

Talking about Politics

You may have been given this advice when you moved to the US: "Never talk about politics in America." That may surprise you, if you come from a country (or family) where talking about politics is an important part of conversations.

People and families differ, of course, but it is fair to say that many Americans like to avoid conflict, and for sure, talking about politics these days may lead to conflict.

Imagine this: You are at a small dinner with people you have not met before. One person says something you really disagree with - say, about gun ownership or immigration policy. Would you say anything, or would you stay silent?

The chart on this page shows what Americans would do. For example, of those who favor raising the minimum wage to \$15/hour, 74% would speak up about their disagreement at that dinner party; of those who oppose raising the minimum wage, only 70% would say anything.

Notice the topic Americans are *least* likely to disagree about at a dinner party with strangers: Donald Trump. Those who disapprove of him are especially unlikely to speak up.

Everyone agrees: What a way to ruin a dinner party...

Talking about Politics.....1
 Halloween2
 Costumes2
 7 Halloween Tips if You Have
 Children3
 And 3 if You Don't3
 To Carve a Jack-o-Lantern3
 Columbus Day4
 Discovery of America: Closer to
 True4
 Those Odd, Hard Vegetables.....5
 Birthday Biography: Noah Webster...5
 7 Ways to Help Your Child Learn
 English.....6
 And Some Ways to Help
 Yourself, Too.....6
 Raising a Bilingual Child6
 9 Tips for Buying Health Products...7
 Why English is Hard7
 That Crazy English: Scary Stuff... ..8

More people would avoid talking about Trump than other topics, even gun policy, with those who disagree

% who would share their own views about each topic at a small dinner with people they have not met before who are expressing the opposing view



Notes: Respondents were randomly assigned a topic. See topline of report "Public Highly Critical of State of Political Discourse in the U.S." for full question wording. In Trump version, respondents were asked about a scenario where guests were discussing their like or dislike of Trump.

Source: Survey of U.S. adults conducted April 29-May 13, 2019.

PEW RESEARCH CENTER

Compliments of

Literacy Volunteers of Kent County

Distribution restricted per terms of educational site license.

The views expressed in this newsletter are those of the author alone and may not reflect those of the site license holder.

Halloween Costumes

Costumes are a traditional part of Halloween. During the holiday's early days, some people believed that ghosts appeared at this time of year; they wore costumes to scare the ghosts.

You can spend many hours (and dollars) on the costumes, or make something fun for free. The most traditional costumes are ghosts, witches, skeletons, and other scary characters. But you will see a wide variety of costumes — animals, TV characters, and story book characters. It might be fun for your child to dress as a character from your own country. For some ideas, try this site: www.thespruce.com/halloween-crafts-for-kids-4127472

Some words about masks: Masks make it hard for children to see. Safety experts say to pick a costume with no mask. Use face paint instead. Also, masks — any kind, not just scary ones — can be frightening for young children. They get confused about whether people have permanently changed when they put on a mask.

If older siblings are going to wear masks, have them put the masks on and off while the younger child watches. Or let the preschool child play with the mask in front of a mirror.

Costumes are big business. Americans will spend \$1 billion (!!) on costumes for children and, in a relatively new trend, another \$1.2 billion on costumes for adults AND \$310 million on costumes for their pets. I say make your own...

Halloween



On the evening of October 31 every year, in most US communities, you will see children in the streets, dressed in costumes, carrying bags for candy. They will go from door to door in their neighborhoods and shout, "Trick or Treat!" According to tradition, the neighbors should give them a piece of candy (the Treat). If not, the children will play a Trick on them. Halloween is so popular in the US that most adults are ready with a basket of candy at the door. Today, the Trick part is rare — children just run to the next house if there is no Treat.

The roots of Halloween are very old. The name itself comes from a Christian celebration of all saints (or "hallows"), started in the ninth century. All Hallow's Day is November 1; the night before is All Hallow's Eve. But the holiday is also rooted in an older, pre-Christian festival, Samhain (pronounced "SOW-in"). As these two belief systems came together, the holiday came to be seen as a time when the boundary between the living and the dead became thinner. Those who had died could re-visit the living, either to haunt those who had wronged them, or just to visit happily with their families. With all these spirits around, going outside became frightening to some. Some stayed home and had fun there. Some people put charms at the doors and windows to keep unfriendly spirits away. If they were brave enough to go out, they would build bonfires, play pranks, and wear costumes, and they often visited people's homes in their disguises.

In the mid-1800s, Irish immigrants to the US brought their traditions with them and, by the 20th century, Halloween had become a popular holiday. Halloween is not considered a religious holiday by most Americans. Here is some background about the common symbols of this holiday:

Ghosts and skeletons: These are references to the thinning of the veil between our world and the "other world."

Witches, broomsticks and black cats: You will see images of witches riding on broomsticks, sometimes with or in the form of a black cat. In the Middle Ages, the idea of witches — women who had sold themselves to the Devil — grew out of the Christian belief about witchcraft (magic) and heresy. You may see witches stirring large pots; in pagan times, these were signs of abundance but now are used to suggest that witches make magic potions.

