

Expecting: The English of Pregnancies



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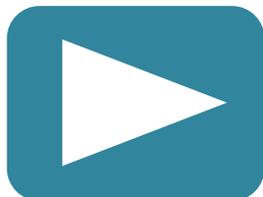
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Expecting: The English of Pregnancies



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My wife, Christine, is pregnant! You might not care, but the announcement big news in our family. A pregnancy is big news in any family. And so, talking about pregnancy is going to be the topic for this week.

Do you need this vocabulary?

For those of you who already have your children, you know that this is a topic that gets re-visited over and over again. For those of you who don't expect children at all or any time soon, I can tell you that expecting parents – that is, parents-to-be – won't give you any choice: it's something you will find yourself talking about in English, if you wait long enough.

During the week, there will be three listening exercises, and a quiz at the end. Until then, here's your chance to brush-up on your pregnancy vocabulary. These are the words you'll be hearing in the listening activities.

Vocabulary

Pregnant / Pregnancy: Pregnant is the "status" or "state" of a woman who will have a baby in the next nine months. After six months or so, you can recognize a pregnant woman on the size of her stomach! Pregnant is an adjective, but there is a noun form of the word: pregnancy. A pregnancy refers to the months in which a woman

is pregnant. You will hear people – often women – refer to a "difficult pregnancy" or a "dangerous pregnancy."

Expecting: To "expect" normally means "to think – almost know – something or someone is coming." If I believe that it will rain tomorrow, then I expect rain. If my sister says she'll call at five, I expect a phone call at five (though, really, I expect my sister to be late).

In the progressive (-ing) form, though, "expecting" often means "expecting a child," or the same as **pregnant**. (**Note:** you can't say a woman "expects" and mean she is pregnant. We *always* use the word "expecting" when we talk about **pregnancy**.)

Due: If your teacher gives you homework to do and tells you to bring it back on Friday, then your homework is due on Friday. (We already talked about this meaning of the word, once.) It simply means, that's when the teacher **expects** you to have the homework done. When we talk about **pregnant** women, however, we use it to mean when the baby should be born. My wife, for example, is due in August. That means, we have plans to have a bigger family in August. You can also say the baby is due in August.

Stroller: Babies don't drive cars. And babies can't walk by themselves. When parents want to go somewhere with their babies, they stick them in a kind of wagon or cart with wheels, and push the wagon around. This wagon is called a stroller.

The word stroller comes from the word "stroll" which is an old-fashioned word for "to take a walk." The British word for a stroller, a "perambulator," comes from the word "perambulate," which is an even *older* word for "to take a walk." The important thing is this: when you walk with your baby, you put it in a stroller.

Crib: Babies don't sleep in normal beds. They have their own, special beds that they can't fall out of. They have cribs. A crib is a bed just the right size for a baby, with walls, or "bars" to keep the baby from falling out.

To be (feeling) for someone: I'm sure you know what it means to be happy. I think you probably even know what it means to be excited or scared. But, what if your best friend is really happy, if he's won the lottery – or had a baby – and you're happy only because he's happy? Then you are happy for your best friend.

If your brother is doing something dangerous and you're scared that something might happen to him, you are scared for your brother. We use the phrase "to be (feeling) for someone" when we want to say that what we feel is because of what happened to someone else.

Announcement: If you open your newspaper, can you find a page where people put ads in to say "We have had a baby." Or "we are married." Or even "John Pierce died on Friday." These kinds of ads are common in the U.S. and in Germany, maybe in your country, too. They are announcements.

An announcement is any time you take the effort to spread information – usually about something that has just happened – around. An ad in the newspaper is an announcement to the world, in general. My wife and I mailed birth announcements to our family and friends.

Talking About Pregnancy: The First Trimester



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The first three months of a pregnancy are called the first trimester. A trimester is three months of a pregnancy. There is, of course, the second trimester and the third trimester. A trimester means "one third."

Christine and I just finished the first trimester of her pregnancy. And it was, for me as a dad-to-be, an exciting time. And for Christine a mostly exciting time. I say mostly exciting because... there's a term called morning sickness. It's not really a sickness. It's the feeling of being sick – and also of throwing up sometimes – that some women have in the beginning of a pregnancy.

We have now read many books on pregnancy and I can tell you that some women have morning sickness very bad. They are sick for three months straight. Other women don't have anything. Christine was in the middle. She had one very bad day and a week where she felt sick the whole time.

