

Hello, my Lovely Learners and welcome to Easy Stories in English, the podcast that will take your English from Okay to Good and from Good to Great! I am Ariel Goodbody, your host for this show. Today's episode is a conversation about my morning routine. As always, the transcript and PDF are available at [EasyStoriesInEnglish.com](https://www.EasyStoriesInEnglish.com), and you can find the link in the description.

So morning routines! It might seem like a boring topic, and it might seem like a strange topic. Why am I talking about my morning routine? Well, if you study a language at school, or even as an adult, this is a common topic at the beginner level. I don't really know why, but many language speaking exams want you to talk about your morning routine, or at least when I was in school, I remember having to talk about my morning routine in my French speaking exam. *Je me lève, je me lave.*

Really, I don't think this makes much sense. How often in real life do you talk about your morning routine? It's not that interesting, and it's not like people talk about it every day, but I suppose it can be interesting to talk about, and it is a way of telling people about you.

Actually, these days on social media videos about morning routines are very popular. People want to know how to be the most productive and healthy, so they look for morning routines online. They want to see how effective, productive, healthy, and strong people do their morning routines, I guess so they can copy their routines and be like these people. Of course, everyone is different and everyone should have a different morning routine. I'm sure my morning routine would be horrible for many people, and when I hear about other people's morning routines, I think, oh my God, that couldn't be me.

I suppose one really important factor is whether you are a morning person or a night owl. So a morning person is someone who loves to be up early in the morning, who has lots of energy in the morning and a night owl - an owl is a kind of bird that sleeps in the day and hunts at night. It finds its food to eat at night. So a night owl is a person who likes to be awake late at night. They like to work late and they like to sleep late. They don't like to get up early.

Fortunately, I am a morning person, because our society is really better for morning people. Most jobs start in the morning, and my current job in China starts at 7:45. I have to be at my desk ready to work by 7:45 in the morning. That is the earliest time I have ever had to start a job. So if I wasn't a morning person, this job would be very difficult.

So let's go through my morning routine. I'm going to try and make it interesting, but it may just be boring. It might just be too much detail. I'm going to tell you everything there is to know about my morning routine, and you can decide whether it's interesting or not.

So I wake up at five in the morning. This is much earlier than I used to wake up in the UK. In the UK I would wake up around 6:00 AM but here the sun rises earlier and sets later. So the day starts at a different time and it's actually quite easy to get up at 5:00 AM because the sun rises about 30 minutes afterwards.

Well, it does now. Obviously now is the summer and there's no daylight savings time in China. The clocks don't change during the year in China. So it might be harder in winter, but again, of course, Ningbo, where I live now, is closer to the equator.

The equator is the line around the center of the earth, and the closer you are to the equator, the less the length of the day changes over the year. Because the UK is quite far north and it is in the northern hemisphere, the northern half of the world, in the UK, winter days are very short, and summer days are very long. But here in China, the difference won't be that big. I hope.

So, I wake up at 5:00 AM and what is the first thing I do? Do I sing? Do I dance? Do I make marmalade on toast? No, I brush my teeth, of course. I'm very much in the group of

people who brush their teeth before eating breakfast. I believe it's healthier to brush your teeth before you eat breakfast, although when I was a child, I used to eat breakfast and then brush my teeth, which I think is actually quite common in the UK. But I believe here in China it's normal to brush your teeth and then have breakfast.

I floss before brushing. So floss, dental floss, is a long, thin tape, a long, thin piece of string that you move between your teeth, you wiggle between your teeth, to clean out bits of food. So brushing your teeth with a toothbrush cleans the outside of the teeth, but to clean between the teeth you need to floss.

Flossing every day is a difficult habit for many people. Many people find it hard to start flossing every day as an adult, at least in the UK. I think probably the problem is that we start flossing too late. You learn to brush your teeth twice a day when you are very young, so it easily becomes part of your routine. But I know many adults struggle with flossing. They find it hard to floss regularly, consistently. But I have a great technique.

So flossing your whole mouth every day is maybe not necessary. So many people floss every other day, for example, they floss on Monday, Wednesday, Friday, Sunday, and then Tuesday, Thursday and Saturday. However, that makes it even harder to build a routine. If you have a habit that you do every day, you will quickly learn the habit. It will quickly become part of your routine. But if you only do it every other day, then it's harder to keep doing it. It's harder to remember.

So what I do is, one day I floss the top half of my mouth, and the next day I floss the bottom half of my mouth. So for example, on Monday I floss the top half, on Tuesday I floss the bottom, on Wednesday, I floss the top, and so on.

