

## Real English Conversations: Junk food (Part 1 of 3)

### Introduction

Hi! Lori here, welcoming you to another episode of Real English Conversations from BetterAtEnglish.com. In today's conversation, which is the first of three parts, my English friend Michael and I talk about junk food and television advertising. Before you listen to the conversation, you might want to warm up and activate your existing vocabulary by thinking about the following questions:

- 1) What is junk food anyway, and how does it differ from healthy food?
- 2) Do junk food ads on TV influence you in any way?
- 3) Do you think that junk food ads should be banned on TV when children are likely to be watching?
- 4) What challenges do parents face when trying to get their children to eat healthy food instead of junk food?

If you want to read along as you listen, you can find the full transcript and vocabulary notes on our website, [www.BetterAtEnglish.com](http://www.BetterAtEnglish.com).

OK, here we go with the conversation!

### Conversation Transcript

- Michael: You know, I was reading an article just yesterday in the news that the government in England is bringing in a law to make it illegal to show TV advertisements for junk food. On any...
- Lori: Really?
- Michael: ...but on any programmes that are targeted at the **under-16s**, so kids' programmes...
- Lori: Ah ha.
- Michael: Umm, they're going to completely outlaw it, umm...and...and... I mean, junk food, I mean, it's anything — that's from McDonalds to any kind of food that's high in fat or sugar or anything like that — it's...and it's something that people have been talking about for years, you know, that...that...how bad junk food is for people.
- Lori: Right.
- Michael: Umm...but I was just really amazed that the government is **taking such a strong action** you know, just something **across the board**.
- Lori: Yeah.
- Michael: You know, umm...but I think...errr...from what I can remember, the advertising standards were...people were saying that they wanted to ban all junk food ads before 9 o'clock.
- Lori: Ah ha.
- Michael: Which...which in...in...in Britain, we have this thing called the...the "9pm **watershed**."
- Lori: Right.
- Michael: I don't know if you're familiar with that?
- Lori: Yeah, I think it's the same...In the...the States, they talk about a watershed.

Michael: Right...right it's sort of like after...after 9pm then they're allowed to show more "adult" programmes, where they have maybe nudity and violence and things like that, so...

Lori: Yeah, all that good stuff!  
[Laughter]

Michael: So, umm...You know, but it...I just thought that it was really amazing that the government would **take such a strong stance** because...errr...do you remember the film...ahh...what's it called? The...the...the one...ummm...  
Supersize Me?

Lori: Oh yeah, yeah, the documentary.

Michael: Yeah, the documentary that they...

Lori: Yeah.

Michael: You know, I mean, I don't see how anybody could watch that documentary, see the evidence and then try to deny how unhealthy junk food is.

Lori: Right...well you have to remember that was a study of "**n=1**" and, I mean, that there...there was probably some **bias** going into it, so I mean...

Michael: Oh...yeah...

Lori: ...as far as a scientific study goes, you know, you...you really couldn't...couldn't...umm **read too much into** that, but I mean, it is suggestive, it does suggest that... that you know, that junk food isn't good for us, and it's basic sound...principles of **sound** nutrition...

Michael: Right, yeah.

Lori: ...that if you're eating a lot of processed, carbohydrates and sugars...

Michael: Yeah, sugary, yeah.

Lori: ...and fats and no fiber and no vegetables and...

Michael: Yeah.

Lori: ...especially in such huge quantities.

Michael: Right...right, I mean it's...it's the thing with the advertising though is that ummm...with the junk food manufacturers targeting young kids...

Lori: Mmm.

Michael: Ummm...I mean, this is something that...that advertisers have been doing for years because they know that if you can get in...into...appeal to a child, then the child will go to his or her parents...

Lori: Oh sure.

Michael: ...and say "Mum, Dad, I...you know, I... I want to go and have a McDonald's Happy Meal or, I want to go to Burger King."

Lori: No, tha...that's not what they will do, they would say "**Mom**, Dad, can't we eat at McDonald's? Mom please? All the other kids can eat at McDonald's!"

Michael: [Laughs] Right! And...and then when **Mum** and Dad say errr... "Well no, because we ate at McDonald yesterday! Umm..." [Laughs] "Let's have something..." push something healthy on the children, the...the kids don't...they don't want to know, because the...you know, McDonald's is portrayed as something that is cool, and of course it's **yummy!** I mean...

Lori: Yeah.

Michael: I think McDonald's is yummy!

Lori: Junk food is yummy! **Are you kidding?**

Michael: Yeah! Umm...

Lori: Given the choice between junk food and...and healthy food...

Michael: Salad?

Lori: Just...just, yeah, well, I love salads, that's...that's the weird thing is I really, truly love a good salad.

Michael: OK.

Lori: But even so, given the choice between a really yummy, good salad...

Michael: Yeah, well I like...I like salad too, but on...on my burger...

Lori: ...and a big, **honking, stinking** great pizza full of all my favorite toppings...

Michael: Right.

Lori: I mean, I would have to be really in the mood for salad for me to choose the salad over the pizza.

