

How to Talk About Your Family in English

One sentence per person, one story per family — the family map

EPISODE 27 • LEVEL B1-B2

Episode summary

- Your colleague leans over at lunch and asks, do you have any brothers or sisters? And your mind goes blank. You know the words. You just cannot put them in order. Family was the one topic Leo had never said out loud — until one work dinner taught him the difference between a list and a story.
- The family map has four moves. Move one: map your family — one sentence per person. Name, place, one detail. Mother, father, siblings, the wider map of grandparents, aunts, uncles, cousins, and the special cases: only child, twins, step and half, in laws.
- Move two: describe, do not list. Name plus one vivid detail. My grandmother is kind. She calls me every Sunday. The job frame, the place frame, and one adjective paint the whole person.
- Move three: relationship frames. We are close. We talk every Sunday. Present simple for facts that stay true, present continuous for family news. Move four: ask about their family — ask, then share — and know the questions to avoid.
- Real families are not simple. English gives you calm words for the hard parts: passed away, not in touch, divorced, and the polite door: I would rather not talk about that. Family is a story, not a list. Tell it, do not recite it.

What's inside this PDF

18 key words • the family map • description frames • Say It Better upgrades • 3 practice exercises

Key Vocabulary

18 words from this episode — learn them, then use them this week

1. sibling

a brother or a sister.

> Do you have any siblings?

2. in laws

the parents and siblings of your husband or wife.

> My mother in law makes the best soup in the world.

3. extended family

everyone beyond your parents and siblings.

> We had the whole extended family for lunch last Sunday.

4. only child

a person with no brothers or sisters.

> I am an only child, so my cousins were like my siblings.

5. twins

two children born at the same time.

> My cousins are twins.

6. close knit

a family that is very close and spends a lot of time together.

> We are a close knit family.

7. grown up

an adult, no longer a child.

> Now that we are all grown up, we meet once a year.

8. middle child

the child between older and younger siblings.

> I am the middle child.

9. get along

to have a good relationship.

> Do you get along with your brother?

10. in touch

in regular contact.

> We are not really in touch these days.

11. passed away

died, said gently.

> My father passed away.

12. gather

to come together.

> We always gather for birthdays.

13. close

very connected, with love and contact.

> We are a close family.

14. stubborn

not easily moved from an opinion.

> My brother is stubborn.

15. strict

firm about rules.

> My grandmother is strict about Sunday lunch.

16. stepmother

the wife of your father.

> My stepmother cooks on Sundays.

17. half brother

a brother who shares one parent with you.

> I have a half brother on my father's side.

18. cousin

the child of your aunt or uncle.

> She is my cousin.

The Family Map

one sentence per person, one story per family

Move one: the map

“One sentence per person. Name, place, one detail.”

Move two: describe

“Name plus one vivid detail. My grandmother is kind. She calls me every Sunday.”

Move three: relationship frames

“We are close. We talk every Sunday. News in the present continuous.”

Move four: ask, then share

“Do you have any brothers or sisters? I have one younger sister.”

The rule

“Family is a story, not a list. Tell it, do not recite it.”

Say It Better — 10 upgrades

☐ “My brother is married with two children.”

☐ “My brother is married and has two children.”

☐ “She is my cousin sister.”

☐ “She is my cousin.”

☐ “My father is no more.”

☐ “My father passed away.”

☐ “I have a family of four members.”

☐ “There are four of us in my family.”

☐ “My sister is elder than me.”

☐ “My sister is older than me.”

☐ “He is my real brother.”

☐ “He is my brother.”

☐ “My mother is housewife.”

☐ “My mother is a homemaker.”

☐ “Do you have brother or sister?”

☐ “Do you have any brothers or sisters?”

Practice Time

3 exercises — do them today, not “someday”

Exercise 1 — Fill in the blank

Word bank: sibling • in laws • extended family • twins • close knit

1. Do you have any _____?
2. She is not an only child, she has a _____.
3. We had the whole _____ for lunch last Sunday.
4. My cousins are _____.
5. We are a _____ family. We talk every single day.

Exercise 2 — Say it like a local

Upgrade each family-English line (answers below):

1. “My father is no more.” > Say it gently:
2. “My sister is elder than me.” > Compare ages the natural way:
3. “Do you have brother or sister?” > Ask it like a local:

Exercise 3 — The family map

Say your family map out loud: one sentence per person, one detail each, one memory at the end. Then say it again, faster, eyes closed.

- Sunday lunch: We arrive at noon. My mother opens the door.
- Birthdays: We always gather at our parents' house.
- The phone call: We talk every Sunday.

Answer key

Ex 1: 1 siblings • 2 sibling • 3 extended family • 4 twins • 5 close knit

Ex 2: 1 “My father passed away.” 2 “My sister is older than me.” 3 “Do you have any brothers or sisters?”