Jack-o-Lanterns: An old story says that a man named Jack loved to tease the Devil. The Devil made him wander the earth forever, carrying a lantern. Today in the US, a carved pumpkin with a candle in it is called a Jack-o-Lantern. (See Sidebar on page 3.)

Apples, squash, corn, and nuts: You will see doors and tables decorated with these harvest fruits, a reference to the harvest timing of Halloween.

In the US, Halloween is a light-hearted, fun holiday. However, there have been some accidents. Because children often go Trick-or-Treating after dinner when it is dark, some children have been hit by a car. And, I am sorry to say, there have been a few tragedies in which adults put poisons or razor blades in children's candy. These tragedies are extremely rare (and have not happened in many many years). But they changed the way that some families and towns celebrate Halloween. Some schools hold a Halloween party for children in costumes instead of Trick-or-Treating. Some towns encourage children to go Trick-or-Treating before dark. And parents now are very careful about the candy their children get. Please read the list of safety tips on the next page closely.

7 Halloween Tips If You Have Children...

1. **Make sure car drivers will be able to see your child.** Make part of the costume white. Put day-glow stickers on the back of the costume. Use a white candy bag. Give your child a flashlight to carry.
2. **Choose the houses you go to carefully.** Go to neighbors you know, or who clearly have young children of their own. If you do not know many people in your neighborhood, ask to go Trick-or-Treating with a neighbor or friend.
3. **Do not go to any house with the front lights turned off.** This means they are not at home, or they have no more Treats left, or do not want to participate in Halloween.
4. **Go along with your younger children when they go Trick-or-Treating.** Stay with them, especially crossing streets. Usually, children do not go inside the neighbors' homes. If your children are invited inside, go with them unless you know the neighbor.
5. Older children may want to go with their friends, without you. **Use your judgment about what is safe.** Ask a friend or teacher if you are not sure. Discuss with your child ahead of time where the group will go. Do not let your child go alone.
6. **Do not let your children eat any candy until you have looked at it carefully.** If the paper is torn, or if it is not pre-packaged, throw it away.
7. **A non-safety tip:** It is most polite for your children to say, "Trick or Treat!" in a friendly and loud voice when the neighbor opens the door. And "Thank you," "Good-bye" or "Happy Halloween" as they leave.

...and 3 Tips If You Don't

You do not have to have children to enjoy Halloween. It's fun to see the costumes and feel the excitement of all that candy! Here is some advice for being a good neighbor:

1. **If you would like to participate in Halloween, show some sign of this.** If you live in a house, turn on your front porch light and front hall light. In an apartment, a Halloween decoration (like a picture of a pumpkin or witch) on the front door also signals that you would like children to knock.
2. **Have a basket of Treats near (but inside) the front door.** The children do not need to come into your home — they can stand at the door to get their Treats. In the weeks before Halloween, stores will sell special bags of small, wrapped candy — this is what most neighbors give. But you can give very small toys or a few pennies instead of candy, if you like. Do not give any food that you did not buy packaged at the store.
3. **If you do not want to participate, or if you are going out, turn off the front lights and take down the decorations.** This may discourage children from knocking. One year, we had no more candy, so we turned out the front lights, and ignored the doorbell. The next year, we bought more candy!

To Carve a Jack-o-Lantern

1. With a sharp knife, cut a 5-6 inch circle around the stem of the pumpkin, making a lid. (Adults should do the cutting, or buy a special pumpkin-carving knife that is safe for older children.) Carve at an inward angle so you can put the lid back on without it falling through. Remove the lid.
2. With your hands and a large spoon, scrape out all the seeds and stringy, yucky stuff. Throw this stuff away. Or wash the seeds, add salt, and put them in a 350° oven till they are golden and crisp - about 10 minutes, stirring once or twice - for a snack. Scrape the pumpkin until all the wet strings are gone, leaving about a one-inch pumpkin wall. (If you see an orange plastic spoon with a flat edge for sale this month, grab it - it makes this job so much easier.)
3. Draw the face on the pumpkin with a pencil. Cut along your pencil lines. Cut at an angle so the pumpkin wall does not show from the outside. Be sure to make enough holes to let oxygen inside, to keep the candle lit. Or buy a stencil and special carving tools that are now on sale, to make pumpkins that are intricate or include written words - these are a new development in the last few years.
4. Dig a small hole in the inside bottom of the pumpkin. Put a wide-bottom candle in the hole. Light the candle. Replace the lid. Boo!

Here is a good youtube to help:

www.youtube.com/watch?v=krfeYXK1byI

Discovery of America: Closer to True

Help your children understand the real discovery of America and the events surrounding Columbus' landing. I recommend these books:

The Discovery of the Americas (B & G Maestro, Scholastic).

