



Vanessa and Nigel
with their children,
Thea and Jonathan

SOCIETY

Welcome to our life!

*Wie sieht eine ganz normale Woche im Leben einer ganz normalen britischen Familie aus?
VANESSA CLARK lädt zu einem aufschlussreichen Blick hinter die Kulissen ein.*

MEDIUM AUDIO PLUS

Are we typical? Probably. We're married. We live with our two teenage children in a house in Abingdon-on-Thames, a small town near Oxford. My husband and I both work. We are middle-aged, middle-class and middle-income. Of course, we can't claim to represent every family in this diverse nation, but if you'd like to know what a typical week in our life is like, our door is open. Come in and have a look!

claim [kleɪm]
• behaupten

diverse [daɪ'vɜːsɪs]
• bunt gemischt,
vielfältig



Monday

8 a.m. The children walk to school, which starts at 8.40 a.m. Jonathan, 15, is in Year 11, working towards his GCSE exams next summer. He has to wear a school uniform: black trousers, white shirt, green jumper. Thea, 16, is now in Year 12, which most people (including students and teachers) still refer to by its old name of “sixth form”. Sixth-formers don’t have to wear a uniform and have more freedom. Over a period of two years, they are preparing for their A-level exams.

8.30 a.m. My husband, Nigel, and I start work. For most of the week, we both work at home. I write English-language material (such as this article) in our small study room, while Nigel does IT work on the dining-room table. According to UK government statistics, more than 1.5 million employees now work from home at least one day a week — and that’s in addition to the millions of self-employed workers. Nigel and I both do a mix of work on an employed and freelance basis, so we’re part of a growing trend.

10 a.m. I go to the market. I like to buy my fruit and vegetables at the weekly market. It’s much cheaper, and there is less packaging than in the shops. Although we’ve had metric measurements in the UK all my life, the fruit-and-veg men at our market still deal in traditional pounds. They are supposed to display their prices in kilos (with pounds as an optional extra), but perhaps they haven’t read that page of European legislation. At the bakery stall, I always buy an after-school treat for the children. Today, it’s Banbury cakes, an Oxfordshire speciality: small, round pastries filled with currants. I also buy bread; today it’s a cottage loaf. I love the traditional name of this shape of bread.

3.10 p.m. The school day finishes. There are after-school activities every day, organized by the teachers for students who want to do more sport, music, science or drama, or for anyone who needs help with his or her homework. Thea is in the school choir and orchestra, and she is also practising for the next school play. Jonathan isn’t interested in anything at school outside lessons. He comes straight home to have a snack and play on his phone.

6 p.m. Jonathan goes to the dojo. Jonathan loves martial arts and goes to various classes throughout the week: kick-boxing, jeet kune do, Brazilian ju-jitsu and more which I can’t spell. We pay a monthly fee of around £60 for him to do as many classes as he likes. He also trains at a local gym, for which we pay £25 per month. He’s an expensive boy, but at least he’s getting some exercise.

7.30 p.m. Thea goes to Girl Guides. The Guides are like the Scouts — only for girls. They meet once a week and do a lot of different activities: arts and crafts, sports, camping, learning new skills. Tonight, they’re finalizing their plans to go to Disneyland Paris next month, so they’re all quite excited.

A-level [ˈeɪˌlevəl] UK
• etwa: Abitur

choir [ˈkwaɪə]
• Chor

cottage loaf
[ˌkɒtɪdʒ ˈlɒʊf] UK
• Landbrot

crafts [kra:fts]
• Kunsthandwerk

currant [ˈkʌrənt]
• Korinthe

dojo [ˈdɔːdʒɔː]
• Übungshalle japanischer Kampfkünste

exercise [ˈeksəsaɪz]
• Bewegung

fee [fiː]
• Beitrag, Gebühr

freelance [ˈfriːlɑːns]
• freiberuflich

GCSE [ˌdʒiː siː es ˈiː] UK
• etwa: Realschulabschluss

jumper [ˈdʒʌmpə] UK
• Pullover

martial arts
[ˌmɑːrjəl ˈɑːts]
• Kampfkunst

pastry [ˈpeɪstri]
• Gebäck

supposed: be ~ to do sth.
[səˈpəʊst]
• etw. tun sollen



Girl Guide Thea learns how to make a camp fire (top); the market at which Vanessa does her vegetable shopping (bottom)

