

## The World of Scottish Whisky

### The Scottish English Podcast – Episode 34



LANGUAGE LEARNING

*Transcript & Upper-intermediate and Advanced  
Vocabulary Guide*

Below is the transcript with all selected B2, C1, and above vocabulary and phrases in **bold**. After the transcript, you'll find a table with definitions, British English pronunciation, and useful collocations/idioms for each highlighted word or phrase.

### Transcript: The World of Scottish Whisky

Hello and welcome back to the Scottish English Podcast, where we bring you stories from Scotland's history, culture, and **traditions**, while helping you practice your English.

I'm Claire and today we're going to pour a glass of Scotland's most famous export: whisky. But first, if you haven't done so already, hit that subscribe button. Or if you're a big fan, consider supporting the show's creation by leaving a tip or becoming a member.

You'll get early access to audio versions of the podcast, and depending on which tier you choose, you could even get the opportunity to request your own episode topics.

More about that in the description. And there you'll also find the free transcript, which comes along with this episode. It contains definitions, the pronunciation, and some idiomatic language for some of the words that I use today.

So whisky, known around the world as scotch. It's not just a drink: it's a story, a tradition, and for many people, a taste of Scotland in a glass. And be careful with the spelling. Whisky without the E is from Scotland, Canada, or Japan. And whiskey with the E is from Ireland or the United States.

Today we'll explore whisky without an E's history, how it's made, the different kinds, and why it remains a **symbol** of Scotland across the globe. So let's raise a glass, **metaphorically speaking** of course, and dive in.

### **Origins of whisky production.**

The word whisky comes from the Scottish Gaelic phrase, uisge beatha. **Apologies** for my terrible pronunciation. That word means 'water of life'. So that tells you straight away how important whisky has always been in Scotland. **Distilling** spirits is thought to have begun in Scotland around the late Middle Ages, perhaps introduced by **monks**.

At first, whisky was not the smooth, golden drink we know it today. It was rough, fiery, and used more as medicine than for enjoyment. People believed it cured **ailments** and warmed the heart in cold highland winters.

By the 15th and 16th centuries, whisky production had spread across the highlands and lowlands, and over time it became **essential** as a part of Scottish life.

### **Different types of scotch whisky.**

Now when we talk about scotch, we're talking about whisky made in Scotland under very strict rules, but not all scotch is the same. Let's break it down.

Single malt scotch whisky. This is made from malted barley in one single distillery, is often seen as the most traditional and is loved for its **complex** flavours.

Single grain scotch whisky. Despite the name, it doesn't mean it's made from one grain. Here, grains like wheat or corn are used, but again, it's at a single distillery.

**Blended** scotch whisky. By far the most common worldwide, this is a mix of different single malts and grain whiskies, creating smooth, consistent flavours.

Famous brands like Johnny Walker and Chivas Regal fall into this category.

Each type has its own character and whisky lovers often enjoy comparing them.

### **Distillation and the role of geography.**

So how is whisky made? At its heart, the process involves malting barley, fermenting it, and then distilling it in copper stills.

But here's the magic. The **geography** of Scotland has a huge **influence** on flavour. For example, whiskies from Islay, an island off the west coast, are famously smoky and peaty, thanks to the **peat** fires used in drying the barley.

Whiskies from Speyside, in the northeast of Scotland, are usually lighter, fruitier and sweeter.

And Highland whiskies often fall somewhere between: bold and full-bodied.

In short, Scotland's varied landscapes from mountains to islands, give whiskies their unique **personalities**.

### **Famous distilleries.**

With over 130 active distilleries today, Scotland is spoiled for choice for whisky. But some names stand out. Macallan. Known for its rich sherried single malts.

Laphroaig from Islay: famous, or **infamous**, for its smoky, medicinal flavour. People either love it or hate it.

Glenfiddich. One of the best selling single malts worldwide.

Lagavulin, another Islay giant with deep smoky whiskies, beloved by connoisseurs. These distilleries are not just factories, they are part of Scotland's culture and economy, attracting visitors from every corner of the world.

Why not try a whisky distillery tour the next time you are in Scotland?

