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# BBC LEARNING ENGLISH

## 6 Minute Vocabulary

### Acronyms



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*This is not a word-for-word transcript*

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**Peter**

Hi! I'm Peter.

**Catherine**

And I'm Catherine. Welcome to 6 Minute Vocabulary. And today we're talking about acronyms.

**Peter**

Examples of acronyms are the name **FIFA**, that's the international federation of association football, and **BBC**.

**Catherine**

We'll talk about where these names come from and we'll tell you how we say and write them.

**Peter**

There will be a quiz of course; and we'll also bring you a top tip for remembering these words.

**Catherine**

Let's start by listening to James. He's giving a lecture about the United Nations.

**Peter**

And while you're listening: Can you guess where the name **UNESCO** comes from?

**INSERT**

**James**

The United Nations aims to encourage international cooperation and preserve world peace. A number of different organisations are part of it. One of the most well-known is **UNESCO**. That's the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organisation. But you may also have heard of the **W-H-O**, the **I-M-F**, and the **W-B-G**, for example. Do you know what they are? The **UN** performs most of its work through these different organisations.

**Peter**

So we asked you: Can you guess where the name **UNESCO** comes from?

**Catherine**

And the answer is that it comes from the first letters of the organisation's full name: **U**nited **N**ations **E**ducational, **S**cientific and **C**ultural **O**rganisation: **UNESCO**.

**Peter**

Now with acronyms like **UNESCO**, we say them as if they are a word: **UNESCO**. We don't spell out the letters separately. We don't say **U-N-E-S-C-O**.

**Catherine**

Other acronyms like this that are very well-known are **NATO**, the North Atlantic Treaty Organisation, and **NASA**, the National Aeronautics and Space Administration.

**Peter**

That's easy for you to say. By the way, **FIFA** is a bit of a trick. The acronym actually comes from the French name for the organisation, not the English. Federation Internationale de Football Association.

**Catherine**

Nice accent.

**Peter**

Merci.

**Catherine**

So what about the other acronyms James mentioned? Let's listen.

**INSERT CLIP 1**

**James**

... you may also have heard of the **W-H-O**, the **I-M-F**, and the **W-B-G**, for example.

**Catherine**

Now these next acronyms are a bit different. We spell out the initial letters separately. Can you guess what these letters stand for? **W-H-O**.

**Peter**

That's the World Health Organisation.

**Catherine**

It is. Now: **I-M-F**...

**Peter**

It's the International Monetary Fund.

**Catherine**

**W-B-G?**

**Peter**

The World Bank Group.

**Catherine**

And it's worth remembering that we always write both types of acronym with capital letters. Now for another clip.

## **INSERT CLIP 2**

**James**

The **UN** performs most of its work through these different organisations.

**Catherine**

Now it's interesting that James started off by saying the United Nations. But here he says the **UN**. Why's that do you think?

**Peter**

Well, using acronyms saves time and it makes the organisations seem more familiar. With the second type of acronym like **U-N**, where you spell out the letters, we sometimes use the full name the first time we mention the organisation and then, once we've done that, we go on to use the acronym as we continue to talk about it.

**Catherine**

OK. But with the first type of acronym like **UNESCO**, where you say it as a word, we nearly always use just the acronym. That's probably because the full names are often so long that the acronyms have actually become like words to replace them.

**Peter**

Yes, in fact there are a few words in English that used to be acronyms but have now become ordinary words. These words are not written with capital letters. For example **scuba** as in **scuba diving**. This comes from **self-contained underwater breathing apparatus**. And laser comes from **light amplification by stimulated emission of radiation**.

**Catherine**

Wow, well yes, that is quite a mouthful, isn't it?

**Peter**

It certainly does go on...

## **IDENT**

6 Minute Vocabulary from BBC Learning English.

### **Peter**

We're talking about acronyms.

### **Catherine**

And it's quiz time! And this time it's a bit of a general knowledge game this time because we're going to see if you know what some popular acronyms stand for. And not all of them are organisations. So number one: **WWW**.

### **Peter**

It's the World Wide Web.

### **Catherine**

It is, indeed. Now number two: **RAM**.

### **Peter**

That's Random Access Memory. We use it for a type of computer memory.

### **Catherine**

We do. And the last one: **CIA**.

### **Peter**

It's the Central Intelligence Agency in the US.

### **Catherine**

It is indeed and it's well done if you got them all right.

### **Peter**

And before we go, here's a vocabulary tip. There are a lot of acronyms in everyday life as well as those that are organisations. For example **ATM**, **DIY** and **FYI**. We use them all the time. When you see an acronym written in capital letters, check out what it stands for online or find a dictionary. They do make sense and are easy to remember when you know the full name or meaning.

### **Peter**

There's more about this at [bbclearningenglish.com](http://bbclearningenglish.com). Join us again soon for more 6 Minute Vocabulary.

### **Both**

Bye!

## Vocabulary points to take away

Many acronyms refer to organisations. The acronyms come from the first letters of the organisations' full names. They are all always written in capital letters.

**UNESCO** is an acronym for the **U**nited **N**ations **E**ducational, **S**cientific and **C**ultural **O**rganisation.

We pronounce acronyms in two different ways. Some are said as words:

**UNESCO**, **NATO** and **NASA** are all important organisations.

Others are said as letters:

The **UN** (U-N), the **EU** (E-U), and the **FBI** (F-B-I).

Using acronyms saves time and makes organisations seem more familiar to us. Many acronyms are also used in everyday life:

I need to get some money at the **ATM** (Automatic Teller Machine).