Shows how archaeologists trace the movement of peoples, 12,000 to 30,000 years ago, from Asia the Americas. Similarities in teeth, language, myths, architecture, pottery, and design tell a fascinating story.

Encounter (J. Yolen, Harcourt Brace Jovanovich) A picture book about Columbus' landing, told from the viewpoint of a Native American small boy. His reaction to Columbus' white skin and European clothing is shown in the eerie illustrations.

Follow the Dream: The Story of Christopher Columbus (P. Sis, Knopf). Another picture book, with especially lovely artwork, about Columbus' life from childhood to adulthood. The unusual level of detail makes it good for older elementary school kids who don't usually choose picture books any more.

Morning Girl (M. Dorris, Hyperion Press). Chapter book — historical fiction about a Native American sister and brother who lived on the Bahamian island where Columbus landed in 1492.

Indigenous Peoples Day/Columbus Day

Americans mark the day in 1492 when an Italian explorer, Christopher Columbus, landed in the "New World" on October 12. The federal holiday, called Columbus Day, is observed on the second Monday of October (this year, October 14). Some states and cities observe Indigenous Peoples Day that day instead.

According to the traditional story, Columbus believed he could reach "India," an important source of spices, by sailing west from Europe. ("India" or "the Indies" were the names used in the 15th century for all eastern Asia, including China and Japan.) It was generally accepted at that time that the world was round. But most people thought the ocean between Europe and India was far too wide for Columbus' plan. Columbus convinced the Spanish Queen Isabella and King Ferdinand to pay for his experiment. When he reached land (on an island that is now part of the Bahamas), he thought he had reached India. He called the Native American people "Indians." Columbus eventually made four trips to the New World (but he never landed on what is now mainland US).

Recently, historians have challenged the traditional story of Columbus in a few ways:

- ♦ Columbus was not the first European to land in the western hemisphere. Leif Eriksson, an Icelandic explorer, probably started a small community on Newfoundland around the year 1000.
- ♦ Some historians believe Columbus was simply looking for new land to conquer for Spain, and was not headed toward India at all. His orders from Isabella and Ferdinand were to "discover and acquire...Islands and Mainlands" in the Ocean Sea. These orders do not mention "India." Would they have used

the word "discover" for India? Could they have believed that Columbus could *acquire* (take as his own) all of India?

- ♦ Until recently, Americans celebrated Columbus' *discovery* of the New World. But the word *discover* suggests that no one knew North and South America were here until Columbus arrived. In fact, people had been living here for at least 12,000 years. Historians agree that fully-evolved humans walked here, over the land bridge that connected Siberia and Alaska during the last Ice Age. When Columbus landed, Native Americans had well-developed cultures, with complex religions, food, language, architecture, and social systems.
- ♦ Columbus forced hundreds of Arawak Indians to return to Spain as slaves. He and his men treated the Arawaks with brutality, and killed many of them. Many people do not want to call him a hero. Some Native



Americans and communities hold annual protests on Columbus Day, and some communities have renamed and re-focused the holiday *Indigenous Peoples' Day*.

The meaning of this holiday has changed for many Americans. Instead of focusing on what Columbus meant to Europe, there is a new sensitivity to the negative effect of European migration and domination on the lives of Native Americans. Some Americans mark the day as the anniversary of the beginning of a multicultural tapestry that defines the US. Unlike Halloween, this is a holiday with few symbols and customs. There are no special dinners, gifts, foods, or forms of celebration that everyone joins. The holiday is one of the few times that countries throughout North, Central, and South America join in the same observation.

Those Odd, Hard Vegetables

This fall, you will start to see many different kinds of squash in supermarkets. The most common are the acorn, butternut, Hubbard, spaghetti, delicata and buttercup squash.

Here is an easy way to cook any of these squash (but see the special instructions below for spaghetti squash):

Look for a squash that has a hard skin and that is firm, with no soft spots.



Cut the squash in half, through the stem. (It will be hard to do because the squash is so firm. Be careful.) Use a spoon to take out the seeds and any stringy stuff around them.

Squash takes a long time to cook. Cooking it in a microwave oven does not hurt the taste, so I suggest you do that, especially if you are cooking only a small amount. Put the pieces in a glass microwave-safe pan, cut side up. Put some butter on the tops of the pieces. Bake uncovered: about 5 minutes (600-700 watt oven) for each 1/2 pound of squash. Increase the time for more squash. Cook until it is very soft.

If you are cooking a lot of squash, or if you do not have a microwave oven, use a conven-

ventional oven. Prepare the squash as described above. Put the squash pieces in a pan, cut side down. Bake at 400° for 40-50 minutes, or until very soft.

When the squash is soft, taste a bit to see how you like it. Try adding salt, or maple syrup, or brown sugar. Do not eat the skin — scoop out the squash with a spoon.