Michael: Yeah, yeah I think that's but it...it's kind of...

Lori: Or the ice cream sundae.

Michael: Aaahhh! Now...  
[laughter]

Michael: You're **bringing out the heavy artillery** there!

Lori: Yeah...yeah.

Michael: Yeah, but it...I think it's umm...I think this is the only way that they can...they can tackle something like this because I've seen this situation too many times, and...and what parent err...really wants to be saying "no" to their...their child and being a **killjoy** all the time?

Lori: Well there's another more **sinister** aspect of the whole thing is that, you know, imagine being a parent and you've worked all day long at your job that maybe you don't like so much and that drains so much of your energy, and then when you come home and you have the choice, "I can either go into the kitchen and start cutting up vegetables and...spending an hour preparing a healthy home-cooked meal for my family..."

Michael: Yup.

Lori: "...or, I can give them what they're telling me that they want by just stopping at McDonald's on the way home from work or, you know, some other fast food, or **popping** a frozen dinner in the oven... and giving them what they want." I mean it just makes it that much easier to...

Michael: Of course, of course.

Lori: ...to resist doing the right thing.

## Final Words

Thanks for tuning in to this episode of Real English Conversations at BetterAtEnglish.com. Before signing off, I'd like to thank the anonymous listener who sent me the book, "Grammar for English Language Teachers" by Martin Parrott. I really love the book. For any listeners who are native or near-native speakers, either teachers or learners, who are interested in a comprehensive book about English grammar, I can highly recommend this one. It's even got exercises and key so you can test yourself as you learn.

If you missed my announcement last week, Better at English has a new sister site, [UncensoredEnglish.com](http://UncensoredEnglish.com), where Michael and I discuss all the naughty slang, swear words and other topics that some listeners here might find offensive. That way we can keep B@E fairly clean, and really go for it on a separate site. You can find the new site at [www.uncensoredenglish.com](http://www.uncensoredenglish.com). Thanks for listening, and for your continued donations. Your donations and support make our shows possible.

Bye for now!

## Vocabulary notes

|                                    |  |
|------------------------------------|--|
| <b>the under-16s</b>               | The group of people who are under 16 years old. You can also talk about the <i>over-16s</i> . Any age group can be referred to this way, e.g., the over-65s, the under-30s.  |
| <b>taking such a strong action</b> | To do something severe. Notice that <i>take</i> and <i>strong</i> collocate (go together) with <i>action</i> in this case.   |
| <b>across the board</b>            | Complete, affecting every level of something. The ban is on all foods considered junk food, not just ice cream and candy.  |
| <b>watershed</b>                   | The time (usually 9 pm in the UK, 10 pm in the USA) after which programs not generally suitable for children can be shown on TV.   |
| <b>take such a strong stance</b>   | <i>To take a stance</i> means to have a certain opinion or way of thinking about something, usually that you express publicly. Notice that <i>take</i> and <i>strong</i> collocate with <i>stance</i> .  |
| <b>n=1</b>                         | In scientific studies, <i>n</i> is used to denote the number of people who participated in the study. An <i>n=1</i> study would be a study of only one person, a sample size of 1.   |
| <b>bias</b>                        | <i>Bias</i> is the tendency to let your personal beliefs and preferences influence you when you are supposed to be neutral. If scientific studies are <i>biased</i> , it means that the scientists let their personal beliefs and agendas influence the results. |
| <b>read too much into</b>          | <i>To read something into something</i> means to believe that an action, event or remark is more important or significant, even if it is not necessarily true.   |
| <b>sound</b>                       | In this case, <i>sound</i> (adj) means valid and in agreement with accepted views  |
| <b>mom / mum</b>                   | Mother. In American English, mothers are <i>moms</i> . In British English, they're <i>mums</i> .   |
| <b>yummy</b>                       | Delicious, tasty. Often used by children, but even by adults in informal situations.   |

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| <b>Are you kidding?</b>                 | <i>Are you kidding</i> means are you joking? But in this case, it is used to add emphasis to the truth of Lori's utterance, i.e., "I'm not joking, I'm being very serious!"  |
| <b>honking</b>                          | Am.E slang for large.  |
| <b>stinking great</b>                   | Br.E slang for extremely large. <i>Stinking</i> can also be used alone as an adverb, for example in the phrase "stinking rich" (extremely rich).   |
| <b>bringing out the heavy artillery</b> | Literally, <i>heavy artillery</i> is a class of very large and powerful military guns, usually moved on wheels or metal tracks. In this case, "bringing out the heavy artillery" means doing or saying something as a means of impressing, arguing, or persuading. |
| <b>killjoy</b>                          | A <i>killjoy</i> is someone who spoils the pleasure of other people.   |
| <b>sinister</b>                         | The main sense of <i>sinister</i> is evil. In this case, Lori talking about a general feeling of apprehension or worry.  |
| <b>popping</b>                          | Informal for <i>to put</i> . To pop something in(to) something = to quickly put something in(to) something.  |