Now I know what you may be thinking. How do I remember which half of my mouth to floss each day? Well, I have the box of dental floss in my bathroom and before I floss every day, I turn it upside down. I put the top on the bottom or the bottom on the top. So if the dental floss is facing up, if I can see the top of the box of dental floss, then I know I need to floss the top half of my mouth. And if my dental floss is facing down, then I know I need to floss the bottom part of my mouth. If any of you find flossing difficult or you struggle to do it regularly, I really recommend this trick.

Now, in the morning, I just floss and brush, but in the evening I don't floss. I use an interdental stick. So it's a little stick with bristles, basically a really small brush, and I put it between my teeth because sometimes there are bits of food that the dental floss doesn't get. And in the evening, after brushing my teeth, I also use mouthwash.

The most common brand of mouthwash is Listerine. Actually, you can get Listerine here in China, although it's a bit different. It doesn't have alcohol in it, or it doesn't have some ingredient in it that we have in the UK. So my mouth doesn't feel so clean after using Chinese Listerine as when I use Listerine in the UK.

However, you can get some very interesting flavours of Listerine here in China. I actually got peach and cherry blossom flavoured Listerine, which I had to try. I saw it in the shop and I had to try it because I thought, how strange! Cherry blossom Listerine? But when I tried it, it tasted too sweet and I don't want my mouthwash to taste sweet because then I don't feel like I'm cleaning my mouth. So maybe the next time I go home I will buy some good strong British Listerine.

Anyway, after brushing my teeth, I do yoga. One of the lovely things about my new flat here in Ningbo is I finally have enough space to do yoga at home. My flat in London was so small that I could sort of do yoga by my bed, but any pose that required horizontal space, so any yoga position where I had to put my arms out sideways, there wasn't enough space for. So I was limited in the yoga poses I could do, and also it is just not very nice to do yoga in a

small space. It doesn't feel like you are saluting the sun. It just feels like you're trapped in a small, overpriced London bedroom.

There are also various yoga poses that require a wall. So you put your feet up on the wall or you do a handstand next to the wall, and I didn't have any free walls where I could do this in London. But again, here in Ningbo I do, so I have purchased a lovely yoga mat, yoga blocks and a yoga strap. So blocks are big square things. You use them for some yoga poses, and a strap is like a long string that again you use for some yoga poses. For example, you tie the strap around your foot and pull your foot up in the air from behind you. It's quite hard to describe these poses with audio, so I'll put some pictures up on the transcript at [EasyStoriesInEnglish.com](https://www.EasyStoriesInEnglish.com).

The yoga mat I purchased is a cork yoga mat. Cork is a kind of wood. You put corks in bottles of wine to keep them good for a long time. When you open a bottle of champagne, the cork flies out and goes [pop]. And it's very fun and dramatic.

So why did I buy a cork yoga mat? Well, cork is a natural material, so it feels nicer than using plastic, and it absorbs liquids. So if you sweat a lot, the cork absorbs the sweat and it doesn't tend to smell as much as a rubber or plastic yoga mat.

Now, of course, doing yoga by yourself is not the same as doing a class, but fortunately, my favorite yoga teacher from London takes part in an online yoga studio where you can either do the classes through Zoom, or through their own online video platform, or you can rewatch the classes after they've happened.

So the classes seem to mostly happen around half past 10 at night for me, because obviously there's a big time zone difference, which is not really a time I want to be doing yoga. That's normally when I'm in bed. So instead I just watch the video replays in the morning, and even though I'm not there live, I get to see my lovely friend Craig, and do his wonderful classes, and it always energises me and puts me in a good mood for the day.

That is, when I have the energy, because, to be honest, there are many days when I wake up and I'm too tired to exercise. Maybe I walked a lot the day before. Maybe it was too hot the day before. Maybe I had some stressful classes, but whatever the reason, I just don't have the energy for yoga. Or I do a shorter yoga class. There's a lovely range of yoga classes on this website, so I can choose one to suit my mood.

After doing yoga, of course, it's time for my shower, and I'm pretty simple with my shower. I actually like to have a cold shower. I find a cold shower really wakes you up and fills you with energy. Now, Ningbo in the summer is so hot that a cold shower doesn't really feel that cold, even inside with air conditioning. But I like the feeling of saving energy, and, I don't know, I just like things being a bit difficult. I think when things are a bit difficult, it's also satisfying. Not all the time, obviously some things can and should be easy, but it's nice to push yourself a bit, and for me, having a lovely cold shower in the morning does just that.

