



PODCAST

TRANSCRIPT

Episode 147:

Title: “Metric or Imperial? That is the Question!”

Duration: 22:57

How to use this transcript:

1. Print this transcript:

We try to reduce our paper consumption, but we really recommend that you print out this document.

2. Write on it and take notes:

Circle, highlight and note anything that you want. We have even provided space for you to do so!

3. Listen first **without** the transcript:

Don't worry about understanding every single word. Just focus on training your ears to the sound of English.

4. Listen again **with** the transcript:

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00:00	<p>You are listening to the Déclic Anglais Podcast, THE podcast for intermediate, French-speaking learners of English. There is a transcript (<i>une transcription</i>) available for this and every episode of this podcast. You can download the transcript for free from the link in the description of this episode.</p> <p>Or go to www.declicanglais.com/podcast.</p> <p><i>(Ecrivez vos notes ici).</i></p>
00:57	<p>Hello and welcome to <i>The Déclic Anglais Podcast</i>! For those of you who don't know me yet, I'm Tom – your host and guide to the English language. Today we're talking about something that often confuses tourists when they visit the United Kingdom, and especially the United States – the different systems of measurement!</p> <p><i>(Ecrivez vos notes ici).</i></p>
01:34	<p>Today's episode explores the metric system, which you use in European countries such as France, Belgium, and Switzerland; and also, the imperial system, which is still used in some English-speaking countries, most notably the United Kingdom and the United States of America.</p> <p>Now then, let's dive into our topic!</p> <p><i>(Ecrivez vos notes ici).</i></p>

02:16

The Metric System: A Brief History

The metric system has a long history. But the system that we know today was born in France during the French Revolution. Yes, that's right! It was Revolutionary France that first implemented the metric system. When it wasn't decapitating kings and queens on the *Place de la Concorde* in Paris, Revolutionary France was revolutionising measurements!

The leaders of Revolutionary France wanted a standardised system of measurement that anyone could use. They based it on the number 10, which makes it very logical and easy to use.

(Ecrivez vos notes ici).

03:25

Metric is the system that most people in Europe are familiar with, it uses units like:

- Metres for length (*la longueur*)
- Kilograms for weight (*le poids*)
- Celsius for temperature
- Litres for volume

Now, let's go across the Channel (*traversons la Manche*), to my native Great Britain, home of *The Imperial System*.

(Ecrivez vos notes ici).

04:13

The Imperial System: A Royal History

The imperial system has a fascinating history, too. One thing to remember, dear listeners, is that the imperial system is **old**. It goes back to the ancient Anglo-Saxon kings, over a thousand years ago. It developed in Great Britain and was later exported to its colonies, such as the USA, Canada, and Australia. Many of the measurements were based on parts of the human body or everyday items.

(Ecrivez vos notes ici).

05:10

For example:

- An inch was based on the width of an adult man's thumb (*un pouce (c'est-à-dire l'unité de mesure) était basé sur la largeur du pouce d'un homme adulte - d'où le nom pouce.*
- A foot was... well, based on an adult man's foot!
- And then there are also yards (*en français, "yard" une verge – une verge équivaut à trois pieds, soit un peu moins d'un mètre*). Apparently a yard was roughly the distance from King Henry I's nose to his outstretched thumb (*apparemment, une verge était à peu près la distance entre le nez du roi Henri Ier et son pouce tendu*) – ... apparently!

(Ecrivez vos notes ici).

06:19	<p>And until the 19th century, it was also common to hear people talk about barleycorns (<i>des grains d'orge</i>). A barleycorn was a unit of length (<i>longueur</i>) – like I said earlier, the imperial system was based on everyday items, things that people saw and used every day. Before the 19th century, most people were farmers, growing plants like barley (<i>l'orge</i>). So, it was actually a good idea to measure things in barleycorns (<i>des grains d'orge</i>), because their size is regular, and everyone was familiar with them. We don't use barleycorns today in everyday English.</p> <p><i>(Ecrivez vos notes ici).</i></p>
07:26	<p><i>Aujourd'hui, on ne mesure plus la longueur en « barleycorns ». Dans la Grande-Bretagne moderne, nous parlons de pouces ou de centimètres. Mais saviez-vous que les tailles de chaussures au Royaume-Uni sont encore aujourd'hui basées sur les barleycorns (les grains d'orge) ?</i></p> <p><i>(Ecrivez vos notes ici).</i></p>
07:52	<p>So, dear listeners, who uses what? Who uses metric? Who uses imperial?</p> <p>Here's something interesting: today, only three countries in the world primarily use the imperial system:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The United States • Myanmar in Asia • Liberia in Africa <p>The rest of the world uses metric! Metric is the most used system in the world.</p> <p><i>(Ecrivez vos notes ici).</i></p>

