

## December 2012

Hello again, Merry Christmas! and a huge Christmas "thank you" to all of you for downloading this *Mansión Inglés* podcast. This is podcast number 56 recorded for December 2012.

*Este mes, por navidad, hemos practicado el vocabulario de navidad y también algunos verbos principales en el nivel básico. En el nivel intermedio hay una carta para Santa y una canción de navidad con Michael Buble que se llama Let It Snow (dejelo nevar - o algo así).*

Etymology - the origins of words and expressions - was our focus in the advanced section, and there's business vocabulary as usual, and of course many more ideas and resources to help you improve your English and take it to the next level.

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Ok so, let's begin then as usual with **el nivel básico**.

¿Como se dice Santa Claus en el inglés británico? - Father Christmas, y

¿Qué es un muñeco de nieve? - a snowman - *repite* - snowman.

Christmas cards *son tarjetas de navidad*. *Repite*: Christmas cards - y regalos de navidad *son*....Christmas presents. ¿Cómo se dice pastel de navidad en inglés? - Christmas cake *Repite*: Christmas cake. Y ¿Cómo se dice árbol de navidad? - Christmas tree. *Repite*: Christmas tree.

¿Te acuerdas como se dice reno en inglés? - reindeer - *Repite* - reindeer.

¿Cómo se dice papel de envolver/papel de regalo en inglés? - wrapping paper. *Repite*: Wrapping paper. To wrap *es envolver* - to wrap a present.

*Repite*: wrap a present. We wrap presents for Christmas. - Please can you wrap it for me?

*Ahora escucha y repite las siguientes frases:*

Santa Claus **speaks** German.

Santa Claus also **plays** the piano.

Santa's son **does** his homework. He does his homework every day.

Santa **likes** rice.

Please **write** your name.

Please **write** your address

Please **write** your passport number

Please write your Christmas list.

Father Christmas uses Facebook.

He also uses Twitter.

Father Christmas likes sending messages.

He goes skiing after work.

Santa's girlfriend studies English.

Santa wears a red coat.

Santa drives a blue car.

Where does Santa live? He lives at the North Pole - *el polo norte* - *Repite*: The North Pole. He lives at the North Pole.

Very good! - ¡Muy bien!

The 24th December is Christmas Eve. *Repite*: Christmas Eve.

The 25th December is Christmas Day *Repite*: Christmas Day.

The 26th December is Boxing Day. *Repite*: Boxing Day

The 31st of December is New Year's Eve. *Repite*: New Year's Eve.

and the 1st of January is New Year's Day. *Repite*: New Year's Day.

Very good!

In the **intermediate section** this month, there was a letter to Santa. Listen to the letter and answer the following questions.

- 1) What did the dog eat?
- 2) What does my sister Sally want for Christmas?
- 3) What does my mum want?

Dear Santa Claus,

I hope you are well and that your preparations for Christmas this year are coming along nicely.

I'm writing to you because I'm really looking **forward** to Christmas and I want to tell you about the presents we'd all like **to have** this year.

I'd really love to get two new cars. I **broke** my toy Ferrari and the Porsche **fell off** the table and now it's only got one wheel.

I'd also like a lot of sweets and a big box of chocolates **to share** with my friends at school. Please don't put the chocolates in my Christmas **stocking** because the dog will probably eat them like she did last year.

I would love to have two horses. Dad thinks this is silly because we live in a city and he says there's **nowhere** to put them and we won't **be able to** look after

them. That's silly because we could easily keep them in the park around the corner and my brother John can feed them. **He's nearly thirteen.**

**By the way**, John wants a new bike this year and my sister Sally would like an iPad. Please don't get her the old iPad because she says the camera's rubbish and the new model has a much better screen.

Dad wants some new **tools** and a big flat-screen TV to watch the football on. I know that Mum thinks a new TV is a big **waste** of money and that's why I'm asking you.

Mum wants a new dress and **some** perfume. She needs a new pair of slippers too, but don't worry **about** those because I think Dad's getting them.