Tuesday

10 a.m. I go to my school. I teach 12 hours a week in a boys' private school nearby. Oxfordshire is an affluent area and has a lot of private schools. My husband and I chose the local state comprehensive school for our children, partly out of principle, partly because we wanted our children to be in mixed-sex schools (most private schools in are single-sex); but to be honest, we didn't have the option of a private school because the fees are about £20,000 per year for a day pupil (and double that for a boarder).

I give one-to-one English-language support to the pupils who come from overseas. Most private schools in the UK are finding that there aren't enough British families who want, or can afford, to send their children to boarding schools these days, so they are filling the empty spaces with pupils from overseas. I work with boys aged 13 to 18 from Hong Kong, mainland China, Russia and Thailand.

5 p.m. I go to the supermarket. On my way home, I call at Waitrose, which is known in the UK as the posh supermarket because it's more expensive than the other stores. I like the quality of the fish and meat and also the company's high ethical values. I cycle past it on my way home from work. I have a customer account card, which allows me to get a free newspaper and a free coffee every day, so it's tempting just to "pop in" for one thing — and then I end up buying more than I intended. I am also able to scan my own shopping as I go around the store, using a handheld scanner, so the shopping is quick and easy — another advantage of this more expensive store.

Wednesday

12 p.m. I have an appointment with my GP. A GP is a "general practitioner" or family doctor. As it's only a minor medical matter, I had to make this appointment two weeks ago. It's possible to get a same-day appointment if it's an emergency, but there's always a delay for non-urgent matters.

A GP appointment is free for everyone in the UK, thanks to the NHS (National Health Service). Our GP knows our whole family well, as she deals with all our physical and mental health matters. Today, she prescribes some tablets for me. The prescription is sent electronically to the chemist's, and I can collect the tablets a short time later. I have to pay £8.60, the standard NHS prescription charge, but many people with a lower income get their prescriptions free.

7.30 p.m. Brass-band practice. Nigel and Thea play in our town brass band. Nigel plays the tuba; Thea plays the euphonium, which is like a small tuba. The band performs at local events, parades and concerts and is currently fundraising to build a new band hut, because the old one is falling down. They might be able to apply for a grant from the National Lottery Fund. The money from the weekly National Lottery draw is used to help charities and other good causes.



Music man: Nigel at home practising the tuba



affluent ['æfluənt]
- wohlhabend, reich

boarder ['bɔ:də]
- Internatsschüler(in)

brass band
[,brɑ:s 'bænd]
- Blaskapelle

cause [kɔ:z]
- hier: Sache

chemist's ['kemists] UK
- Apotheke

comprehensive school
[,kɒmpri'hensiv sku:l]
UK
- Gesamtschule

draw [drɔ:]
- Ziehung

fundraising: be ~
['fʌnd,reizɪŋ]
- Spenden sammeln

grant [grɑ:nt]
- Zuschuss, Unterstützung

matter ['mætə]
- Angelegenheit

pop in [pɒp 'ɪn] UK ifml.
- (kurz) vorbeischaun

posh [pɒʃ] ifml.
- nobel, vornehm

prescribe [pri'skraɪb]
- verschreiben, verordnen

prescription charge
[pri'skripʃən tʃɑ:dʒ]
- Rezeptgebühr

tempting ['temptɪŋ]
- verlockend

Thursday

7 a.m. I check the bank account on my mobile banking app.

Today, the monthly mortgage payment is made from our bank account. A mortgage is a loan to buy a house. In the UK, it has always been more usual to try to buy your own home, rather than renting. We pay around £1,000 per month, which is less than the rent we would have to pay for a house like ours. We have nearly finished paying for the property, so we're in a lucky position. However, house prices have risen so dramatically in the past 20 years that it's difficult for younger people to buy their first home, and home ownership has fallen to 64 per cent. We worry about how our children will be able to buy their own property.