Spaghetti squash is

different from these others, in a fun and interesting way. Bake it whole (without cutting it in half). Before you put it in the oven, stick a fork or knife in a few places, to release pressure. Bake it at 350° for about 45 minutes. Then turn it over and bake it 20 minutes longer, or until it is very soft to touch. Cut it in half and remove the seeds. When you scoop out the cooked squash you will see how it gets its name. Serve with butter, salt, and cheese, or spaghetti sauce. (Or, you can cut it in half before cooking; here's a youtube to show you how to do so safely: www.youtube.com/watch?v=sD-4E_wLz0.)

See www.recipesource.com (search for "squash") for 423 (!) other ways to cook specific kinds of squash.

Yom Kippur

Read the September issue of *Newcomer's Almanac* to learn about the Jewish high holy days which started on September 30 (Rosh Hashanah) and end on October 9 (Yom Kippur), Yom Kippur is the Day of *Atonement* (action to gain forgiveness, a time to try to find ways to improve one's relationships and behavior. It is traditional to *fast* (not eat) as atonement for and concentration on past wrong doings, and in the hope of living a sin-free life in the future. Yom Kippur marks the end of the judgment period that started with Rosh Hashanah.

Birthday Biography: Noah Webster

Noah Webster — author of the first American dictionary — was born on October 16, 1758.

Webster began his career as a teacher, but didn't like the available textbooks, which he thought lacked an American perspective. He prepared a book called *The American Spelling Book* in 1783, which was wildly successful. People would gather for big weekend parties to play spelling games based on this book. (Who said Americans don't know how to have a good time??) The book has sold over 100 million copies and is still in print.

In Webster's day, the most authoritative English-language dictionary was the [British] Samuel Johnson's *Dictionary* (1755). Webster wanted a dictionary that showed uniquely-American words (like *chowder* and *hickory*) and pronunciation. He wanted to standardize American spelling — from him we have check not cheque, honor not honour, center not centre, and defense not defence, for example.

And he wanted to record the English language as it was spoken within the US culture. He produced a two-volume *American Dictionary of the English Language* in 1828. Of its 70,000 words, about half had never been in any earlier dictionary. The book did not sell well in his lifetime. But it continues on now as the standard dictionary in the US.

Happy Birthday, Mr. Webster.

Your children have a wonderful opportunity to become bilingual. Still, some parents worry that it is too difficult for a child to learn two languages, and that they will be delayed in speaking if they try.

The latest, well-designed research studies show that bilingual children can, and do, learn two languages well. In fact, they seem to be slightly ahead of monolingual children in understanding written language — maybe because they have a better understanding of the symbolic relation between words and objects.

To help your child learn two languages, experts advise you to keep your child's language environment consistent. For example, it will help if your child always speaks his/her native language at home, and English outside the home. Or, if you and your spouse have different native languages, you could each speak your native language to your child.

If your children's daily schedule means they will be exposed much more to one language than the other, plan extra opportunities to hear and speak the less-common language.

Also, it is important for your children to have a rich language environment in both languages — spoken conversation, stories, and songs each teach different aspects of language. Audiobooks, DVDs and CDs from your home country can help supplement what you provide your children.

7 Ways to Help Your Child Learn English

Here is some advice, from teachers of English as a Second Language, about what you can do to help your children learn English.

1 - Continue to speak your native language at home, even if you are strongly committed to learning English. Children will more easily learn a second language if they are strong in a first.

2 - At the same time, be a role model for learning English for your children. By speaking English in your community, you will be showing your children that you think learning English is a good thing to do, and that making mistakes is OK.

3 - Look for ways your child can practice English privately. It feels less risky to speak English to one person than to a group.

4 - Understand that children often have a “silent period” when they first learn English — a time when they will not speak English. This may last as long as six months, although it usually doesn't. Be patient. Your child is learning to understand English, even if she is not speaking it. Some children wait to talk

aloud until they can speak in complete sentences.

5 - Remember that young children who are learning two languages at once are processing both languages, and may appear to be slower at speaking and reading than their friends. Don't panic. They are doing something more difficult. The reward will be knowing two languages and a deeper understanding of how language works.

6 - Realize that it takes three to seven years to learn a language well. Your child may be speaking English competently within six months or a year, but to function fully in school (or for you, in your adult life), it takes much longer.

7 - There is an emotional aspect to learning a second language. Learning will be faster if English has a positive tone to it in your family. For example, if your child wants to learn, if she thinks her parents are happy about learning English, and if English has pleasant associations to it, she will learn more quickly. Do not pressure your child or be critical of how quickly he is learning English.

And Some Ways to Help Yourself, Too

Dave's ESL Cafe (www.eslcafe.com) has a good reputation among a number of English teachers I know — there are tips for teaching, job postings, etc. The site also has a number of pages for students of English, which you might enjoy.

Click on “Stuff for Students” at the top. There are dozens of grammar lessons, for independent study.

Or click on “Stuff for Everyone” and then “ESL Links!” for a list of over 3000 links to all sorts of sites: games, holidays, music, slang, tongue twisters, and more.