Granny says she wants new legs for Christmas so that she can get up and down the **stairs** easier, so I'll leave that with you. Oh, and my Granddad wants his luck to change so that he can **win** money betting on the horses. Can you do that for him? I think he would also like a bottle of brandy, because Dad always **shouts** at him when he drinks the brandy from the cupboard.

I think that's all for this Christmas. Be careful when you come down the chimney, because we had it **blocked up** last month and there's a gas fire there now. It might be better if you came through the window. **I'll leave** one open for you.

Best wishes and a very Merry Christmas to you, your reindeer and all your little helpers in Lapland.

Answer the questions.

- 1) What did the dog eat? - chocolates
- 2) What does my sister Sally want for Christmas? - an iPad
- 3) What does my mum want? - a new dress and some perfume. And a pair of slippers.

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In the **advanced section** this month, we followed the theme of "The Twelve Days of Christmas", an English Christmas carol that tells about a series of increasingly impressive gifts given on each of the twelve days of Christmas.

We looked at the etymology, the origin, of 12 common English expressions.

Before I read the 12 expressions with their explanations, I'm going to say some of the vocabulary in Spanish and I want you to say the word in English before I do. Then, repeat the word to practise pronunciation. Ready?

gallows = *horca*  
 pot = *olla, cacharro*  
 to tan = *curtir*  
 tannery = *curtiduría*  
 saying = *refrán, dicho*  
 thatched roof = *tejado de paja*  
 dirt = *suciedad, mugre*  
 slate = *pizarra*  
 slippery = *resbaladizo, resbaloso*  
 straw = *paja*  
 chew = *masticar*  
 loaf = *pan de molde*  
 to show off = *hacer alarde de*  
 lead = *plomo*  
 to knock out = *dejar sin conocimiento*  
 burial = *entierro*  
 to bury = *enterrar*  
 to dig up = *desenterrar*  
 coffin = *ataúd*  
 grave = *tumba*  
 scratch = *rasguño, arañazo*  
 corpse = *cadáver*  
 bell = *campana*  
 graveyard = *cementerio*

Very good!

The first expression was to have "**one** (drink) **for the road**"

There is an old pub/hotel in Marble Arch, London, which used to have a gallows (*una horca*) next to it. Prisoners were taken to the gallows to be hanged. The horse drawn wagon that took the prisoner had an armed guard on it to stop the prisoner from escaping.

So the guard would stop the wagon outside the pub and ask the prisoner if he would like one last drink before he died. If he said, "Yes," it was referred to as **one for the road**. If he refused, that prisoner was **on the wagon**. To be "on the wagon" today means not to be drinking alcohol. And today, to have one last drink before you leave a pub or a house is to have one for the road. Shall we have one for the road? Shall we have one last drink? Yes, good idea! I'll have one for the road. What would you like to drink? Oh, just a Coke. I'm on the wagon.

Many years ago people used to use urine to tan animal skins, so families used to all pee in a pot, which was taken once a day and sold to the

tannery. If you had to do this to survive you were **piss poor**; but worse than that were the really poor folk, who couldn't even afford to buy a pot. They **didn't have a pot to piss in** and they were the lowest of the low.

Baths used to consist of a big tub, or *cuba*, filled with hot water. The man of the house had the privilege of the nice clean water. He had the first bath, then all the other sons and men, then the women, and finally the children. Last of all the babies. By then the water was so dirty you could actually lose someone in it. From this we get the saying **Don't throw the baby out with the bath water!** which in Spanish I think translates to *tirar las frutas frescas con las podridas* or *las pochas*.

You must have heard the expression **It's raining cats and dogs**. But where does it come from? Well, houses used to have thatched roofs (*tejados de paja*), thick straw piled high, with no wood underneath. It was the only place for animals to get warm, so all the cats, the dogs and other small animals, like mice and insects, lived in the roof. When it rained, of course, it became slippery, and sometimes the animals would slip and fall off the roof. This is where we get the saying **It's raining cats and dogs**.