I'm very simple with my bathroom products. I just use shampoo and I use a bar of soap to wash my body. I don't use conditioner because my hair isn't long enough to need conditioner, and I much prefer a physical hard bar of soap than liquid soap or shower gel. I like taking a bar of soap and rubbing it all over my body because then I feel really clean, whereas, I find with shower gel, I feel like I'm wasting a lot of the product and I just don't feel as clean.

I also think it's bad for the environment to use shower gel because most of the product is just water. So they're spending a lot of money to ship around essentially bottles of water with some soap mixed in them. I don't know. I know this is a cultural difference as well. I believe in America using bar soap is much more common, but in the UK most people use shower

gel. Usually it's like bright blue or bright green, and, I dunno, at some point I just stopped using it and now I much prefer using soap.

So I wash my hair usually every other day, and I also put on deodorant every other day. So in China it's a bit hard to find deodorants that also are antiperspirants. So the deodorant is the part that adds smell, like a pleasant smell to your body, and antiperspirants are the chemicals that stop you from sweating.

In the West, most deodorants are also antiperspirants. I believe here genetically many people's sweat does not smell in the same way that Western people's sweat does. Therefore, a lot of deodorants don't contain antiperspirants. In Japan, that is definitely the case. Now, of course, it's much easier to order foreign products in China than it was in the past, but still, I brought some deodorant with antiperspirant from the UK and I would like to make it last.

By the way, I always use a roll-on deodorant, so that's a deodorant with a ball that you roll against your armpits. Many people use spray deodorant. I think the most popular spray deodorant is Lynx, although in America and some other countries, it's known as Axe. I use an unscented roll-on deodorant because I don't like the smell of deodorants. Actually, I hate the smell of deodorants. I would rather smell of nothing or of real sweat, but if I show up to work smelling of sweat, people probably won't be too happy. So I use an unscented roll-on deodorant.

Now, on the packet it says it lasts 48 hours. And at first I thought that was one of those silly marketing things, but actually I found out it's true. If you apply it on Monday and don't apply it on Tuesday, you will still be absolutely fine and fresh on Tuesday. So even in a hot climate like Ningbo, I only need to apply deodorant every other day, which is good because one, it saves me money, the deodorant lasts longer, and two, I have a lot of armpit hair, I have very hairy armpits, so it takes the deodorant a long time to dry.

So sometimes in the morning I put on the deodorant and I'm walking around without a shirt on for a long time waiting for the deodorant to dry. Once I have bought a hair dryer - actually I've ordered a hair dryer and it's coming in a few days - once I have my hair dryer, I will be using that to dry my deodorant, to dry my armpits. Yes, I know it sounds really silly using a hair dryer to dry the deodorant on my armpits, but in my experience, it's simply the best system. Unless I shave my armpits, but I don't want to do that.

So just like with the dental floss, I have an ingenious method to know every day whether I should put on deodorant or not. So I keep the deodorant by my sink in the bathroom, and if it's a day when I should wear it, I put it at the front of the sink, close to me, and then when I get out of the shower, if the deodorant is at the front of the sink, I put it on and then I put it at the back of the sink. And on a day when I get out of the shower and the deodorant is at the back of the sink, I put it to the front of the sink, but I don't put it on. I put it at the front of the sink so that tomorrow I will know to put on deodorant.

If at this point you are thinking, wow, Ariel, this is so boring. You have talked about your morning routine for almost half an hour: welcome to the show! I can talk about literally anything. We have a phrase, actually, in the UK. We say he could talk for England, as in I could make talking a sport. If there was an English national team for talking like there is for football, I could talk for England.

So after showering and putting on my deodorant, or not, depending on the day, I get dressed. I don't have anything special to tell you about getting dressed. It's pretty simple.

After that, I make coffee and have my breakfast. Now, because I've only been living in this flat for a few weeks, and I was waiting to get paid from my job, I didn't have my usual coffee setup. My usual coffee setup is I have a v60 filter. This is a specific kind of coffee filter.

It's like a plastic cone that you put on a cup. You put a paper filter inside, you put in coffee grounds, so coffee powder, and then you pour over water and the water drips through and you get a nice cup of coffee.

I use a v60 filter because it's simple, cheap, and not messy, but you get a good quality cup of coffee. The most important thing is to use real coffee beans. I don't buy the powder. I buy the beans and I grind the beans into the powder at home. So along with your mug, the plastic filter and the paper filter, you also need a coffee grinder, a machine that grinds coffee beans into coffee powder.

For the last few weeks, I haven't had this because I've been trying to save money, but I got paid recently, so I've ordered this setup and I can't wait to get back into the swing of my usual coffee routine.

