believe to be true*, as in “*He regarded her as beautiful*”. This usage can also be followed by a gerund as in “*She regarded him as having little to say*”. In other words, *as* here is a preposition.

In the same way, the noun, *regard*, is almost only used metaphorically, as in “*His regard was important for me*”, meaning that I wanted him to think well of me. The same idea is present in expressions like “*She was held in high regard*”. And when we say “*Give my regards to*” someone, we are asking for our best wishes and/or greetings to be passed on.

This latter is the sense in the expression, *Best regards*, (with which we might end an informal letter), or the phrase *with (kind) regards to*, which we might use in a letter to send regards to someone.

But please note the quite different expression, *with regard to*, which is a way of referring to something, as in “*With regard to your second point...*”. This is quite formal language, but is usually to be preferred to *regarding*, which (like *concerning*) is much overused by non-native speakers, as noted in *News & Tips* No. 20.

Another expression meaning the same is *as regards*, as in “*As regards your second point...*”, but I cannot recommend it, because it can easily sound rather contemptuous.

Clear, evident and obvious

An explanation, a proof, or a solution can be described as *clear*, *evident* or *obvious* (in the sense of *easy to see or understand*). However, while the word *clear* is reasonably neutral, the other two, especially the word *obvious*, can sound arrogant.

Evidently and obviously

That which is *evident* is also *obvious* (in the sense of *easy to see or understand*), but the adverbial forms, *evidently* and *obviously*, are used in slightly different ways. While the latter contains all the force of the adjective, *evidently* implies the revelation or exposure of something that was *not* obvious earlier. For instance, while Bernie Madoff *evidently* had been lying about his investment strategy for years, he had not been doing so *obviously*. In other words, *evidently* has the sense of “*it turns out to be so, but was not always obvious*”.

Conclusively and in conclusion

These two expressions are different. While *in conclusion* merely introduces the last thing you are going to say, the adjective *conclusive* and the adverb *conclusively* are used when describing a decisive and convincing proof of something.

So while the *concluding* evidence is just evidence given at the end (*in conclusion*), the *conclusive* evidence is what puts an end to all doubt (*conclusively*). So your conclusion may or may not be conclusive. ☺



From the workshop...

A majority of and most of

At first sight, it might seem that these two are the same, but in modern British English *a majority of* is only used with countables. So while we can speak of *a majority of* people, cats or pot plants, we must use *most* when referring to uncountables, as in *most of* the money, information or paint.

Unfortunately, many non-native speakers of English seem very fond of *a majority of*, which is can sound odd with uncountables, is longer than *most of*, and is not necessary at all.

Divide, separate and part

In modern English, the verb *to part* does not mean the same as *to divide*.

The subject of the verb *to divide* is usually the person or thing causing the division, as in the maxim, *divide and conquer*. So you might *divide* a pizza into four pieces. The subject of the verb *to part* is usually at least one of the things that get separated, as in “*They parted good friends*” and “*She did not want to part with the money*”. So when Shakespeare said “*Parting is such sweet sorrow*”, he was not thinking of the joys of cutting up the loved one into small bits!

Note how the verb *to part* also implies the *emotive value* of the togetherness that is ending. When you leave a place, the usual verb is *depart* rather than *part*.

But there are exceptions to these patterns. So in Parliament we speak of the House (of Commons) *dividing* on a question. And a dress might *part* at the seams when you wash it. On the other hand these exceptions are few and far between, and in the latter case, the expression *come apart* would be more common.

The verb *to separate* can have either sense. So you can *separate* the sheep from the goats, and couples can *separate* (with no implications about emotions). This latter is the reason we use the word *separated* to describe couples that no longer live together.

Back-up you don't have to think about

One thing everybody who uses a computer has to worry about is what happens if (when) the thing stops working.

You know, one day the screen is just black and you can't recover your hard disk. So you need to take back-ups, right? But do you? And if you do, how often? And is it enough?

The scope for sleepless nights is enormous, especially if you are self-employed and all your data is on one machine. *So take back-ups!*

Xmas gift ideas



And the neat way to do it is over the Internet.

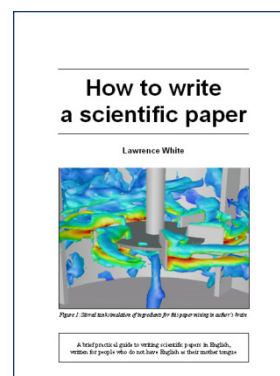
There are several such systems. I use one called Carbonite. It starts automatically and works quietly and continuously in the background, backing up your changed data. Everything is encrypted before it leaves your machine and is therefore safe in more than one way.

And, no, the system does not slow down your computer or your internet connection. Nor does it cost the earth ...

The perfect Xmas gift for the scientist in your life!

You can find out more and order the booklet on writing scientific papers published by *English support* at:

www.englishsupport.dk.



You can try it out here! If you use this link to download a free 15-day trial subscription, you get an extra free month of service when you buy:

<http://www.carbonite.com/raf/signup.aspx?RAFUserUID=213288&a=0>

Questions & Answers

(Edited)

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A bit of a challenge!