Floors in houses years ago were just dirt. Only the wealthy had something other than dirt. From this we get the saying, **dirt poor**. The wealthy had slate floors (*suelos de pizarra*) that would get slippery in the winter when wet, so they put straw (*paja*) on floor to stop them from slipping. When winter came, they added more and more straw, which was called thresh, until, when you opened the door, it would all start slipping outside. A piece of wood was placed in the entrance to stop it. This is where the word **threshold** comes from. Threshold in Spanish is *umbral*. And today there's a tradition, when you marry, the groom lifts up the bride and carries her across the threshold and into her new house.

A person who **brings home the bacon** in a family earns the money. Years ago it was something very special to get some pork and take it home. When visitors came over, they would hang up their bacon, to show it off. It was a sign of wealth that a man could **bring home the bacon**. They would cut off a little bacon to share with guests and they would all sit around talking and **chew the fat**. "Chewing the fat" means talking or chatting about nothing in particular. "Let's chew the fat." "Who brings home the bacon in your family?"

**The upper crust** of society are the rich, wealthy landowners. The people with money and power. The top class. Many years ago, bread used to be divided according to status. The common workers got the bottom of the loaf (which was usually burnt), the family got the middle, and guests got the top, or **the upper crust**. So the 'upper crust' of society are the rich and wealthy.

Cups made from lead (*plomo*) used to be used to drink beer or whisky. The combination of alcohol and lead would sometimes knock the drinkers out for a couple of days. Someone walking along the road would think they were dead and prepare them for burial. They were laid out on the

kitchen table for a couple of days, and the family would come around to eat and drink and wait to see if they would wake up. Hence the custom of **holding a wake**.

England is old and small, and the local villagers started running out of places to bury people. So, they would dig up coffins and would take the bones to a bone-house and reuse the grave. When reopening these coffins, one out of 25 coffins were found to have scratch marks on the inside and they realized they had been burying people alive. So they would tie a string on the wrist of the corpse, put it through the coffin and up through the ground and then tie it to a bell. Someone would have to sit out in the graveyard all night (which was called **the graveyard shift**) to listen for the bell; thus, someone could be **saved by the bell** or was considered **a dead ringer**.

Listen and repeat the 12 expressions of Christmas.

to have **one for the road**  
 to be **on the wagon**.  
 to be **piss poor** or **dirt poor**  
 to **not have a pot to piss in**  
**Don't throw the baby out with the bath water!**  
**It's raining cats and dogs**  
 to **bring home the bacon**  
 to **chew the fat**  
 the **upper crust**  
 to **hold a wake**  
**the graveyard shift**  
 to be **saved by the bell** / to be **a dead ringer**

Very good!

Moving on to **Business English**, let's practise some business vocabulary.

When someone "brings something to the table", it means that they **have something to offer**. Repeat: to bring to the table. "What are they bringing to the table? What are they offering?"

If you are made redundant you lose your job. Repeat: to be made redundant. I was made redundant. 3 of us are going to be made redundant next year. Sandra has been **made redundant** from her clerical job.

Remember that a degree is something you do, not make. I did my degree at London University. Repeat: to **do a degree**. I did a degree in industrial design. She's doing a law degree.

A competitor is a company that competes with another company. Google is one of Apple's main **competitors**. Google is competing with Apple. There's a lot of competition in the mobile phone market.

Well that's all we have time for on this podcast, but don't worry, we'll be back with you next month with another podcast from our monthly newsletter, our *cuaderno de inglés mensual*. Remember, you can listen to all our previous podcasts at [mansioningles.com](http://mansioningles.com) and on iTunes.

So *¡Feliz Navidad!* - Happy Christmas! - Merry Christmas! from all of us here at La Mansión del Inglés. *¡Felices fiestas!* - Season's greetings! and we look forward to the New Year when we'll be bringing you more new material.

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Until next month then, take care, keep practising and taking your English to the next level! Bye for now!

*The music in this month's podcast is by **Revolution Void**, the album is *The Politics of Desire* and the track is called *Outer Orbit*.*