Ooh, it's a routine within a routine! It's just like that film *Inception*. Ooh, that film's quite old now. Some of you might not know it.

So, recently, without my beloved v60 filter, I've been relying on instant coffee, which... you can probably hear from my voice what I think of instant coffee. It's really not very good. Or I've ordered takeaway coffee to my house.

Now the takeaway in China is just crazy. I can literally wake up, grab my phone, order some coffee, and in 30 or 40 minutes it will show up at my front door. So I've got quite a few cappuccinos and lattes delivered to my front door recently, but once my coffee filter, beans and grinder arrive, I'll be back to my usual routine, and that's definitely going to save me a lot of money.

At some point, if I'm feeling very fancy, I might even buy a coffee machine that makes espressos, lattes and cappuccinos all in one. But for now, I think we're trying to save money. I don't need that. I would love that, but, you know, I can live without it.

Okay, enough about coffee. What about breakfast? Well, my go-to breakfast in the UK was muesli, chia seeds, milled flaxseed, yoghurt, oat milk, banana and peanut butter. Hmm, if that sounds like an overly complicated breakfast, it is. Uh, it was kind of ridiculous, but it was very healthy and very filling, and it had a lot of protein, and it was delicious and not too expensive.

The problem here in China is, muesli is not that popular. Yoghurt, for the most part, is not what I'm used to. It's just a very different consistency. The yogurt is usually sweet. If you get a big pot of yoghurt it's much more expensive than what I'm used to. And that's before we even get into peanut butter, which I'm pretty sure you have to buy from an import store or an international supermarket because it's not very popular with Chinese people.

So my breakfast has necessarily had to change while I'm here. Now in a previous episode of the podcast, I did talk about some lovely hotel breakfasts I had in China, and don't get me wrong, I do like a Chinese breakfast, but I'm the kind of person who likes to have the same breakfast every day, and I'm still struggling to find my routine with that.

It's got a bit easier because one of my dear, dear friends back in the UK managed to send me a bag of Alpen, which is a kind of muesli. It's not the best quality muesli, it's just one of those standard brands you find in the supermarket. But when I opened the bag of Alpen and smelled it, it was like, ah! A taste of home, so I'm going to enjoy that Alpen over the next few weeks, or few days. We'll see how long it lasts.

I can have that with yoghurt, milk and banana, so it's not too far from my old breakfast. There is also a much wider selection of exotic fruits here in China. So recently for breakfast, I've also been having chopped dragon fruit and mango with yoghurt, which sounds really exciting. Dragon fruits are crazy. They look so weird. They're so big, they're so pink, and

they taste... alright, I guess? I feel like dragon fruit, the name is amazing, the look is amazing, and the taste just doesn't quite meet the level, but it's not bad for breakfast.

I've also just purchased a rice cooker, which means I can make congee, or rice porridge, and porridge was my other go-to breakfast back in the UK, so maybe I'll get into making porridge at home. I dunno. I'm gonna experiment a bit and see what I like. I may just end up buying all the ingredients for muesli online and making my own muesli, because it's really not very hard. It's just deciding on some ratios and mixing together some oats and dried fruit. I can probably make quite a cool muesli here using some dried Chinese fruits, and I'm sure goji berries are much cheaper here than in the West where they've become this kind of super food and therefore they're quite expensive.

But making my own tub of muesli requires purchasing a lot of things. And honestly, since I got paid yesterday, I've been doing so much online shopping. There is so much furniture I have to buy. I need to buy computer parts and build a new computer. And, uh, it's just a lot. So maybe next time you hear from me, I'll be making my own muesli. Maybe next time you hear from me, I'll be milking my own cow. I could keep a cow on my balcony. I could milk it and make fresh yoghurt from its milk because, oh my God, I really want proper Greek yoghurt.

Now, back in the UK, while I drank my coffee and ate my breakfast, I would usually journal, I would write in my diary, or I might read a book, or I might do some podcasting work. Recently here I've been studying Chinese. I'm using an app called Du Chinese. That's D-U. Which is fantastic. In fact, I kind of wish I could make the same thing but for English, but I'm not an app designer and... Well, I don't know. If any of you are app designers and want to collaborate with me, shoot me an email at Ariel@EasyStoriesInEnglish.com.

But basically, this app, Du Chinese, has stories and articles in all different levels, really all levels from complete beginner to pretty advanced. And they all have features like you can see the pronunciation of all the characters, you can choose simplified or traditional characters, you can press on any word and get the translation, you can make flash cards from new words. And everything, every resource on the website, is voiced so you can read and listen at the same time. It is, without a doubt, the best Chinese study tool I have found. Actually, it's one of the best language study tools I've found ever.

