



## ESL Podcast 727 – Home Architectural Styles

### GLOSSARY

**real estate agent** – a person whose job is to help other people buy or sell homes, land, and/or other property

\* The real estate agent thinks we can sell our home for \$270,000.

**the bigger the better** – a phrase used when comparing two or more things to show that the larger one is better or more valuable than smaller versions of the same thing

\* - What size soda would you like?

- I'm really thirsty, so the bigger the better!

**Cape Cod** – a type of home that was very popular in Cape Cod, Massachusetts in the late 1700s, usually with one or two floors, a pointed roof, and a chimney in the center of the home

\* They rented a really nice Cape Cod home for their week-long vacation in Boston.

**Georgian** – a large, rectangular home, usually with two or three floors, with the door in the center and with many identical, rectangular windows spaced evenly on each floor

\* A Georgian home would look strange from the outside if there were different curtains in each room.

**modest** – humble; without using a lot of money; without drawing attention to one's wealth, power, talent, or intelligence

\* They have learned to live comfortably on a modest teacher's salary.

**bungalow** – a small home, usually with one or one-and-a-half floors, with a pointed roof and a large covered porch (open area) in the front of the home

\* On hot summer afternoons, they love drinking iced tea while sitting outside on the porch of their bungalow.

**cottage** – a small home, usually with only one or two bedrooms and only one floor, often with many identical homes nearby, often built next to a lake or near the mountains and used as a vacation home or as a rental property

\* Pierre doesn't really like camping, so they're going to rent a cottage by the lake.

**a step up from** – an improvement over; one level better or higher than

\* His new job isn't great, but it's a step up from what he used to do.



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**mobile home** – an inexpensive home that is built in a factory and has wheels so that it can be pulled to where the owners will live, with pieces of wood or plastic used to hide the wheels

\* Gracie grew up in a small mobile home, and she couldn't wait to buy a larger home as an adult.

**to come into some money** – to inherit; to receive money from someone when that person dies

\* When Ralph's grandfather died, he came into some money and he decided to use it to open a new business.

**colonial** – a home built in one of the styles that was popular in North America before the United States became a country, usually with one or two floors and with very steep (with a sharp angle) roofs

\* They're looking for a home that is colonial on the outside, but has a modern interior.

**Greek revival** – a home or other building that is similar to ancient Greek architecture, with pillars (columns; vertical structures) in the front or all around the building, like many U.S. government buildings

\* This Greek revival home reminds me of the Lincoln Memorial in Washington, D.C.

**split-level** – a type of home where the main floor where one walks into the home is halfway between an upper floor, usually where the bedrooms are, and a lower floor, usually where the family room or basement is

\* Split-level architecture is a good choice for building on a hill.

**ranch** – a long, rectangular home with only one floor and large windows, usually with little architectural decoration inside or outside

\* Lynette doesn't like stairs, so she's looking for a ranch home.

**the sky's the limit** – a phrase used to show that there are no limits or controls, so one can do whatever one wants, without paying attention to how much something costs

\* If we get this contract, the sky's the limit. Our business will definitely grow.

**nouveau riche** – people who became wealthy or rich very recently, often used when one disapproves of the way those people are spending their money

\* Many of the nouveau riche spent their money on expensive cars and big homes, but they quickly ran out of money.



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**ostentatious** – doing or saying things to try to impress other people, especially spending a lot of money to draw attention to oneself

\* Wearing that much diamond jewelry all at once is just ostentatious!

**deal with it** – an informal, slightly rude phrase used to tell someone that he or she must accept something or learn to tolerate it because it is not going to change

\* I know you don't like cleaning up your room, but as long as you live in this house, you have to follow our rules. Deal with it!

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### COMPREHENSION QUESTIONS

1. Which of these homes has only one floor?
  - a) A Georgian home.
  - b) A split-level home.
  - c) A ranch home.
2. What does Ralph mean when he says, "We've come into some money"?
  - a) They made a lot of money when they sold their home.
  - b) They saved money by not paying taxes.
  - c) They received money when someone died.