Or to practice reading and vocabulary, go to one of my favorite sites, www.freerice.com. Answer the questions about word meaning and a sponsor will donate 10 grains of rice to a world-wide hunger organization. Play for a few minutes and the grains mount up.

9 Tips for Buying Health Products

If a doctor has prescribed a drug for you, you can be sure it has been approved by the US Food and Drug Administration (FDA). You can also check the approval of a drug here: www.fda.gov/cder/ob/default.htm (check Appendix A for a quick list by product name).

But not every product that claims to have health benefits is a drug. For example, natural herbs, vitamins, or oils might be good for you, but if they are sold to be taken for their health benefits, they are considered “dietary supplements,” not drugs. The FDA and the Federal Trade Commission (FTC) watch over the claims made in their advertising, to be sure that what is claimed about such health products is true.

Still, some products appear for sale — on line, on TV, in magazines — that may not be approved. One recent report showed that consumers spend billions of dollars on non-approved and ineffective health products each year. The FDA (www.fda.gov/consumers/protecting-yourself/health-fraud-scams) recommends:

- 1) Be skeptical about products that claim to cure a wide range of unrelated illnesses, especially serious ones.
- 2) Be skeptical about ads filled with personal stories about how a person’s health improved after using the product. These stories are hard to regulate and may be completely made up. Or they may be true, but the person might have improved even without using the product.
- 3.) Be skeptical of “quick fixes” — claims that you will feel better immediately. Most treatments for serious illness take a while to work. And remember, an ad that says a product will work “in days” might be right —



but do they mean 60 days? 300 days?

- 4) Do not be persuaded by the use of the word “natural” in an ad. Being natural is not always good (for example, think of natural but poisonous mushrooms).
- 5) Be careful about trusting “money-back guarantees.” These ads may say they will give your money back if you are not completely satisfied. But many consumers have had trouble actually getting their money back — the companies have moved or closed or otherwise disappeared.
- 6) Be sure you understand all the medical terms an ad uses; if you don’t, then don’t be persuaded by them. Ads can use a lot of fancy medical-sounding words to make their product sound good. If you don’t know the words, ask for help.
- 7) Ask a medical professional or other expert you trust about any new product before using it. Talk with friends and family too. Especially if you come from a culture with a strong non-Western medicine tradition, you may prefer to get advice from someone from your own culture about how to avoid products that do not work.
- 8) If you are concerned about a product, ask about it at the Better Business Bureau, a relevant national health organization (for example, American Heart Association), or your local FDA public affairs office (to find yours, go to: www.fda.gov/about-fda/contact-ora/fda-public-affairs-specialists).
- 9) In short, trust your good judgment. If it sounds too good to be true, it probably is.

Why English is Hard

If the following sentences don’t make you laugh (or cry), please ask a native English speaker to read them aloud for you...

- ♦ The bandage was wound around the wound.
- ♦ The farm was used to produce produce.
- ♦ The dump was so full that it had to refuse more refuse.
- ♦ We must polish the Polish furniture.
- ♦ He could lead if he would get the lead out.
- ♦ The soldier decided to desert his dessert in the desert.
- ♦ There is no time like the present, so he thought it was time to present the present.
- ♦ A bass was painted on the head of the bass drum.
- ♦ When shot at, the dove dove into the bushes.
- ♦ I did not object to the object.
- ♦ The insurance was invalid for the invalid.
- ♦ There was a row among the oarsmen about how to row.
- ♦ They were too close to the door to close it.
- ♦ The buck does funny things when the does are present.
- ♦ A seamstress and a sewer fell down into a sewer line.
- ♦ The farmer taught his sow to sow.
- ♦ The wind was too strong to wind the sail
- ♦ After a number of injections my jaw got number.
- ♦ Upon seeing the tear in the painting I shed a tear.
- ♦ I had to subject the subject to a series of tests.
- ♦ How can I intimate this to my most intimate friend?

Newcomer's Almanac is published monthly by The Interchange Institute, for people who have recently moved to the United States. Its goal is to promote international understanding by providing information about the American holidays, customs, values, social issues, and language that often confuse and surprise newcomers. It is written by Anne P. Copeland, PhD, who is a clinical psychologist and the Director of The Interchange Institute. She is an American and has lived and worked overseas with her family.

The Interchange Institute is a not-for-profit organization that studies the impact of intercultural transitions on individuals, their families, and the organizations for which they work. From the results of this research, the Institute offers seminars and workshops, produces publications, and provides consultative services to the international newcomers, their organizations, and to host communities, recognizing that change and insight on both sides facilitates smooth transition.

Subscriptions: Please contact The Interchange Institute for information about subscription fees, site licenses, and discount rates.

The Interchange Institute
www.interchangeinstitute.org
email: newcomer@interchangeinstitute.org



The
Interchange
Institute

Copyright 2019
Anne P. Copeland.
All rights reserved.
No photocopying
allowed except under
terms of site license.

That Crazy English: Scary Stuff

On Halloween, you may need to know some of these idioms:

That costume *makes my skin crawl*. (That costume *is very frightening*.)