If there was this app for every language, it would be so much easier to learn languages. And it's pretty impressive because Chinese is much more challenging to create this app for than, say, English, because you have the simplified versus traditional characters. You have lots of different characters with different pronunciations. It's just, yeah.

The actual reading material on the websites is interesting. They have some really fun, cute stories for beginners. They have many adaptations of Chinese myths and legends, which of course I love because I love mythology and storytelling. They have adaptations of short stories. I just read an adaptation of a Japanese short story in Chinese and they have articles about everyday life and society.

So if you're learning Chinese or you're interested in learning Chinese, I seriously recommend Du Chinese. And it's a great way to start off my day because, of course, I am living here in China and I want to improve my Chinese as fast as possible.

My main motivation for learning Chinese is not to make friends. It's not to advance my career. It's so that when delivery drivers ring me I can understand what they're saying. Because right now, every time I order takeaway or I get a large item delivered, I have a panic attack when the delivery driver rings me and shouts at me down the phone on their little moped as they're speeding down the street speaking so, so fast, usually in a thick dialect.

So if I get to the level where I can understand the delivery drivers and comfortably talk to them, I know I'll be doing well.

And then finally, after studying Chinese and getting my bag ready for work, I head out the door and I go to work. I sometimes take out the rubbish, I take out the bin bags, while I go down. There's a space in my apartment complex with bins that are annoyingly open at 7:30 to 9:30, I think, and then again later in the evening. The thing is, I don't want to take the bins out in the evening. I get home from work and I'm tired and sweaty, and the last thing I want to do is carry those bins out 'cause it's like a good three, four minute walk from my house to the bin area, but you can... well, I'm not sure if you're supposed to do this, but I was told, and I've seen other people do it, that you can just take the bins before 7:30 and leave them there. And then at 7:30, someone who works in the complex opens all the bins and will put your bags inside. Because if you go there outside of the normal bin hours, the bins are all locked shut. There is a 24-hour bin area somewhere in the basement car park, I think, but the last time I tried to find that I got trapped in the car park, so I won't be trying that again anytime soon.

On that note, it's a bit weird in China. I'm used to the UK where there's general rubbish, food waste and recycling, and often the recycling is even separated into paper, cardboard, and glass, and plastic. But in China, at least where I live, it's just separated into rubbish and food waste. Which I guess is better than nothing. It's good that they separate food waste. Actually, I've heard about separating recycling in Shanghai, I believe? So I think it might vary depending on the region. It could be that they're starting recycling in tier one cities and then spreading into other cities.

If you don't know, cities in China are divided into tiers. So tier one cities are cities like Shanghai and Beijing. Tier one cities tend to be more expensive, but also have better facilities and amenities. Ningbo, where I live, is a tier two city, which is a really nice balance because it's cheaper, but it's still modern, clean, and reliable.

So anyway, after taking out the bins or not, I walk to work, and I think that's where my morning routine officially ends. Obviously, on the weekends, I don't do things in quite the same way.

For example, as I'm recording this, it's a Saturday and it's 5:00 PM, and I haven't even left the house today. I slept until eight in the morning. I had a nice, really slow morning with two coffees and a long yoga class, and a slow breakfast, and some sushi for lunch, and I unpacked my new robot vacuum cleaner and got him cleaning the place. So anyway, I've been having a very lazy day, but this was my first week of teaching at my new job, so I'm pretty tired.

It's also a nice change of pace because my weekends back in London were always so busy. I did two hours of yoga every Saturday morning, and I went to church and did choir practice every Sunday morning, and I usually socialised in the afternoons and evenings on the weekend as well. So I almost never got to have a lazy day.

But since my move to China, I've been giving myself the rest and recuperation that I need, and with my lovely big three-bedroom flat, which is in a lovely quiet area, it's so easy to relax.

In fact, as I talk to you now, I can feel myself falling asleep. Oh, it's so tiring recording an episode of Easy Stories in English!

But you've been a fabulous audience, and if you'd like to really show your appreciation, you can leave me a comment and tell me all about your morning routine. Go on, go into just as much detail as I did. It'll be good English practice. Just go over to the transcript. You can

find the link to that in the description, or if you're listening on Spotify, you can leave a comment there.

Well, it's too late for me to go and have an afternoon nap, but I'm certainly going to do something nice and relaxed after this. In fact, I think I might go and eat some fruit. Bye!