8 a.m. I walk by the river. On Thursday mornings before work, I always walk by the river with a friend. It's great to live so near the Thames. We always see lots of people out walking in all weathers, including many with dogs. There are 8.5 million dogs in the UK, but we don't have one.

8 p.m. We drive to the discount supermarket. Once every few weeks, we save money by stocking up on everyday products at lower prices. Sometimes we have a supermarket delivery: I order online, and the delivery is free for orders over £100. At other times, we drive to one of the cheaper supermarkets on the outskirts of Oxford and stock up on everyday food products. The German discount stores Aldi and Lidl are big names in the UK grocery market now. They may not be as luxurious as Waitrose, but we get a large trolley full of family shopping for about half the price.

grocery ['grəʊsəri]

• Lebensmittel-

mortgage ['mɔ:ɡɪdʒ]

• Hypotheken-

outskirts ['aʊtska:ɪts]

• Stadtrand, Vororte

rather than ['rɑ:ðə ðæn]

• anstelle

stock up on sth.

[stɒk 'ʌp ɒn]

• sich mit etw. eindecken



English idyll: the River Thames at Abingdon near the Clarks' home

Fotos: Vanessa Clark; alamy; kyuree/Stock.com



Friday

5 p.m. Jonathan's drum lesson. It's lucky that our house is detached, so we have no direct neighbours. Around one third of British children play a musical instrument. Boys are most likely to learn the guitar, the piano or electronic keyboard and the drums, while girls are more likely to choose the recorder, followed by the guitar and the piano/keyboard.

8 p.m. Curry and TV time. At the end of the week, Nigel and I usually treat ourselves to a takeaway dinner in front of the television. For the rest of the week, we try to cook healthy meals and sit down together as a family — but on Fridays, it's curry and telly without the kids. We have a really good Indian restaurant near our home, and we both like curry, although Nigel prefers his food much hotter than I do.

The favourite cuisine for takeaway food in the UK is Chinese, by the way, with Indian in second place and pizza third. What about the nation's traditional fish and chips? They're not at the top, I'm afraid. We enjoy watching *Have I Got News for You*, a satirical quiz on the week's news. It's probably the only show we ever watch "live" — in other words, on the same day it's broadcast. Usually, if we watch TV, we'll choose something from the BBC iPlayer or Netflix.

Saturday

9 a.m. Parkrun. At 9 a.m. every Saturday morning, around 350 runners — including Nigel and me — meet near Abingdon Bridge and take part in a five-kilometre run by the river. The same event happens in 445 different locations across the UK every Saturday morning. I am not a naturally sporty person and am always one of the last runners to finish, but the atmosphere is great, and the people are really friendly. Apart from cycling to work and walking a lot, this is the only exercise I do. The NHS recommends adults to do at least 150 minutes of moderate exercise a week. I think I'm just about OK, since walking and cycling count towards that total.

2 p.m. Thea and I go shopping for clothes. All British towns have charity shops. These are shops that sell second-hand goods to raise money for good causes. I like the idea of recycling in this way — as well as saving money. Thea likes wearing unusual clothes and enjoys finding unique "pre-loved" clothing for just a few pounds of her pocket money.

Sunday

10 a.m. I listen to *The Archers*, the iconic BBC radio soap opera, which has been running since 1951. These days, I usually download episodes via the BBC RadioPlayer app on my phone, but from time to time, if I'm busy in the kitchen on a Sunday morning, I still enjoy the tradition of listening to *The Archers* on

broadcast ['brɔːdkɑːst]

• übertragen, gesendet

detached [di'tætʃt] UK

• freistehend

iconic [aɪ'kɒnɪk]

• kultig

recorder [ri'kɔːdə]

• Blockflöte

telly ['teli] UK ifml.

• Fernsehen

treat: ~ oneself to sth.