You made me nearly *jump out of my skin*. (You *really scared me*.)

You must *have nerves of steel* to go to that house. (You must *be very brave* to go to that house.)

He *lost his nerve* and decided not to wear that ghost costume. (He *decided that wearing that ghost costume was too frightening*, and so he would not do it.)

You *scared the daylights out of me*; you *scared me out of my wits*. (You *frightened me very much*.)

I was *scared stiff* when she answered the door. (I was *really frightened* when she answered the door.)

Don't be a *nervous Nellie*; you are doing the right thing. (Don't be *too timid and scared*; you are doing the right thing.)

Your ghost costume is really *creepy*. (Your ghost costume is really *scary*.)

That *gives me goose bumps*. (That *makes me very frightened*.)

That story *makes my hair stand on end*. (That story *scares me a lot*.)

GRAMMAR: THE OR A?

Read *Indigenous Peoples Day/Columbus Day* on [page 4](#). In the first few paragraphs, circle every "the" and "a" or "an" that you see. Notice that "the" is used to introduce or identify nouns that are specific — that is, particular things that the writer thinks the reader (you!) knows about already. (You know, that day in 1492, the one you have read about in history books.) "A" or "an" are used to identify a member of a class or set. The writer does not assume that the reader knows the specifics being referred to. (There were lots of Italian explorers so I have to tell you that the one I'm talking about is Columbus.)

In each pair of items below, write "the" in one item and "a" (or "an" if the noun begins with a vowel) in the other, depending on the context given by the second sentence in each item. In some items in a pair, either "the" or "a" could be correct; use the context of the other item to make your choices. The first one has been done for you.

- 1a. Did you watch a movie last night? Which one?
1b. Did you watch the movie last night? I left it for you next to the TV.
- 2a. I remembered to bring ___ coat. But I forgot the mittens.
2b. I remembered to bring ___ coat. But I'm still cold.
- 3a. I added ___ orange to the salad. I hope you like it.
3b. I added ___ orange to the salad. I hope you weren't planning to eat it for a snack.
- 4a. She met with ___ lawyer last night. She really needs some advice.
4b. She met with ___ lawyer last night. He finally had time to see her.
- 5a. I put ___ book in my backpack. I may have time to read while I wait.
5b. I put ___ book in my backpack. This way I'm sure I won't forget it.
- 6a. I heard ___ telephone ring. It is right next to my bed.
6b. I heard ___ telephone ring. Or was that noise my microwave?
- 7a. ___ drawer in my desk is stuck. And the legs are wobbly.
7b. ___ drawer in my desk is stuck. It's the second one from the top.
- 8a. ___ salesman answered my questions. I'll go home and think about what to buy.
8b. ___ salesman answered my questions. He was very helpful.

HOMEWORK

WITH A PEN

1. Read about *Halloween* on [pages 2 and 3](#). Write a short description of a holiday from your country for which people dress in costumes. What do the costumes look like? Do adults and children both wear them? Why are costumes traditional on this holiday?

2. Read *Halloween Costumes* on [page 2](#). Write instructions to make a costume from your home country — a famous person, traditional dress, or something silly like food or a famous product.

3. Read *Indigenous Peoples Day/Columbus Day* on [page 4](#). Write a description of a national holiday in your home country that marks a historical event. How do people celebrate it? Has its meaning or celebration changed with time?

4. Read *Those Odd, Hard Vegetables* on [page 5](#). Think of a fruit or vegetable you have in your home country that you have not seen in the US. Draw a picture of it, then write a description of how to prepare it, for an American reader.

5. Read *That Crazy English* on [page 8](#). Write a list of idioms in your home language that you use to describe scary things. Translate each word for word, and then explain its meaning.

2

UNDERSTANDING WHAT YOU READ

Read about *Indigenous Peoples Day/Columbus Day* on [page 4](#). Mark each sentence below True (T) or False (F). Make corrections to the false sentences to make them true.

