

Formal & Informal Vocabulary: Using French words in English

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=yQStFX6SUXs>

<https://www.engvid.com/formal-informal-vocabulary-french-anglo-saxon/>

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Hi, everyone. I'm Jade. What we're talking about today is a little bit of a history lesson

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of the English language. We're going to talk about why English has so many synonyms, why

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we don't just have one word to things, sometimes there's more than one word for it. I'm also

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going to talk about informal language and formal language, why there's always so much

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of a choice in English. And the reason is because we always have this split in English

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between words that come from an Anglo Saxon origin and words that come from a French origin,

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and it's said that about 30... 30% of words actually have a... Can't speak today. Have

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a French origin and we still use those words today. And generally, the ones that come from

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French, they have a more formal quality to them, and the ones that come from Anglo Saxon

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are more neutral and they're the ones that native speakers use all time when they're

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speaking just among each other.

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But first I'm going to recite a little bit of a poem for you because this poem comes

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from Middle English, and the English that you'll hear is really different to the English

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that I'm speaking now. It will be like I'm speaking a different language, but what you

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will hear is the blend between Anglo Saxon words and French words. Okay?

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So let's see if I remember it.

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Whan that Aprill, with his shoures soote The droghte of March hath perced to the roote

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And bathed every veyne in swich licour, Of which vertu engendred is the flour.

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And I could continue, but I won't. And that comes from a really famous poem in English

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taken from The Canterbury Tales, and it's the first part of The Canterbury Tales called

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the general prologue. And it's in Middle English, the time when the peasants spoke Anglo Saxon

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English-peasants are the poor people-and all the rulers spoke French. And the reason that

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happened is because in 1066 there was a big battle when a French king of a part of France

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called Normandy came and defeated the English king at that time, and then he became king

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of England. So when he became king of England, he brought all his people over and the language

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of power in England at that time became French. So everybody who was in a position of power

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spoke French. So in the course the... Every decision-maker in England spoke French. Meanwhile,

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all the peasants just carried on speaking Anglo Saxon like they did before, and the

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words that they used and the language they spoke came from Germany and Norway. They were

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different tribes and before they came over to England. So there were two different languages

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going on. Plus it was only much later that the two... The two languages blended to become

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one language that we speak now that we have both, have both Anglo Saxon words and French

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words in our language.

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What else is important to say about it? I know there's something I've missed.

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Hopefully I'll remember what I missed. Oh yes. And because the kings and the ruling people spoke in French

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and the peasants spoke in Anglo Saxon, I feel like that distinction is still there. So when

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we're not trying to be formal or official or anything, we use words of Anglo Saxon origin.

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Only when we're trying to express ourselves in a very elegant way or an official way do

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we use the French origin words. So even though our language has become one thing, we're still

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keeping this idea in our language that the French words are sort of higher. And this

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is also important for you because when you learn English, especially if you already speak

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a European language, a Latin European language, it's often so easy for you to learn a lot

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of the verbs because they just sound the same, and so you don't bother with phrasal verbs

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because you've already got a verb you can use that's almost the same in your own language.

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But the problem is this gives your speech a really formal quality so you're not speaking

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like a native speaker at all. And this is also to do with Anglo Saxon because we get

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all our phrasal verbs from the Anglo Saxon origin.

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So that's something that we'll talk about in the next part of the lesson, but first

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before we get there I also want to give you some examples to do with meat and animals.

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Maybe in your country you just have the same word for the animal and for the meat. It's

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the same thing, right? Well, in English we have different words. Here are the words for

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the animal, and these are Anglo Saxon words. So the Anglo Saxons were the peasants and

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they were working on the farm with the animals, and these are the words they had for the animals:

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"sheep", "deer", "cow", "hen". One-syllable words. Typical. Typical-sounding, short, Anglo Saxon words.

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Meanwhile, the kings and the rulers-that's supposed to be like a big piece

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of chicken or something-they ate lots of meat and they had different words. They didn't

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touch the animals on the farm, they just ate the animals. They had the word: "mutton".

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"Mutton" is an old sheep. We don't actually really eat mutton now in England. We eat lamb,

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which is a young... A younger sheep. Deer is "venison", the meat for that is called

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"venison". The meat for cow is "beef", and the meat for hen is "poultry." This is a more

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general word for... This is a more general word for chicken and other birds that you can eat.

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We can also thank the French people who came and conquered us in 1066 for the words that

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they brought into the language to do with the food. I don't know what the peasants of

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that time ate, but French brought us lots of words, like: "cuisine", "soup", "spice",

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"mayonnaise". So, we... We have... We still always take a lot of cooking words from French.

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Plus, as I said to you, the French were in positions of power. That's the reasons why

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so many of our words to do with finance and government come from French. "Mortgage",

"parliament",

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"interest". When we come back we're going to look at some more specific comparisons

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of Anglo Saxon and French words.

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Okay, let's compare some of those Anglo Saxon words and the French words. On the... Here

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we've got the... Oh, that's silly of me. Here the Anglo Saxon words, here are the French words.

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And I mentioned to you that phrasal verbs come from Anglo Saxon origin.

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The ones that come from French, these are the more formal verbs. So if you use these in speech

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people will know what you're talking about, but compared to a native speaker your speech

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will have more formal quality. Also, that means that these are things that you actually

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need to learn if your language is one of the European Latin languages because these words

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are not related to the... To the word that you use.

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So we've got: "ask for", ask for something means "enquire".

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"Keep on" doing something means "continue".

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"Blow up" something means "explode".

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"Run away" means "escape".

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"Put out", for example, a fire, means "extinguish".

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"Go up" means "increase".

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And "go down" means "decrease".

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Another thing I'll mention about this is our newspapers here in England, we

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have lots of different kinds of newspapers. We have ones called tabloids. Tabloids are...

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Like, you could call them the popular press. They're much more likely to write in phrasal

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verbs, whereas the broadsheet newspaper is the more respectable press, write in the French

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origin verbs. But like I said, people don't necessarily speak like this. Writing is a bit different.

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Then let's compare some just vocabularies and general vocabulary. We've got the French

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words here and the Anglo Saxon words-because I did it wrong-on this side. So I'm wearing

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a "shirt", that's a regular shirt, not a fancy word, but the French origin word: "blouse".

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Sounds a little bit fancy in English English. "Answer", to answer something means the same

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as "reply" in the French origin word.

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Anglo Saxon word is "weird", but the French origin word is "strange".

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We talk about "behaviour" in Anglo Saxon, but in French it's "manner".

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"Belongings" become "property". And "folk" become "people".

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"Folk" is one of my favourite words.

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It's so simple and it's just one syllable as well. It's a really good example of just

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Anglo Saxon clarity in sound, and also being... It just makes sense, so you kind of just sharp

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words, "folk". And "people" is, you know, is a bit longer. So yeah, here is a little

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introduction I would say to Anglo Saxon and French, and how it all comes together over

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the years to make up the English that we speak today.

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So, what you can do now is go to the engVid website to do the quiz,

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check how good you are with this vocabulary.

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And if you did like this video, please do subscribe here to my engVid channel,

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also my personal channel because I've got two YouTube channels

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because one isn't enough for me.

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Thank you so much for watching.

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And come and join me again soon for more videos. Okay. Bye.