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### WHAT ELSE DOES IT MEAN?

#### **modest**

The word "modest," in this podcast, means without using a lot of money, or without drawing attention to one's wealth, power, or intelligence: "Despite her modest upbringing, she became a multi-millionaire as a powerful business executive." The word "modest" also means humble, or not talking about how good, intelligent, talented, or rich one is because one does not want other people to pay attention to it: "It's good to be modest, but if you're too modest your boss will never know how many contributions you make around here." The word "modest" can also refer to one's behavior and sense of decency, or what is right and appropriate: "Sienna is a very modest young woman who never wears short skirts or any shirts that are cut low in the front."

#### **deal with it**

In this podcast, the phrase "deal with it" is an informal, slightly rude phrase used to tell someone that he or she must accept something or learn to tolerate it because it is not going to change: "Being a police officer is stressful, but you



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need to learn to deal with it. Otherwise you won't be able to work here for very long." The phrase "to cut a deal" means to reach an agreement or sign a contract with someone, especially in business: "Do you think we'll ever end these negotiations and cut a deal?" Finally, the phrase "to deal a blow to (someone)" means to hurt or harm someone: "The heavy rain and cold temperatures dealt a blow to strawberry farmers."

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### CULTURE NOTE

#### McMansions and the Small House Movement

There are two "opposing" (very different from each other) "trends" (popular ways of doing something) in new "residential" (related to homes, not businesses) "construction" (building) in the United States: McMansions and the small house movement.

A "McMansion" is a "pejorative" (negative and insulting) "term" (word) for very large new homes that are built in new "developments" (areas where many homes are being built for the first time) where all the homes look "alike" (the same). McMansions are much larger than "typical" (usual; ordinary) homes in the area. They usually have more than one floor, with many bedrooms, an office, a family room, and a "bonus room" (an extra room, often used for electronics or play). McMansions normally have two or more large garages, "granite" (expensive, beautiful rock) countertops, and "stainless steel" (shiny, silver-colored) "appliances" (large machines in a home, like refrigerators and stoves).

Although some people like McMansions and save their money to buy one, other people are taking the opposite approach and joining the "small house movement." They want to minimize their "impact" (effect; influence) on the environment and save money by living in "extremely" (very) small houses. Some of these homes are so small that only one person can live there. They usually have only one bedroom, or the entire home is one large room. People have to "downsize" (sell or get rid of the things one owns) to be able to live there, but they say this "simplifies" (makes easier and clearer) their life and lets them focus on what is really important, such as family and friends. Because small homes are less expensive and easier to maintain, the people who live there do not need as much money, so they can work less and focus on what they enjoy doing.

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Comprehension Questions Correct Answers: 1 – c; 2 – c



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### COMPLETE TRANSCRIPT

Welcome to English as a Second Language Podcast number 727: Home Architectural Styles.

This is English as a Second Language Podcast episode 727. I'm your host, Dr. Jeff McQuillan, coming to you from the Center for Educational Development in beautiful Los Angeles, California.

Our website is eslpod.com. Go there to download a Learning Guide for this episode, and become a member of ESL Podcast and help support this podcast.

This episode is a dialogue between Ralph and Nina about architectural styles; that is, the look, the design of houses, how they look inside and outside. Let's get started.

[start of dialogue]

Ralph: I just talked to our new real estate agent and she's going to show us some houses tomorrow. I told her that the bigger the better and that we're looking for a large Cape Cod or Georgian-style house.

Nina: You did? I've been thinking that we'd try to find something more modest, a bungalow or a cottage.

Ralph: What?! You think I'm going to live in a house that's a step up from a mobile home? No way. We've come into some money and we're going to buy a big house – maybe a colonial or a Greek revival.

Nina: If you want something bigger than a bungalow, how about a split-level modern house or maybe a ranch-style house?

Ralph: You're still thinking too small. The sky's the limit. We can afford something big, something really big.

Nina: That's what the nouveau riche would do.