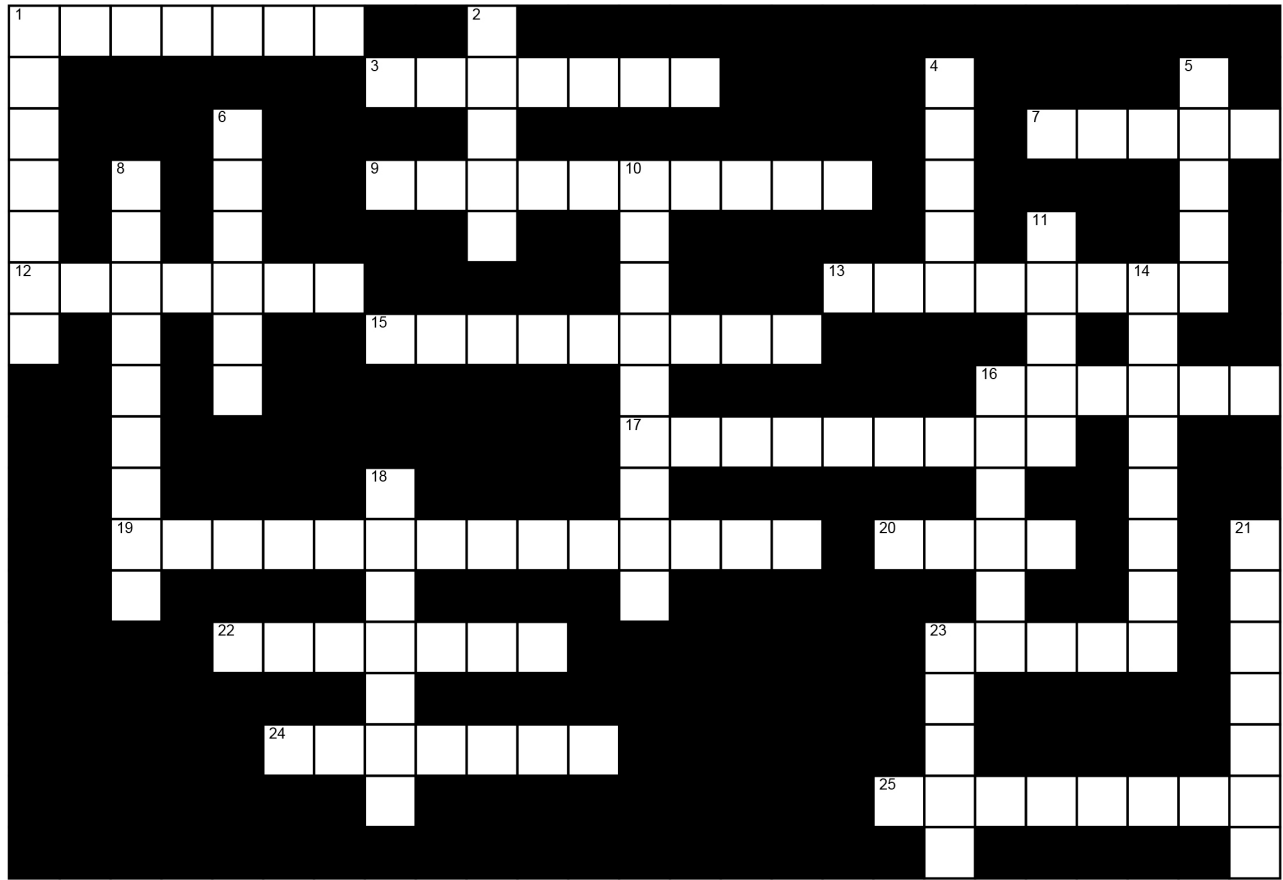
Italian

- T F 1. Christopher Columbus was ~~Spanish~~.
- T F 2. Columbus was kind to the people he met in the New World.
- T F 3. Columbus was probably not the first European to cross the Atlantic Ocean.
- T F 4. Columbus was the first person to discover that the world is round.
- T F 5. Columbus Day is celebrated only in the United States.
- T F 6. Columbus was the first European to walk on land that is now the United States.
- T F 7. Columbus discovered America.
- T F 8. It is traditional to send Columbus Day cards to your neighbors in the US.

VOCABULARY

Read the *Halloween* articles on [pages 2 and 3](#). Pick the correct meaning of the bold word:

1. If you would like to **participate** in Halloween, show some sign of this.
a. compete with others b. help others c. join others
2. The name 'Halloween' comes from a Christian **celebration** of all saints.
a. party for b. time to remember c. listing of
3. Young children are confused about whether people have **permanently** changed when they put on a mask.
a. forever b. suddenly c. mysteriously
4. An old story says that a man named Jack loved to **tease** the Devil.
a. steal from b. bother, annoy c. hurt
5. Hanging fruit and vegetables on a front door is a **reference** to old harvest festivals.
a. symbol of b. definition of c. replacement for
6. Halloween is a **light-hearted** holiday.
a. spiritual b. fun, not serious c. day-time



Across

1. Carve a ___ to make a jack-o-lantern on Halloween.
3. a uniquely-American word in the first American dictionary
7. Children shout "Trick or ___" when they ring your doorbell to ask for candy.
9. Experts tell parents of children who are learning two languages to keep their language environment ___.
12. Visit www.____.com for tips for learning English.
13. Some people say, "Never talk about ___ in America."
15. scare the ___ out of me
16. a nervous ___; someone who is easily scared
17. There is an ___ aspect to learning a new language, so try not to raise anxiety.
19. FDA - Food and Drug ___
20. makes my ___ stand on end
22. Your child will want to wear a ___ on Halloween.
23. You can eat the ___ from a pumpkin; just wash away the yucky stuff and roast them.
24. ___ Girl, a children's story about the landing of a western explorer.
25. Practice your vocabulary (and raise money for world hunger at the same time) at www.____.com

Down

1. The Columbus Day holiday is celebrated as Indigenous ___ Day in some parts of the US.
2. Columbus understood that the world is ___, not flat.
4. makes your skin ___; is creepy
5. Halloween ___ can be frightening to young children, and unsafe for children of all ages.
6. Delicata and butternut are two kinds of ___ you will see in the fall.
8. A ___ child knows two languages equally well.
10. When you cook a ___ squash, the insides look pretty much like pasta.
11. nerves of ___; very brave
14. Christopher ___ sailed for the king and queen of Spain.
16. your ___, or home, language
18. A natural herb is considered a ___ supplement.
21. Noah ___ wrote the first American dictionary.
23. Traditional Halloween costumes are ___ characters.

