

Transcript for **Weird things we do in Britain**

Hello, everyone, and welcome back to another video for the British Council's LearnEnglish Teens website and their YouTube channel.

In today's video I wanted to talk about some weird things that we do in Britain. So, I have been thinking about this a bit because I have been talking to some of my friends who have moved to Britain to study for university and they've just been, like, 'You know what? It's really weird that British people do [X, Y or Z].'

So it got me thinking about these things that people brought to my attention because as a British person, it just seems like the norm because obviously I've grown up in Britain and it's all I've ever known, but the more I think about it, and just reflect on different places I've travelled to, the more I realise that these things actually are very British.

So, without further ado, here are some weird things that British people do.

Now the first one probably goes without saying. It's a very big stereotype about British people but it is based in truth – that we are very serious about our cups of tea. Tea-drinking is a very big thing in Britain. We have tea houses, um, lots of shops popping up in London that specialise in different types of brewed tea and all this kind of, like, intricate stuff to do with tea. It's an art, it's becoming an art, tea-drinking, it really is. Knowing how to make the perfect cup of tea. There are even courses on this. Would you believe it?

Now, I would say I'm very traditional in the sense that I do have at least one cup of tea a day. It's not always, like, Earl Grey or 'English' tea but I definitely do have a cup of tea, whether it's, like, summer time, whether it's winter time. I always have at least a cup of tea around four, five o'clock, when it's teatime. But I do know that there are British people who take this much more seriously than I do, and can drink up to ten cups of tea a day. I actually have a friend who is guilty of this, so tea is a very important thing for British culture. I don't know if it's weird, but it is very particular to British culture.

The next thing is something very small but something very different for quite a lot of countries. In our bathrooms we tend to have separate hot water and cold water taps. In Europe generally, um, the taps are those mixer taps so it means that you just, like, move it to the left if you want it to be hot and move it to the right if you want it to be cold. Put it somewhere in the middle and you get perfect lukewarm water. In the UK, or at least, um, in a lot of more traditional old-build houses in the UK, we have two separate taps, so to create that lovely lukewarm water we have to dilute the two taps. I'll put a picture in because I actually have it in my, um, house, so you can see what I'm talking about. It's something so simple that you might not even notice, but something that can be a bit weird if you are coming to the UK for the first time and you're staying in a house that has these two different taps.

So the next weird thing that we do in Britain is that we drive on the left-hand side of the road. And I know we're not the only ones to do this. I know that in Cyprus they also drive on the left and I think in Malta as well. But I took this one step further to figure out why we drive on the left-hand side of the road, because I couldn't just settle with the fact that we wanted to be different from the rest of the world or we wanted to be more difficult than the rest of the world in driving on this side. So, what I found from doing a quick Google

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search is that apparently in the medieval times it was more common to actually ride your horse on the left-hand side of the road, and this is because, of course, most people are right-handed, not just writing but also I guess with sword-fighting. So knights or men who rode horses with swords would have to have their right side ready and armed just in case someone was going to attack them or they needed to engage in a fight. So, it does make sense. It's weird, but it does make sense, why we drive on the left-hand side of the road.

Returning back to bathrooms for just one sec, another weird thing that we do in Britain is sometimes we have carpets on our bathroom floor. Now, this could be seen as a good thing and a bad thing, or maybe just a weird thing. I don't find it weird just because I've been to a couple of my friends' houses that have carpet in their bathroom and it's actually really nice during the winter. I feel like it would keep your feet nice and warm when you've just got out of the shower. But it is kind of weird to have carpet in your bathroom the more I think about it. But again, I think more modern houses probably don't have this as much any more, but more traditional houses have those two little taps we talked about and perhaps carpet in your bathroom. Why not?

Another thing which my friend actually pointed out to me, and I had never really thought about this before, is that we use these washbowls – I'm not even sure what they're actually called – but we have basically a big bowl that you put in the sink and you fill that with hot water and soap and you wash your bowls in there, so you're not refilling the sink with hot water or you're not letting the water run while you're washing. It's a great way to save water and soap when you're washing plates, but it's something I didn't realise that was quite particular to Britain. I actually went into the shop the other day and I saw them selling these, so I was, like, wow, it actually is a big thing. I wasn't sure if it was something that just my family did to save water and soap or if it was, like, a widespread thing, but actually it's quite a common thing, I would say, to use these washbowls to wash your plates and then rinse them all off at the end.

The next thing that could be seen as a weird thing that we do in Britain is that our lawyers and our judges still wear those white powdered wigs to the courtroom. And I actually again tried to do a quick Google search to figure out the history about this and, like, why we still do this, but essentially it's just a uniform, I guess. I mean, I feel like when you watch any crime or, like, law court series or dramas, British ones particularly, you always see that token lawyer or judge with that powdered wig. Most of the searches came up with it saying that it's just a uniform nowadays. I find it weird – I don't understand why, um, but there we have it. That's another weird thing that we do in the UK.

Now, I've mentioned this in a previous video. British people love queuing. And this is seen to be such a weird thing in different countries, especially when I was in Italy. People really don't know what queuing is. People didn't understand why I would get so upset when I'm waiting in a line, or what I think is a line, in the supermarket and then someone just comes in front of me because they have less stuff. But British people absolutely love queuing. I have no idea where this whole, like, social system came from but it is a very concrete one in British society and it's one that you can't ignore. So just be warned. If you ever are in something that looks like a queue, it's best to just wait your turn. Don't go ahead, because you're sure to get someone angry if you do.

And my last and final weird thing that we do in Britain is to do with our money, actually. Um, I was looking at a twenty pound note that I had the other day and I realised it said something like 'I promise to pay the bearer the sum of twenty pounds on demand'. And it reminded me of this class I had back in primary school when we were looking at the Victorian era as to why our money still says, 'I promise to pay' blah

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blah blah, when, you know, we have the actual money, and it goes back to, from what I can remember, the fact that people sometimes didn't have the physical money to pay someone so they would literally just write on a piece of paper, like a plain piece of paper, not real money, 'I promise to pay the bearer the sum of XXX' and they would swear on the queen's life that they were going to pay this money or this loan to that particular person. So I think it's kind of cool that we still have that on our actual, um, cash notes now. I just thought that was something really cool and different, perhaps a bit weird. Um, I can't remember coming across that anywhere else in all the other currencies I've used during my travels, but let me know if you do have something similar in your currency. Who knows? Maybe we're all weird together.

So, guys, I hope you enjoyed this video of a couple of weird things that we do in Britain. Let me know in the comments below how weird these things actually are, because they might actually not be that weird, but this is just what, as I said, some of my friends who have moved to the UK have told me about. They don't seem that weird to me, probably because I've lived in the UK for most of my life, but who knows? I will see you in the next one. Bye, guys!