

British English: Listening Comprehension 4

Surprise!



(6: 20)

Through this listening comprehension video, I would like to draw your attention to another pronunciation quirk¹ of English pronunciation. This one occurs in American English as well. It's called **palatalization**. Palatalization happens when specific sounds appear together. In this lesson, we'll look at when a word ending in [d] or [t] appears immediately before a word beginning with [y]. (There are other types of palatalization—[s + y] / [z + y]—but we will study these separately later.)

When we link [d] and [y], a new sound is formed; it is similar to the /j/ and the /dg/ in the word “judge”. So, the phrase “*did you*” will sound like /didju/ and the phrase “*could you*” will sound like /cudju/.

When we link [t] and [y], a new sound is formed; it is similar to the /ch/ in the word “church”. So, the phrase “*but you*” will sound like /but chu/ and the phrase “*want you*” will sound like /wan chu/. You should know that this can also occur within a word. For example, the British often pronounce the word “stupid” as /schu pid/.

00:00:57 What about **you**?
00:01:40 Did **you** hear? No. It's Jane's birthday on Saturday.
00:02:56 That looks great. Where did **you** get it?
00:03:06 Did **you** get the candles?
00:03:54 Did **you** have a nice day?
00:03:57 Yes. What did **you** do?
00:04:00 What did **you** buy?
00:04:14 What else did **you** do?
00:04:25 Did **you**?
00:04:58 It's not **your** birthday.
00:05:03 But **you** said it was the 13th of May.

There are 11 instances of palatalization in this short video. It happens frequently.

¹ **quirk**: a strange or peculiar aspect (*particularidad*)

Answer the comprehension questions.

- 1) When are their birthdays? (Write the speakers words.)

Matt:	Helen:	Jane:
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- 2) What's your horoscope sign? _____

- 3) How much did the cake cost? _____

- 4) What did Matt have for breakfast? (List the items.)

- 5) What mistake did Matt make? (Answer in a complete sentence in English.)

- 6) What do the British say when they toast with champagne? _____

(*Note that this word is also often used to say "thank you" in England.)

- 7) Below is a transcript of the video. Listen again—just the audio below—and fill in the blanks.

Helen (voice over): This is how it started. Another exciting evening at _____ Blackwood Road.

David: Hi, Julia. How are you? Yeah, sure.

Helen: When's your birthday?

Matt: The 4th of August.

Helen: That's Leo. You're a _____.

Matt: What's wrong?

Helen: Nothing.

Matt: What about you?

Helen: My birthday is the 16th of _____. I'm a Pisces.

Matt: The fish. ... So what's the horoscope sign for this month?

Helen: May. ... Helen: The _____ part is Taurus.

Matt: The bull. So Jane's a bull.

Helen: Is Jane's birthday this month? When?

Matt: The 13th.

Helen: The 13th of May. It's the 11th of May today. That's in two days. Are you _____?

Matt: That's what she said.

Helen: Did you hear? No. It's Jane's birthday on _____. Why don't we have a party?

David: In two days?

Helen: Yeah.

Matt: A _____ party. Good idea.

Helen: Right. How many people?

David: Just the four of us. A meal. The cake. _____ to drink. Presents.

Helen: Okay. Let's make a shopping list.

[Helen is decorating, and Matt is wrapping a present as David brings in the cake.]

David: I've got it.

Helen: Let's see it.

Matt: That looks great. Where did you get it?

David: I _____ it at Pascal's, you know, next to the bank.

Helen: How much was it?

David: It was _____ pounds.

Helen: Did you get the candles? ... You didn't get the candles.

Matt: I did.

Helen: Thank you.

David: When does Jane get home?

Matt: Usually at half past six, after her game of tennis. In about _____ minutes.

Helen: Oh, no!

David: She's early.

Helen: David, help me with this cake.

David: Matt, don't let her _____ into the kitchen.

Matt: How?

David: Talk to her. Two minutes.

Matt: What do you want me to talk about?

Helen: Anything.

Matt: Hi, Jane.

Jane: Hi, Matt.

Matt: Here, _____ me.

Jane: Thanks.

Matt: Did you have a nice day?

Jane: Yes.

Matt: What did you do?

Jane: I went shopping.

Matt: What did you buy?

Jane: I bought a t-shirt and some _____ and I bought some food. ... Matt, are you okay?

Matt: What else did you do?

Jane: I played tennis.

Matt: Where?

Jane: At the Sports Centre.

Matt: I had a good day.

Jane: Did you?

Matt: I got up at..., oh, about 11 o'clock. And then I had breakfast. I had _____ and I had toast and coffee. And orange juice. And then I watched television. Matt: And then...

Jane: Matt, please move. Now.

ALL: Happy birthday!

David: It's not your birthday.

Helen: Matthew.

Matt: But you said it was the 13th of May.

Jane: The 30th of May, Matt. Not the 13th.

David: Then what do we do with all this food and drink?

Helen: We can still have a party.

Matt: Then what about the _____?

Helen: We can have a party then too.

Jane: Sure.

Matt: Great. Two parties.

David: But only one present, _____?

Helen: Oh, David. What? Really?

Helen (voice over): So that was the surprise party. A real surprise for everyone.