



Video 4 – Real World English: date and time

Imagine you read about an upcoming conference. It sounds interesting, and you want to go. Then suddenly you're confused.

Does 'seven–five' mean July fifth, or May seventh?

When the date is presented in this way, you can't be sure. The format is ambiguous for all numbers up to twelve.

If you know where the writer is from, you can guess. Americans usually put the month first – month, day, year. So in American English, 'seven–five' means July fifth.

In British and other varieties of English, the order is normally day, month, year, so "'seven–five'" means the seventh of May. Or *May seventh*, as Americans phrase it.

It's a good idea to confirm dates before booking any tickets. And if you're writing the date, it's best to spell out the month, to avoid ambiguity.

People tell the time in different ways, too.

British English speakers say *quarter to nine*, while American English speakers say a *quarter of nine*, or sometimes a *quarter 'til nine*.

Where British English speakers say *quarter past four*, Americans say a *quarter after four* – but 'four fifteen' is most common.

In British English, you might hear *half-two*, which is an informal way of saying *two-thirty*. And in American English you might hear *in the a.m.*, which means *in the morning*.

One last difference worth noting is that British people often use *fortnight* to mean a period of two weeks.

A newsletter could be sent *fortnightly*, for example. In American English, this word is less common, and tends to appear in more literary contexts.

In our next video, we'll look at how people talk about their education in different varieties of English. You'll be amazed at how complicated *that* can get!

See you then!