08:35	<p><i>(Comment ça, Tom ? Tu veux dire que les Britanniques n'utilisent même pas le système qu'ils ont inventé ? Qu'ils ont exporté dans le monde entier ?)</i></p> <p>Well, dear listeners, the United Kingdom is a special case. And as a British person myself, I can tell you that it's very complicated, and there are differences between the generations <i>(il existe des différences entre les générations)</i>. Older generations prefer the imperial system, but younger generations are more comfortable with the metric system.</p> <p>Since 1965, the United Kingdom is officially a metric country. If you go to British shops/supermarkets, you will see products measured in grams, kilograms, and litres.</p> <p><i>(Ecrivez vos notes ici).</i></p>
09:42	<p><i>Mais Tom, pourquoi les Britanniques ont-ils abandonné un système qu'ils avaient inventé ?</i></p> <p>One word, dear listeners: trade <i>(le commerce)</i>. Most other countries in the world (and countries that Britain traded with) used metric. <i>(La plupart des pays avec lesquels la Grande-Bretagne commerçait utilisaient le système métrique).</i></p> <p><i>(Ecrivez vos notes ici).</i></p>
10:15	<p>Therefore, it was easier to do business with these countries using the metric system. But that said <i>(ceci dit)</i>, dear listeners, metrification was not a total success, and it did not spread to everything <i>(la métrification ne s'est pas étendue partout)</i> Oh no! ... Because we still use imperial measurements for certain things in daily life.</p> <p><i>(Ecrivez vos notes ici).</i></p>

11:00	<p>You will hear us British people talk about:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• <u>Miles</u> for driving distances (not kilometres)• <u>Pints</u> for beer and milk (an imperial pint is approximately 568 ml).• And <u>pounds</u> for body weight (<i>nous mesurons le poids du corps en livres</i>)• And we use <u>feet</u> and <u>inches</u> for a person's height (<i>des pieds et pouces pour la taille d'une personne</i>). <p>(<i>Et comme je l'ai déjà dit, nos tailles de chaussures sont toujours basées sur les grains d'orge</i>).</p> <p>(<i>Ecrivez vos notes ici</i>).</p>
11:56	<p>Dear listeners, I must confess something... I am a British expatriate living in France, I've been here for 10 years now. I still do not know my own height in centimetres (but I can immediately tell you in feet and inches). I am also unsure of my weight in kilograms (but I can tell you in pounds). And every time I buy a pair of shoes in France, I need to look up my shoesize on the internet (<i>chaque fois que j'achète une paire de chaussures en France, je dois vérifier ma pointure sur Internet</i>).</p> <p>(<i>Ecrivez vos notes ici</i>).</p>

12:46	<p>But I must also say that this isn't because I believe the metric system is "bad" in some way – oh no, quite the contrary! I prefer the metric system. It's more my own fault, because I'm quite forgetful with numbers! (<i>J'ai tendance à oublier les chiffres !</i>)</p> <p><i>(Ecrivez vos notes ici).</i></p>
13:18	<p>Yes, you generally find that younger British people are more at ease with the metric system than the older generations.</p> <p>A personal anecdote: When I was a teenager, I helped my grandfather building some garden furniture. He wasn't happy that I kept measuring the wood in centimetres and millimetres! My grandfather only uses feet and inches.</p> <p>And even today, when I cook with my mother (especially at Christmastime) it can also be confusing. I prefer to weigh the flour in grams (<i>je préfère peser la farine en grammes</i>), but my mother prefers to weigh it in ounces (<i>les onces. Une once correspond à environ 28 grammes</i>).</p> <p><i>(Ecrivez vos notes ici).</i></p>
14:20	<p><i>(Je pense que l'expression française : "avoir les fesses entre deux chaises" résume très bien la relation de la Grande-Bretagne avec les deux systèmes de mesure. 99% de nos produits sont vendus en unités métriques. Mais il y a des choses pour lesquelles les Britanniques n'arrivent toujours pas à utiliser le système métrique, comme la taille d'une personne - il y a un blocage psychologique quelque part, c'est très étrange).</i></p> <p><i>(Ecrivez vos notes ici).</i></p>