Ralph: So what? Our money is new and we have a lot of it, and I want a big house. We're not being ostentatious. If anyone criticizes us for that, I'd say, "Deal with it!"

[end of dialogue]



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Our dialogue begins with Ralph saying to Nina, “I just talked to our new real estate agent and she’s going to show us some homes tomorrow.” “Real estate” (two words) refers to property – physical property – land and buildings including houses. An “agent” is someone who sells or buys or negotiates for you. A “real estate agent” is someone that helps you either buy or sell your house. Ralph says that he told the real estate agent the bigger the better; that is, he’s looking for a big house. When we say “the bigger the better” we mean the larger something is the better it is. That’s not always true, but that’s what Ralph wants in his new house.

He says, “we’re looking for a large Cape Cod or Georgian-style house.” A “Cape Cod” is a type of home that originally was very popular in a certain area in the United States, an area in the state of Massachusetts, which is in the northeast part of the U.S. Cape Cod, if you look at a map of the state of Massachusetts, is the thin, you might even call it a “tail” that comes out from the main part of Massachusetts into the Atlantic Ocean. It’s like a little...hmm...a little “c” that comes out, that’s called Cape Cod. A Cape Cod-style house usually has one or two floors – two levels, the roof comes to a point, and there’s often, or usually, a chimney in the center of the house. A “chimney” is a tall structure that you use for a fireplace. When you have a fire with wood or gas in one of your rooms you need some place for the smoke to go, and it goes up something called a “chimney.” So that’s a Cape Cod-style house. A “Georgian- (Georgian) style house” is a large, rectangular house, usually two or three floors, with a door in the center, and many identical rectangular windows that are on each floor. It’s what we might call a very “symmetrical” looking house. There are windows on both sides and they match, and the distance between them matches, and so forth. That’s a Georgian-style house.

Nina says, “You did (meaning you told her we wanted a big house)? I’ve been thinking that we’d try to find something more modest, a bungalow or a cottage.” “Modest” (modest) usually means humble, someone or something without a lot of money. “Modest” can have a couple of different meanings; take a look at our Learning Guide for some additional explanations. But when we use it to describe, for example, a house, we would mean it’s not a large house, not an expensive looking house.

A “bungalow” (bungalow) is a very small house, usually with just one level – one floor. It has a roof; there’s often an open area in the front that has a cover on it, what we would call a “porch” (porch). Many houses in the U.S. have porches. Our house, when I was growing up in Minnesota, had a porch. It was an “enclosed porch,” meaning there were windows and a door even though it was



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outside of the house; it wasn't heated in the wintertime. A "bungalow" is a small, very small little house. This style of house was very popular in California, especially in the 20<sup>th</sup> century. Near where I live, not too far from Santa Monica, California, there are lots of little bungalows that you can still find. Many of them have been destroyed, we would say "torn down," and replaced by larger houses, but there are still a fair number – a reasonable number of them here in Southern California.

A "cottage" (cottage) is also a small house, usually with only one or two bedrooms, and one floor. Often there are many other identical looking houses called "cottages" near it. Usually, the word "cottage" is used for a small house that is near a lake or perhaps a river, although it might be in the mountains as well. Cottages are usually used as vacation housing; that is, somewhere where you go on the weekend, not the place where you live the entire year. The word "cottage" is not as common in California; you will hear the word more often in the Midwest and the East, where there are more lakes and rivers and perhaps more of these kinds of houses.

Nina, then, wants a smaller house than Ralph. Ralph says, "What?! You think I'm going to live in a house that's a step up from a mobile home? No way." So, Ralph is saying that he does not want to live in a house that is just a step up from a mobile home. The expression "to be a step up from" means one level higher, slightly better than, an improvement over. A "mobile home" is the cheapest, least expensive kind of housing you can have. It's a home that is made like a big trailer; there are wheels on it, and it is towed by a truck and put into the place where you are living. Often there are other mobile homes very close to you, what we would call a "mobile home park." Mobile homes are housing for people, often times, who don't have a lot of money; they are cheap housing. Ralph says that he is not going to live in a house that is just a little better, just a step up from a mobile home. He says, "We've come into some money and we're going to buy a big house." "To come into some money" means to receive some money, usually from someone who has died. We would call that "inheriting" the money (inheriting).

