
BBC LEARNING ENGLISH

6 Minute Vocabulary

Synonyms



This is not a word-for-word transcript

Catherine

Hello and welcome to 6 Minute Vocabulary. I'm Catherine...

Finn

And I'm Finn. And Catherine, I see you've got a new phone there. Was it **expensive**?

Catherine

It was a bit **pricey**, Finn, but not as **dear** as my last one. But, do you like it?

Finn

I love it. I'm a little bit jealous.

Catherine

It is nice, isn't it?

Finn

And we used three words there: **expensive**, **pricey** and **dear** and they're all synonyms. They all mean that something cost a lot of money and they're the topic of this programme.

Catherine

That's right. Synonyms are words that have the same or similar meanings. And English speakers use a lot of synonyms, so it's good to learn a few.

Finn

It certainly is. We'll give you lots of them in this programme...

Catherine

We'll give you a quiz...

Finn

... and a top tip for improving your vocabulary using synonyms.

Catherine

So, let's start by listening to Rob and Mike discussing a television advert.

Finn

Think about this question while you listen: what kind of pet do Mike's kids have – and what was **strange** about it?

INSERT

Mike

You know that **funny** advert where the vet thinks he's dealing with a dead cat but it's really a furry hat?

Rob

Oh yeah, it's **hilarious**. That **look** on the vet's face is so **comical** and the girl's **expression** when she picks up her hat is **priceless**!

Mike

Strange thing is the same thing happened to me – quite **bizarre** actually. I was holding the kids' hamster while they were cleaning the cage. I thought it a bit **odd** because it wasn't moving. My daughter gave me a **weird** look and asked why I was stroking one of her gloves!

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Catherine

So, what kind of pet do Mike's kids have – and what was **strange** about it??

Finn

It was quite strange. The answer is: they have a hamster – but Mike thought it was a bit **odd**, because it wasn't moving.

Catherine

Now **strange** and **odd** are synonyms. They both mean **unusual**.

Finn

Listen to this clip for two more words that Mike uses to mean strange or unusual.

INSERT CLIP 1

Mike

Strange thing is the same thing happened to me – quite **bizarre** actually. I was holding the kids' hamster while they were cleaning the cage. I thought it a bit **odd** because it wasn't moving. My daughter gave me a **weird** look and asked why I was stroking one of her gloves!

Finn

So we heard the word **bizarre**, spelt **b-i-z-a-r-r-e**, which means strange and difficult to explain. Mike thought the situation was bizarre. We also heard **weird**, spelt **w-e-i-r-d**, which also means very unusual.

Catherine

Let's listen to another clip with some more synonyms. And this time try to spot three words that mean **funny**.

INSERT 1 CLIP 2

Mike

You know that **funny** advert where the vet thinks he's dealing with a dead cat but it's really a furry hat?

Rob

Oh yeah, it's **hilarious**. That **look** on the vet's face is so **comical** and the girl's **expression** when she picks up her hat is **priceless**!

Finn

So **hilarious**, **comical** and **priceless** are all synonyms of **funny**. But they mean funny in a slightly different way: **hilarious** means very funny, in the sense that it makes you laugh out loud, **comical** means funny in a silly way...

Catherine

... and **priceless** can mean extremely funny. We usually only use it with this meaning when we're speaking. There are some other synonyms of funny, too, including: **humorous** and **amusing**.

Finn

And in the clip we heard two noun synonyms – **look** and **expression**, both meaning the way someone shows on their face what they are thinking or feeling.

IDENT

You're listening to BBC Learning English.

Finn

And we're talking about synonyms. Like **strange** and **odd**...

Catherine

... and **funny** and **amusing**.

Finn

Now a word of warning – we can't always use any synonym to replace a word – it depends on the context and what exactly we're trying to say.

Catherine

That's right. So, for example, at the beginning of the programme, I said that my new phone was **pricey**, spelt **p-r-i-c-e-y**, and I also used the word **dear**, spelt **d-e-a-r**.

Finn

And both words are synonyms of **expensive**. But **pricey** is more informal and more modern than **dear**.

Catherine

So you won't see those written down very much.

Finn

Not much, no. And our top tip for learning vocabulary is: use a thesaurus, which is a dictionary of synonyms, to help you find new words and make your English more interesting. And look for example sentences with each word to help you choose the right word for each situation.

Catherine

And now, it's time for a quiz. Which is the odd one out? Number 1: a) expensive, b) dear, c) cheap.

Finn

That one is c) **cheap**, because the other two mean **costing a lot money**.

Catherine

Very good. And number two: a) bizarre, b) hilarious, c) weird.

Finn

And the answer is b) **hilarious**. Because **bizarre** and **weird** are both synonyms of **strange**.

Catherine

Number three: a) humorous, b) hilarious, c) expression.

Finn

And the answer to that is c) **expression**, because the other two are both synonyms of funny.

Catherine

And that's the end of the quiz – well done if you got them right.

Finn

Well done indeed. There's more about this at bbclearningenglish.com. Join us again for more 6 Minute Vocabulary.

Both

Bye!

Vocabulary points to take away

dear

costing a lot

Don't you think that two pounds for a bag of sugar is rather dear?

expensive

costing a lot of money

£150! That's so expensive for a handbag!

pricey (informal)

costing a lot of money

The clothes in that shop are a bit pricey. I think I'll just try the market.

bizarre

strange in an unusual, sometimes interesting way

So there I was, interviewing the person who'd been my greatest hero at school. It was quite bizarre.

odd

not quite right

There's something a bit odd about Jack. He won't look at you when you speak to him.

strange

different from normal

June really is quite strange sometimes. When you see her, she sometimes says hello and smiles and then other times she completely ignores you!

unusual

not normal or different from other people or things

The shark steak had quite an unusual flavour. I had never tasted anything like it before.

weird

strange or unexpected

There were some really weird noises last night. Do you think this house might be haunted!?

amusing

funny or entertaining

There was an amusing article on the how parents are having to ask their young children to help them switch on their tablets and TVs.

comical

funny in a silly way

The hat on his head made him look quite comical.

funny

making you laugh

Ouch! Don't laugh. It's not funny!

hilarious

very funny, enough to make you laugh out loud

His jokes were hilarious. I laughed all night.

humorous

funny enough to make you smile

The Queen showed the more humorous side to her nature when she took part in the James Bond sketch in the 2012 opening ceremony to the Olympics.

priceless

really amusing

The look on his face was priceless when I told him it was me who'd got the job and not him.

expression

appearance on someone's face showing what they think or feel

The teacher realised from the expression on the students' faces that they hadn't understood.

look

appearance on someone's face showing what they think or feel

I could tell by the look on her face that she was really hurt by what I'd said.