Unfortunately, her morning sickness came during a vacation to visit my parents in the U.S. That means that, while we were planning on traveling, she was throwing up and so we didn't travel.

It was good for me because I spent more time with my parents. I think it was a little nerve-wracking for Christine because we didn't know she was pregnant then, we just knew she was sick.

We hoped to have children and so we talked about "Is this a sign that she could be pregnant?" And my mother – who already has six grandchildren, but what grandma has too many grandchildren? – the first thing she thought was "is Christine pregnant?" And, of course, we were all... not excited, but maybe nervous, or we were anticipating maybe being pregnant.

Before we flew back to the U.S., Christine took the first pregnancy test and the result was positive. Of course, she's a very cautious person, so when we got back to Germany she bought two more tests and took them both and the results were positive. And, she still didn't believe it... because we wanted to have children and we don't believe good news.

So, she went to her gynecologist (a gynecologist is a doctor only for women) and the gynecologist gave her an ultrasound.

An ultrasound is a machine that lets the gynecologist look inside Christine's stomach. It uses sound waves. At the top of this post on the blog there will be a picture of our most recent ultrasound. It's how you can see inside a woman to see how the baby is progressing. And the ultrasound showed that Christine was pregnant. And, of course, then we were excited.

And then we starting talking about how many things do we have to get done before the baby comes. How much will our life change? Should we move into a new apartment or not?

Our apartment now is at the top of six flights of stairs and there's no elevator. (A "flight" is a series of steps between two floors). So we still talk about maybe finding a new apartment.

And the first trimester is normally when any major problems in a pregnancy are going to happy. That's why you don't announce a pregnancy until after the first trimester. And, it's also I think very difficult to keep the secret of "we are pregnant" during this first

trimester. We are excited, we are hopeful. And, I am very glad that we made the announcement because... I like talking and keeping this gigantic thing secret was very difficult for me.

And keeping the secret was difficult for another reason: because we started changing our plans. We changed our vacation plans for 2009, so that we would do most of our traveling in early 2009 and not later. And we started talking about moving. And, of course, we couldn't tell our families why we had these plans to change. We only said "Oh, we're thinking of only traveling in the first half of the year."

And now that everyone knows that we're expecting a baby in August, it's definitely nice to talk about it.

Talking About Pregnancy: The Announcement



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Because we kept the secret of our pregnancy for the first trimester, it was important to us to make a *big* announcement of the pregnancy. We were very excited to talk about it and wanted to do a good job.

Of course, my family is further away and the announcement was not a big deal. I told my mother in a phone call and she was excited and she said she thought maybe Christine was pregnant and she was waiting to hear. And, of course, she was excited. She was so happy for us. It was... wow. She couldn't stop laughing and smiling and talking.

For the rest of my family I made letters that included an ultrasound picture and an announcement that Christine and I are expecting a baby in August and... blah, blah, blah.

But for Christine's family, because they're closer and we can get them all in one spot at one time, we wanted to do something special. And to understand the idea Christine had, you need a little background on Germany.

In Germany, if you drive your car too fast there are machines that will photograph your car. There is a radar connected to a camera that takes a picture of your car and a few days later (or a few weeks later) you get a letter in the mail, complete with photograph of your car. That says "On this day you were driving this fast and the speed limit was only this much and that means you were fifteen kilometers too fast and the fine is 20

Euros, or something like that." And, like many people in Germany, we have one of those letters in our apartment.

And so we took that letter, we scanned it into the computer and started to change it. We replaced the photograph of the car with an ultrasound picture. We changed the text from a warning that we had driven too fast to a warning that our family was growing too quickly, and we were required to make an announcement to our family. Where the fine was, we found an online calculator for the cost of raising a child in Germany. Believe it or not, raising a child for 18 years cost 107,136 Euros. That's a lot of money. So we put that amount into the fine box, printed it out, folded it up, and pretended we got it in the mail.

We went to Christine's house (to Christine's *parents'* house) for coffee and pretended like we just got the photograph in the mail that day. And Christine was angry and upset and she showed it to her parents and her parents looked at it, and looked at her, and looked at it. Her mom said "Does this mean what I think it means?" And, of course, we said "yes," and they were also very excited.