Hi Lawrence

I am interested in the word "challenge" as a noun in a sense of testing abilities. I couldn't find that in your index section, so could you please tell me which is correct: "answering a challenge" or "accepting a challenge" or "going along with a challenge" or something else?

Well, all these are possible in certain contexts. If someone challenges you to a game of chess, you can *answer the challenge* by *accepting the challenge* (= saying Yes). In this sense you can be said to *go along with the challenge*. ☺

But I think what you are probably after is the more abstract sense of *challenge* as in "*being self-employed is a challenge*". The usual phrase here is to *meet the challenge* as in "*She met the challenge of being self-employed with her characteristic courage*".

University names and job titles

Dear Lawrence

I always enjoy reading your News & Tips.

In your latest edition No. 48, you mention DTU where I'm employed. Just for your information, DTU's English name is the Technical University of Denmark. Please see our website: <http://www.dtu.dk/english.aspx>.

I also have a question. DTU used to translate the title "rektor" as "rector". In DTU's latest organisation chart, I recently discovered that the title "rector" has been replaced by "President". Please see: http://www.dtu.dk/English/About_DTU/Organization.aspx. Is it better to use "President" than "Rector"?

As titles may be quite difficult to translate, I suggest that you write about university titles/titles in companies in one of your future editions of News & Tips.

Thank you for your comments. Yes, I know the official translation of DTU is the *Technical University of Denmark*, but it always looks so odd to follow that with DTU; it looks like it should be TUD. ☺ The more direct translation (*Denmark's Technical University*) is therefore less confusing, and I commend it to DTU.

As an employee of DTU, you must of course continue to use the official version, but I am in a different situation. I also refer to Copenhagen University (whose official title is the University of Copenhagen) and Oxford University (whose official title is the University of Oxford), and so on.

With regard to your second question, "president" is definitely *not* to be preferred to "rector". It sounds like the head of an American corporation. But this is part of a wider (still informal) debate that is going on at DTU on whether to use British or American English. Other things being equal, it always seems best to me for Danish and other European organisations to use British English, which is after all the European form of English.

Thank you for your suggestion about job titles. As you say, it is a difficult (and touchy) subject, so naturally we will be happy to do so! ☺ On the other hand, it will also require quite a bit of research.

Best wishes to all our readers
for Christmas and the New Year!

Lawrence White
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www. **English support** .dk

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Christmas quiz

Test your English... (News & Tips Nos. 1–49)

This year, I thought I'd give you a challenge – which you are welcome to pass on to your family, friends, colleagues, competitors and worst enemies! Can you improve the English in the sentences below? They all have at least one mistake, and most answers are in the issue of *News & Tips* with the same number. ☺