Well, Ralph and Nina have inherited some money, and Ralph wants to buy a big house. "Maybe," he says, "a colonial or a Greek revival." A "colonial" is a home built in one of the styles that was popular in the United States before we became a country, when we were still a colony. That's where "colonial" comes from. Usually, a colonial has one or two stories – one or two floors – two levels, and very steep roofs; that is, roofs that come to a very sharp angle. That's a colonial house, especially on the East Coast and the Midwest in the U.S. Here in the west, especially California, we have something called a "Spanish colonial," which





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is different than a eastern colonial house. A Spanish colonial has usually rounded arches in the side of the house and in the windows. It is not as sharp; it doesn't have as many angles. Even the walls in the corner of the – of the room are rounded in many Spanish colonial houses. You find a lot of those here in Los Angeles that were built in the early and mid-20<sup>th</sup> century. "Greek revival" is a house or a building that looks like sort of classic ancient Greek architecture, with what we would call "pillars," large, round columns in the front around the building. Many of the buildings in Washington, D.C. for the U.S. government are built in this sort of classic Greek style. So, a Greek revival house would be one like that.

Nina says, "If you want something bigger than a bungalow, how about a split-level modern house or perhaps a ranch-style house?" A "split-level home" is a home where you walk in and there are two more levels, they're sort of halfway between being a completely separate level. One level above you is where there are bedrooms, and one level below you is where you will find, say, the living room, the main space in the house. That's a split-level house. A "ranch-style house" is a long, rectangular house, with only one floor. It has very large windows. It's very plain, very simple, not a lot of decoration inside or outside the house.

Ralph says, "You're still thinking too small. The sky's the limit." The expression "the sky is the limit" – we put "sky" and "is" together so it becomes "the sky's the limit" – is a phrase used to show there are no limits, no controls. You can have whatever you want, as expensive and as big as you want. Ralph says, "We can afford (meaning we have the money for) something big, really big."

Nina says, "That's what the nouveau riche would do." "Nouveau riche" is a French expression. And by the way, I always mispronounce the French expressions; I'm sorry. Please don't email me and tell me I'm saying it wrong. I know I'm saying it wrong. It's...uh...just because I'm not very intelligent; I haven't figured out French pronunciation yet. In fact, I mispronounce all languages really! Um...so, that's...uh...that's what Americans do! We're not the smartest people, you have to understand that. Or maybe it's just me! Anyway, "nouveau riche" in U.S. English means someone who has become rich, someone who has become wealthy very recently. The term is often used as a criticism, as a negative way of describing people who suddenly get a lot of money and go out and spend a lot of money on things that other people disapprove of, or that show that they have a lot of money.

Ralph says, "So what? Our money is new and we have a lot of it, and I want a big house. We're not being ostentatious." "To be ostentatious" (ostentatious) means to do something or say something just to impress other people, especially





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when you spend a lot of money. Rock stars and celebrities are often ostentatious; they like to spend their money on big cars or jewelry to show other people how much money they have. Ralph says, "If anyone criticizes us, I'd say, 'Deal with it!'" The expression "deal with it" is an informal expression, slightly rude. It's used to tell people that you must accept or learn to tolerate something because it's not going to change. Someone is complaining about their life; you might, if you are tired of listening to them, say, "Oh, just deal with it!" meaning you just have to make the best of it that you can. You're really telling them to stop complaining.

Now let's listen to the dialogue, this time at a normal speed.

[start of dialogue]

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[end of dialogue]

The script for this episode was written by Dr. Lucy Tse.



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From Los Angeles, California, I'm Jeff McQuillan. Thank you for listening. Come back and listen to us next time on ESL Podcast.

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