OUT AND ABOUT

1. Read *Talking about Politics* on [page 1](#). As you go through the month, observe how/whether Americans discuss politics when they are with people they do not know, or are with people who disagree with them. Are you surprised by any discussions?

2. Read *Indigenous Peoples Day/Columbus Day* on [page 4](#). Watch for any non-commercial celebrations of this holiday (or of celebrations of Indigenous Peoples' Day) in your community. Are there any?

IF YOU USE THE WEB

1. Read *Halloween Costumes* on [page 2](#). Go to the web site mentioned (www.thespruce.com/halloween-crafts-for-kids-4127472). Pick a costume you would like to wear and read the instructions for making it.
2. Read *Discovery of America: Closer to True* on [page 4](#). Find lists of well-reviewed stories about and by Native Americans at these 2 sites: www.hbook.com/2016/10/using-books/books-for-indigenous-peoples-day/#

medium.com/embrace-race/indigenousreads-by-indigenous-writers-a-childrens-reading-list-c3b558d1d94a

3. Read *Birthday Biography: Noah Webster* on page 5. Go to www.merriam-webster.com and explore the games and apps there, to expand your vocabulary.

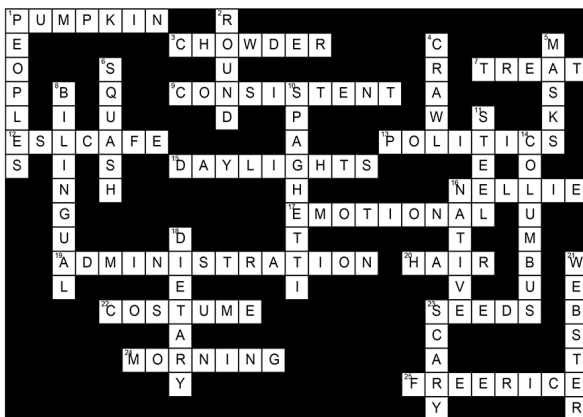
WITH A FRIEND

1. Read *Columbus Day* on [page 4](#). Tell a friend or partner what you were taught as a child about how Europeans found the Western Hemisphere. Did you learn that Columbus “discovered” it? Discuss a history lesson that you learned as a child about your home country that you now understand differently.
2. Read about Halloween on [pages 2 and 3](#). If people in your home country celebrate Halloween, describe how, if at all, it is different than in the US. Discuss a holiday in your country that involves talking about death. Or that involves purposefully being scary or scared. Or that involves people wearing costumes. Or that involves asking for food from neighbors.
3. Read *7 Ways to Help Your Child Learn English* and *Raising a Bilingual Child* on [page 6](#). If you have children, discuss which part of the advice given in the article is most surprising, or has been most difficult for you. If you do not have children, discuss what advice you would give adults who are trying to learn English. Which rule of English has been most difficult for you to master?
4. Read *Why English is Hard* on [page 7](#). Take turns reading the sentences with a partner or friend. Circle the words in each sentence that are spelled the same but pronounced differently.

HALLOWEEN BY NUMBERS

Read *Halloween* on [page 2](#). Try to match the number on the left with the correct product on the right. Now you know about Halloween and the US economy.

- | | |
|----------------|--|
| 1) 41,100,000 | a) dollar value of candy imported to the US, January to July |
| 2) 894,900,000 | b) number of 5-14-year-olds in US, all of them potential Trick-or-Treaters |
| 3) 1,637 | c) number of US candy factories |
| 4) 803,000,000 | d) number of people who work in US candy factories |
| 5) 67,531 | e) number of pounds of pumpkins grown in the US |



ANSWER CORNER

GRAMMAR: THE OR A?

- 2a the 2b a
3a an 3b the
4a a 4b the
5a a 5b the
6a the 6b a
7a The 7b A
8a A 8b The

UNDERSTANDING WHAT YOU READ

2. F ...was cruel to the people...
3. T
4. F ...was not the first person...
5. F ...is celebrated in North, South and Central America
6. F ...never walked on the land that is now the United States.
7. F Native Americans discovered America.
8. F It is not traditional...

VOCABULARY

- 1c 2b 3a 4b 5a

HALLOWEEN BY NUMBERS

- 1b 2e 3c 4a 5d



The Interchange Institute
© The Interchange Institute, 2019