14:57	<p>So, how do the British and Americans compare when it comes to the metric and imperial systems?</p> <p>The United States of America began as a collection of thirteen British colonies that became an independent country. They inherited the imperial system from the British, but unlike the British, they have never converted to the metric system. If you go to the USA, you will notice that they are fully “imperial”.</p> <p><i>(Ecrivez vos notes ici).</i></p>
15:42	<p>One very noticeable difference between the British and Americans is that the British measure temperature in Celsius, whereas the Americans in Fahrenheit (<i>les Britanniques mesurent la température en Celsius, alors que les Américains la mesurent en Fahrenheit</i>).</p> <p>Now, dear listeners, to me, a Brit, Fahrenheit makes absolutely no sense. I simply cannot understand Fahrenheit - you know, at least Celsius has a kind of logic: 0° C is where water freezes. 100° is where water boils (<i>l'eau bout</i>). Easy!</p> <p><i>(Ecrivez vos notes ici).</i></p>
16:43	<p>But Fahrenheit... Wow! For those of you who don't know the difference between Fahrenheit and Celsius – the differences are quite astounding. Water freezes at 32 Fahrenheit (<i>l'eau gèle à 32 Fahrenheit</i>), and it boils at 212° Fahrenheit.</p> <p><i>(Ecrivez vos notes ici).</i></p>

17:16	<p>So, it's very funny for us British and Europeans to watch an American weather forecast, where they say:</p> <p><i>[In a faux American accent]: "Today in Houston, Texas, we've got 100° and beautiful blue skies."</i></p> <p>Yes, dear listeners, 100° Fahrenheit – not 100° Celsius!</p> <p>100° Fahrenheit is a very warm summer's day - about 37° Celsius. (<i>Bien entendu, si la température atteint 100° Celsius un jour d'été, la crème solaire sera le dernier de nos soucis !</i>)</p> <p><i>(Ecrivez vos notes ici).</i></p>
18:09	<p>So, dear listeners, are there any advantages to each system?</p> <p>Well, in my opinion, the fact that most of the world has adopted the metric system tells us everything:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• It's based on powers of 10, making it easy to convert between units.• Its simplicity makes international trade easier• The logic of the metric system also makes it very easy to learn (ten millimetres to a centimetre, one hundred centimetres to metre, a thousand metres to a kilometre... easy!) <p><i>(Ecrivez vos notes ici).</i></p>

18:53	<p>Now, there are a lot of advocates for the imperial system, too. And they have become more vocal in the United Kingdom since Brexit.</p> <p>They say that:</p> <p>The imperial units are more relatable to human experience. For example, an inch is based on an adult thumb (<i>un pouce adulte</i>), and a foot (<i>un pied</i>) on an adult foot!</p> <p>They also argue that the imperial system can be divided easily into halves and quarters (but I'm not sure that I agree with this. Personally, I find metric much easier).</p> <p><i>(Ecrivez vos notes ici).</i></p>
19:39	<p>Another problem that I have with the imperial system is that there is no easy logic to follow: For example, there are 3 barleycorns to an inch. 12 inches to a foot. 3 feet to a yard. And 1760 yards to a mile. What?! How can this be easier than centimetres, metres, and kilometres?</p> <p><i>(Ecrivez vos notes ici).</i></p>
20:10	<p>Ultimately, I believe that so many people use the imperial system simply because it's already so deeply embedded (<i>si profondément ancré</i>) in their culture and in their everyday language.</p> <p><i>(Ecrivez vos notes ici).</i></p>

20:33	<p>And the people in Britain who advocate for the imperial system always reference these measurements as being a part of British identity and British heritage. And I can understand that - it's true that some of these measurements have been in place for over a thousand years, since the time of the ancient Anglo-Saxons. So, I can understand some people's reluctance to lose these measurements. (<i>Je peux comprendre la réticence de certaines personnes à perdre ces mesures.</i>)</p> <p>(<i>Ecrivez vos notes ici.</i>)</p>
21:28	<p>Alright then, dear listeners, let's leave it there for today. I hope you've enjoyed this episode of <i>The Déclic Anglais Podcast</i>. If you enjoy this podcast, then I think you'll love <i>The Déclic Anglais Club</i> – our online learning platform.</p> <p>The episodes of this podcast are always full of new vocabulary that can sometimes be hard to remember. Well, in <i>The Déclic Anglais Club</i> we take episodes of this podcast and transform them into interactive lessons, which will help you learn the vocabulary.</p> <p>You can improve your listening and reading comprehension, and even improve your spelling (<i>votre orthographe</i>) with our dictation exercises (<i>avec nos dictées</i>).</p> <p>If you're interested, just go to www.declicanglais.com for more information.</p> <p>That's all for today's episode! Have a lovely day, dear listeners, take care of yourselves. I look forward to seeing you again in the next one. Bye for now.</p> <p>(<i>Ecrivez vos notes ici.</i>)</p>

How did it go?

Take a moment to revisit the notes that you took.

List here 3 words or expressions (minimum) that you would like to remember from this podcast. We recommend that you consult a free, online dictionary like

www.wordreference.com to ensure that you have the correct definition and context.

WORDS/EXPRESSIONS THAT I WANT TO REMEMBER:

1.

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