VOCABULARY

Family relationships

Whatever form they take, families are central to most of our lives.
ANNA HOCHSieder presents language to talk about family relationships.

1. family tree
   [ˈfæmli 'triː]
2. paternal great-grandparents
   ['pæ,ɡrænt,ɡreɪt,ɡreɪnd,peərənts]
3. maternal grandmother
   [ˈmæ,ɡrænt,ɡreɪnd,mæθə]
4. stepmother
   ['step,meθə]
5. father
   [ˈfeðə]
6. mother
   [ˈmʌðə]
7. aunt
   [ɑːnt]
8. uncle
   [ˈʌŋkl]
9. half-sister
   ['hɑːf, 'sɪstə]
10. brother-in-law
    ['brʌðər ɪnˌlɔː]
11. sister
    [ˈsɪstə]
12. husband
    [ˈhʌzbənd]
13. sister-in-law
    ['sɪstər ɪnˌlɔː]
14. father-in-law
    ['feðər ɪnˌlɔː]
15. mother-in-law
    ['meθər ɪnˌlɔː]
16. nephew
    [ˈnefjuː]
17. niece
    [ˈniːs]
18. son
    [sʌn]
19. daughter
    [ˈdɔːtə]

Family matters

Kath is the eldest of seven children. Hers is a close-knit family. Her parents have a lot of siblings, two. Kath has eight uncles, nine aunts and no less than 28 first cousins. She loved growing up in such a large extended family. Kath has six children of her own: two sets of twins, an adopted son and a baby girl who is ten years his junior.

Liz is an only child. Her parents got divorced when she was very young. They had joint custody of their daughter. At first, Liz lived with her father and his new spouse. Her stepmother brought in three children from three previous relationships. Liz had difficulty adjusting to her blended family (N. Am.), so she moved back in with her mother. They didn’t get on well, but today, Liz is a single mum herself and knows how hard it is to raise a child with no help from a partner.

Eric and Mabel are celebrating their 60th wedding anniversary. Eric was brought up by foster parents. He didn’t meet his birth mother until he was 18. When Eric and Mabel got engaged, Eric told his wife-to-be that he was illegitimate and didn’t know who his father was. Fortunately, his future in-laws were not as narrow-minded as his blood relations, who had wanted nothing to do with him. Blood is not always thicker than water.
PRACTICE

Now, try the following exercises to practise talking about family relationships.

Exercise 1

Study the family tree and complete the sentences (A–G).

A. Mary is Harry and Jill’s__________________________.
B. Lucy, Tim, Eva and Alex are John and Mary’s__________________________.
C. Harry is Sally’s__________________________.
D. Jill is Lucy’s__________________________.
E. Harry is Alex’s__________________________.
F. Tim and Eva are__________________________.
G. Lucy is Jack’s__________________________.

Exercise 2

Study the text and the illustration on the opposite page. Then complete the definitions by matching the sentence halves below.

A. Your maternal grandmother is... 1. your husband or wife.
B. Your stepmother is... 2. your brother’s or sister’s son.
C. Your nephew is... 3. your mother’s mother.
D. Your siblings are... 4. your spouse’s parents.
E. Your spouse is... 5. your father’s new wife.
F. Your in-laws are... 6. your brothers and sisters.

Exercise 3

Complete each of the following definitions with a word from the opposite page.

A. A(n)__________________________ child has no brothers or sisters.
B. A(n)__________________________ family consists of parents, step-parents and children from more than one relationship.
C. A(n)__________________________ family is one in which family members take a strong interest in each other.
D. If two people get__________________________, they agree to marry each other.
E. If two people get__________________________, they legally end their marriage.

It’s all relative

Someone who is related to you — in other words, who is a member of your family — is a relative or relation of yours.

Blood relatives, or blood relations, are related by birth rather than by marriage. Parents, children and siblings are close relatives, while cousins, great-aunts, etc. are more distant relatives.

In the context of families, the noun relationship refers to the way in which family members are related to each other:

- What’s your relationship to Jack?
  — He’s my mum’s cousin and, therefore, my second cousin.

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