### **Whisky in Scottish traditions.**

Whisky is more than just a drink. It's part of **tradition**. At a Burns Night's Supper in January, Scots raise a dram of whisky to toast the poet Robert Burns. At weddings, special occasions, or even funerals, sharing whisky is a **gesture** of respect and togetherness.

Even today, whisky lies at the heart of Scottish **hospitality**. Offering guests a wee dram, that's a small glass, is still a sign of warmth and welcome. And of course, whisky is central to Scotland's worldwide reputation. Wherever you go: New York, Tokyo, Paris, scotch whisky carries a piece of Scotland with it.

### **Tasting notes and the art of appreciation.**

Now, how does one taste whisky rather than just drink it? Whisky lovers will say it's an art.

When you pour a glass first, look at the colour. It gives hints of the cask it matured in. Maybe pale gold or deep amber. Then swirl it gently and notice the nose, the aroma. You might smell fruit, vanilla, spice, or smoke. Take a small sip. Let it roll over your tongue. Is it sweet, oaky, smoky? Does it feel light or heavy? That's where tasting notes come from, describing the **sensations** and flavours. And remember, there's no single right way to enjoy whisky, whether neat, that's without anything or with a splash of water or even in a cocktail, whisky **appreciation** is about pleasure, not rules.

From its humble beginnings as the water of life to becoming a global **symbol** of Scottish culture, whisky has carried Scotland's spirit around the world.

So next time you see a bottle of scotch, you'll know it is not just a drink. It's a story of land, skill, and tradition distilled, matured, and poured into every glass.

Thank you for sharing this wee journey with me today. If you enjoyed this episode, don't forget to subscribe and tell a friend who loves Scottish history and maybe whisky too. Until next time, I'll say slàinte. That's Scottish Gaelic for cheers.

## Vocabulary Table

Word/Phrase	Definition	Pronunciation	Collocations / Idiomatic Phrases
export	send goods to another country for sale	ɪkˈspɔːt	export market, export goods
tradition	customs passed down through generations	trəˈdɪʃən	family tradition, cultural tradition
symbol	something that represents something else	ˈsɪmbəl	national symbol, symbol of peace
apologies	expressions of regret	əˈpɒlədʒɪz	offer apologies, accept apologies
distilling	process of purifying a liquid by heating and condensing	dɪˈstɪlɪŋ	distilling process, distilling spirits
essential	absolutely necessary	ɪˈsenʃəl	essential part, essential for
complex	consisting of many different and connected parts	ˈkɒmpleks	complex flavors, complex problem
blended	mixed together	ˈblendɪd	blended whisky, blended tea

famous	well known	'feɪməs	famous brand, famous person
geography	the physical features of an area	dʒi'ɒɡrəfi	physical geography, human geography
influence	the power to affect something	'ɪnfluəns	have influence, cultural influence
personality	qualities that make someone or something unique	ˌpɜːsə'nælɪti	distinct personality, friendly personality
infamous	well known for a bad reason	'ɪnfəməs	infamous criminal, infamous event
gesture	a movement to express an idea or feeling	'dʒɛstʃə	kind gesture, make a gesture
hospitality	friendly and generous reception of guests	ˌhɒspɪ'tælɪti	warm hospitality, local hospitality
appreciation	recognition and enjoyment of value	əˌpriːʃi'eɪʃən	art appreciation, appreciation of music
sensations	physical feelings or perceptions	sɛn'seɪʃənz	pleasant sensations, sensory sensations

metaphorically speaking	in a way that uses or contains metaphors (using a word or phrase to describe somebody or something else, in a way that is different from its normal use)	/ˌmetəˈfɒrɪkli/	metaphorically speaking
monk	a member of a religious group of men who often live apart from other people in a monastery and who do not marry or have personal possessions	/mɒŋk/	Benedictine/Buddhist monks
ailments	an illness that is not very serious	/ˈeɪlmənt/	childhood/common/minor ailments
peat	a soft black or brown substance formed from old or dying plants just under the surface of the ground, especially in cool wet areas. It is burned as a fuel or used to improve garden soil.	/pi:t/	peat bogs peat extraction