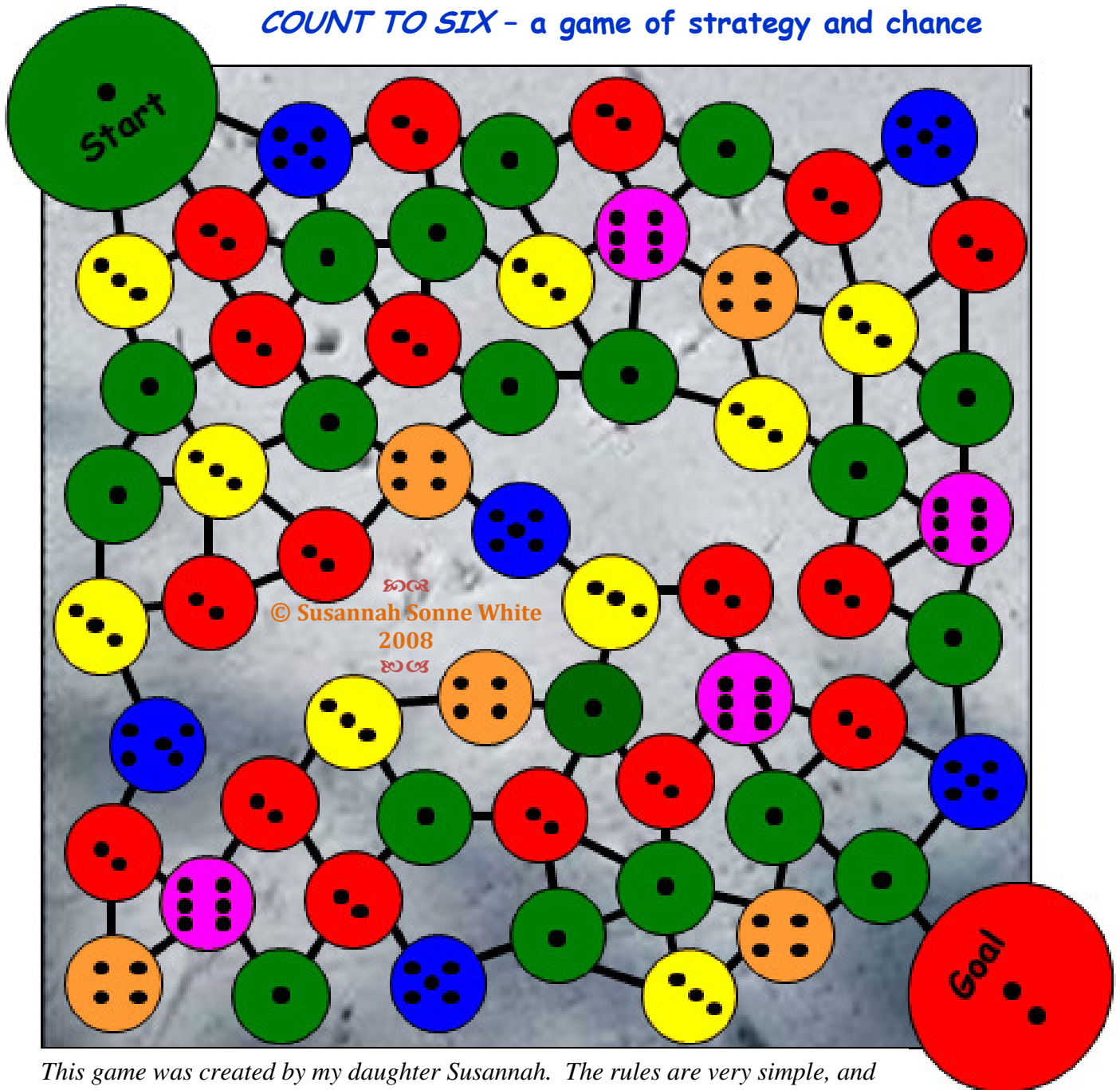
1. We would like to inform that we are specialised in English.
2. We will be finish in six month.
3. The people for who he worked thought he was good at his job.
4. The news are that a number of cases of piracy has been reported.
5. The economics of the agreement mean that the staff gets a pay rise every year.
6. I work hard at the moment, because we are having a lot of customers.
7. I look forward to hear from you but will revert if I do not.
8. He claimed, that the Sun is about ninety-three millions of miles away.
9. She saw an add in the paper the other day for a film with mr. Bean.
10. I am out of office untill 2nd January.
11. The staff drinks all kind of beer after work.
12. A part of the apprentices should stay on after completing their apprenticeship.
13. There are things you should buy, like for an example an umbrella, in the case that it rains.
14. Were where the boxes whit a length, width and heigth of 30 cm?
15. While in Paris he had the possibility to visit the Louvre.
16. We hold considerable knowledge and experience about Danish society.
17. Be aware that I have lived in London for many years before I moved to Denmark.
18. I would appreciate if you would let me know about your experience within teaching.
19. If you do not have an education as a book-keeper, you may loose your job.
20. Please notice that the different requirements are according to the regulations.
21. He missed having a job because he failed passing his exams.
22. To a considerable extend, wind energy can substitute fossil-fuel energy.
23. I would appreciate to hear from you whether you are capable to do this job.
24. He was looking forward to see her although he had difficulty to understand her English.
25. She suggested to drink a toast to success.
26. A substantial amount of paintings was stolen.
27. He properly worked in close corporation with someone in the company.
28. I saw an environmental friendly radio last week – isn't the progress wonderful!
29. I spent yesterday playing golf, drinking beer and talking about the meaning of life.
30. In the last years, I have had my own company.
31. In the hereafter, You will find a description of the cottage.
32. After this course, you will have knowledge on all our products with prizes as low as £10.
33. He held a party on Saturday with few friends.
34. The principle was wearing his daily clothes at the time.
35. When he is coming, tell him I'm not in!
36. If you are going to Greenland, make sure you take some isolating clothing with you.
37. If I may advice you, I suggest you check the prizes carefully before you buy anything.
38. The transport company had a series of different kinds of vehicle for hire.
39. Mozart was only brilliant.
40. I thought the tea tasted well, and I said so.
41. Please write your name in the top of the sheet.
42. Is she still dependent of him?
43. It is unpolite to speak like that.
44. My loss of balance was the affect of drinking too much beer.
45. Three-quarters of the city were destroyed in the earthquake.
46. Did you reach the train all right the other day?
47. You shoot to a target and hopefully hit it in the middle.
48. He kept smiling despite he was very angry.
49. She parted the Christmas cake into 12 equal pieces.

MERRY
CHRISTMAS!

Christmas game

If you did not receive this newsletter by e-mail, you will need to subscribe if you want it again. It's FREE. Get on the mailing list via the website!

COUNT TO SIX - a game of strategy and chance



This game was created by my daughter Susannah. The rules are very simple, and it can be played by as many people as can sit around the "board" – just so long as they can all COUNT TO SIX... ☺

Each player has a counter. Start at *Start* and try to be the first to get to the *Goal*. And there are SIX rules:

1. Take turns in throwing a dice.
2. Move the same number of places as shown on the dice.
3. You must end on a circle with the same number too.
4. You may not step on the same circle twice in a move.
5. You may not use circles occupied by others.
6. If you cannot move, you go back to *Start*.

Have fun!

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