I should also say that Christine's mom has been giving us many hints that she wants grandchildren. And it was very funny for us when we knew we were pregnant and couldn't tell her that she would give us hints that she wanted grandchildren.

One example is: she went on vacation and came back. We asked her how her vacation was and she said "Oh, we did this and we did this. And there was a really big toy store. And all the old people were shopping for their grandchildren and I don't have grandchildren so I didn't go inside, but it looked like a nice toy store. I'd like to have someone to shop for."

And now I think they're excited that they're going to be grandparents although hearing the name "grandma and grandpa" still seems strange to them, I think.

Talking About Pregnancy: The Preparation



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The pregnancy really changed the way we looked at our lives. We've gone from being two adults to being the beginnings of a family. And, of course, it's a change that's not going to come automatically or even super-easily. And even worse, it's a change that neither of us have had before and so we're mostly guessing what we have to do.

Now that we have announced the pregnancy, we can ask our parents what they did. And we have asked them. But now I'm asking you. Do you have children? How did you prepare for your children? What do you think I should do to prepare for my children? What do you think the minimum a family should have before the child is born? And do you have any specific advice for the first several months of being a parent?

And I can tell you what we have planned so far. First, we started thinking about what do we need? At the bare minimum? We think it's better to buy a little bit (you can always buy more later) and we don't want to be completely unprepared, so we said: a stroller, a crib, maybe a... a playpen.

A playpen is where you put a baby during the day. And, obviously, the equipment of having a baby: bottles and diapers and... little bit of clothing. Though clothing is difficult to buy until you know how big the baby is.

But, we've begun making these plans and even that has made me realize how expensive babies really are. A baby costs money. Wow. And so, we've gone from planning what we need to making plans of how cheaply can we get what we need?

I've become an expert on eBay. There is a website only for Dresden (a city in Germany) where we can find used stuff. And the trick now is deciding what we want, watching for it online, and saying how much are we willing to pay? We know the new price of the things we like. And if something is only a little bit cheaper than new, then it makes more sense to buy it new because it's sturdier and has a guarantee. So, how much will we pay for quality that is used? And because many Germans only have one child, there are a lot of things that are only used once.

And so, the big part of preparing now, or the first part of preparing now is watching our pennies and trying to figure out how to get the things we need for the lowest price. But of course, that's not the only thing. Christine will tell her work this week that she's pregnant and a lot of things will change for her at work.

Also, we have to prepare for the time when she's not working and she's at home. That means, thinking about money. And, of course, we have to prepare for the idea that we're carrying a baby into our apartment every day.

I mentioned once that our apartment is on the sixth floor of a building with no elevator. That means six flights of stairs. So far, it's been no problem, but when you think about having a baby in one arm, a dog in the other, and groceries to carry, it's a lot. So we have to think about if we're going to move or not. And, if we don't move, how are we going to manage the baby-dog-groceries problem?

We don't have answers, yet. I think we're going to do our best and then say "when the baby comes, we'll do what we can." And, obviously, we're not going to die. I'm not panicking over the coming baby. But, I think our job is to do the best we can without

going crazy and then, when the baby comes, obviously we'll see what has to be changed and what doesn't.

But still, one more time, I'd like to ask you what your advice is for a coming baby?

Quiz

1. If you hear that a woman is expecting, you can guess that she's:

- Waiting for guests
- Going to have a baby
- Angry that her husband
- came home late

2. If you want to take your baby for a walk, you will push it in a:

- Baby-car
- Baby-mobile
- Babywagon
- Stroller

3. If our baby is "due" in August it ...

- has nothing to do until August
- should come in August
- started walking in August
- will start walking in August

4. What is a "trimester"?

- A building with 3 floors
- Half a semester
- The first three months of a pregnancy
- A machine with 3 wheels

5. What is a "playpen"?

- A pen you play with
- A big box for baby clothes and equipment
- A large mat for playing with babies and feeding them
- A structure with high sides where a baby can play safely

Answers

1. If you hear that a woman is expecting, you can guess that she's:

- Going to have a baby

2. If you want to take your baby for a walk, you will push it in a:

- Stroller

3. If our baby is "due" in August it ...

- should come in August

4. What is a "trimester"?

- The first three months of a pregnancy

5. What is a "playpen"?

- A structure with high sides where a baby can play safely

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This lesson was written by Toby, an American English teacher who lives in Germany. Toby is the creator of [Bite Sized English](#).