
BBC LEARNING ENGLISH

6 Minute English

Is a door just a door?

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NB: This is not a word-for-word transcript

Rob

Hello and welcome to 6 Minute English. I'm Rob...

Neil

... and I'm Neil. Hello.

Rob

Hello, Neil! You look pleased today, Neil.

Neil

I am pleased. I just moved into my new flat!

Rob

OK, fantastic! Congratulations! Where is this new flat?

Neil

It's in the city. It's a one-bed flat so it's **bijoux** – meaning small but attractive. There's a balcony, I've got a couple of deckchairs, and a barbecue...

Rob

I can't wait to see it. It sounds perfect. Well, today we're discussing housing – and why in some buildings there are separate entrances for rich and poor residents! So, are you ready for today's quiz question, Neil?

Neil

I'm all ears.

Rob

OK, so you mean you're listening carefully.

Neil

I am.

Rob

Right. What does 'social housing' mean? Is it housing for people who...

a) to buy or rent at a low price?

b) who want to live together sharing facilities?

or c) who aren't able to pay any rent at all?

Neil

OK, I think the answer is a) to buy or rent at a low price.

Rob

OK. Well, we'll see if you were right or wrong later on in the programme. So, have you met your neighbours yet, Neil?

Neil

Yes – I bumped into one couple as I was leaving for work this morning.

Rob

I see. **Bump into** means to meet somebody by chance. So were they friendly?

Neil

Well, they complained about me blocking the communal area with my bike – also about my guitar playing. But apart from that, they seemed nice!

Rob

A **communal area** is an area that is shared by a number of people. Well, I hate to say it, Neil, but your guitar playing is annoying!

Neil

Oh, Rob, genius isn't appreciated here, I think. OK... Let's listen to the journalist Tom Bateman talking about rich and poor doors.

Tom Bateman, journalist

In front of us here is a 20-storey building. Right about me I got tinted blue glass windows and balconies on every floor as you look from the street. And there is a very plush foyer. A sign in the window says 'luxurious penthouses with spectacular views.'

Neil

But this is what the journalist Tom Bateman saw when he went around the other side of the same building.

Tom Bateman, journalist

So as you come down the side of the building, you can see the windows – quite small windows – of the flats above here – certainly no balconies. This is a big grey concrete wall and as you walk down an alleyway towards the other door.

Rob

So this building has one entrance with a **plush** – or expensive and luxurious – foyer. And **foyer** means entrance hall. Then there's another entrance down an **alleyway** – or narrow passage between buildings.

Neil

This entrance leads to flats with small windows and no balconies. Why's that, Rob?

Rob

That's because the alleyway entrance is the so-called 'poor door'. There's no swanky foyer or tinted glass windows for these residents because they pay less rent than the people living in the apartments at the front.

Neil

Swanky means something fashionable and expensive that is designed to impress people. And **tinted** glass is coloured glass – so people can't look through your windows.

Rob

That sounds useful! Do you have tinted glass windows, Neil?

Neil

No, I don't. Tinted sunglasses are all that I can afford. So what do you think about having a rich door and a poor door for the same building, Rob?

Rob

Well, some people think it's terrible. They say it's **segregation** – or separation and different treatment of people – and I can't believe the poor-door people put up with it really!

Neil

To put up with something means to accept something that is annoying without complaining about it. The thing is, though, the poor-door people don't pay nearly as much rent. And they don't have to pay the same service charges that the rich-door people pay.

Rob

A **service charge** is an amount of money you pay to the owner of an apartment building for things like putting out the rubbish. Well, let's listen to an experience of a poor-door resident.

Abdul Mohammed, resident of One Commercial St, City of London

We can't use the lift... because it's for the rich people. So whenever the doors open, I use it. So they try and tell me off for using it. I say, 'here, come, take me to court – I don't mind'.

Neil

So what has Abdul been doing that the rich-door residents don't like, Rob?

Rob

Well, he's been using their lift because it's near his apartment door.

Neil

And what does Abdul mean when he says, 'come, take me to court'?

Rob

He's inviting the rich-door residents to take legal action against him, but Abdul doesn't really think he's doing anything wrong.

Neil

OK, it's time to hear the answer to today's quiz question.

Rob

Yes. What does 'social housing' mean? Is it flats or houses for people... a) to buy or rent at a low price? b) who want to live together sharing facilities? or c) who aren't able to pay any rent at all?

Neil

And I said a) to buy or rent at a low price.

Rob

And you were right! So well done for that, Neil. Now, shall we listen to the words we've learned on today's programme?

Neil

Good idea. We heard:

bijoux

bump into

communal area

plush

foyer

alleyway

swanky

tinted

segregation

to put up with something

service charge

Rob

Thank you. Well, that's the end of today's 6 Minute English. I hope you felt at home with us on today's show! Please join us again soon.

Both

Bye.

Vocabulary

bijoux

small but attractive

bump into

meet somebody by chance

communal area

area that is shared by a number of people

plush

expensive and luxurious

foyer

entrance hall

alleyway

narrow passage between buildings

swanky

something fashionable and expensive that is designed to impress people

tinted

coloured glass

segregation

separation and different treatment of people

to put up with something

to accept something that is annoying without complaining about it

service charge

amount of money you pay to the owner of an apartment building for things like putting out the rubbish