[tri:t]

• sich etw. gönnen

unique [ju'ni:k] • ein-

zigartig, ungewöhnlich



Friday night is takeaway night — usually a curry in the Clark family home



Saturday morning: time for Vanessa and Nigel to meet up with other runners for the weekly parkrun

Radio 4 and finding out what's going on in the fictional village of Ambridge. How are the cows at Brookfield farm? How is the village cricket team doing, now that they've allowed women to play? I need to know!

Sunday lunch. We don't have the traditional Sunday lunch of roast meat and vegetables around the family dining table, partly because Jonathan is vegetarian, but also because we're all busy with different activities. Again, it seems that we are part of a trend: these days, families are more likely to eat a roast during the week, rather than on Sunday. Chicken is the favourite, followed by beef and lamb.

Pizza night. On Sunday evenings, we always eat home-made pizzas as a family treat, and I make two extra mini-pizzas for the children to take to school in their lunch boxes on Monday. They can buy lunch at school, but the school meals are not freshly cooked, and most kids take packed lunches.

Then it's the usual Sunday night routine of homework, baths and bed — and the week begins again.

Fotos: Vanessa Clark: kyuree/Stock.com

packed lunch
[ˌpækt ˈlʌntʃ] UK
► Lunchpaket

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The life of a typical British family

On pages 40–45, Vanessa Clark welcomes you into her home to experience **the life of a typical British family**. Here, you can test yourself on what you've read.

1. A week with the Clarks



1. A typical British school day starts at around 8.30 a.m. and finishes at around
A. 11 a.m. B. 1 p.m. C. 3 p.m.
2. In the British school system, years 12 and 13 are still known by their old name of
A. the sixth farm B. the sixth form C. the sixth firm
3. A type of traditional British loaf of bread is called a “.....”.
A. cottage loaf B. house loaf C. bungalow loaf
4. If you'd like to send your child to a private school as a day pupil, it will cost around
A. £3,000 a year B. £10,000 a year C. £20,000 a year
5. The supermarket that offers a free newspaper, free coffee and a “scan-as-you-shop” service is called
A. Waitrose B. Aldi C. Lidl
6. Your family doctor is known as your
A. BP B. GP C. MP
7. A visit to the doctor is free for
A. people who have health insurance
B. people on a low income
C. everyone
8. The loan of money to buy a house is called a
A. luggage B. garbage C. mortgage
9. The BBC satirical quiz of the week's news on Friday nights is called
A. News Flash
B. Have I Got News for You
C. Tell Me the News
10. The five-kilometre run that takes place in 445 places across the UK every Saturday morning is called the
A. parkrun B. funrun C. townrun

Making requests

In this month's Spoken English (page 54), Adrian Doff looks at different ways of **making requests**. Here, you can practise what you've learned.

1. Polite or casual?

E

Decide whether the requests below are polite (P) or casual (C).

P C

- A. Could you tell me the time?
 B. Do you think you could help me carry this to my car, please?
 C. If it isn't too much trouble, would you water my plants next week?
 D. Turn off the light before you leave, will you?
 E. Can I have some more peas?
 F. Would you mind staying after class to help?

2. I'll tell you what I really, really want

M

Complete the following sentences with the words from the list.

possibly | **too much trouble** | **would you mind** | **you could** | **you'd mind**

- A. If it isn't _____, I'd like to add a name to the guest list.
 B. Do you think _____ pick up some milk on your way home?
 C. Sorry, _____ smoking outside instead?
 D. I wonder if _____ playing somewhere else.
 E. I was wondering if you could _____ help me with my work.

3. Fitting for the occasion

A

Match the situations (A–D) to the appropriate requests (1–4).

- | | |
|---|--|
| A. Sophie is at a restaurant. | 1. Move your bag out of the way, will you? |
| B. Sophie is with an old friend who is cooking for her. | 2. Hey, can't you do something vegan for me? |
| C. David is on a train and suddenly starts to feel dizzy. | 3. I'm very sorry, but could you possibly prepare a vegan dish for me? |
| D. David would like to sit down next to his son. | 4. Would you mind removing your bag so that I can sit down? |