

Hometown English: Vocabulary for Describing Your Hometown

If you think of a town as your hometown, you probably like it. And, if you like a town, you probably know a lot about your hometown, and like talking about it. So, today we're going to give you the chance to learn the vocabulary you might want to use in describing your hometown.

Before You Listen to the Recording

Take a moment to think about what you think of as your hometown. You should, at the least, know exactly what town or city you're going to describe! Is it a big city, or is it a small town or even a village? Do many tourists come there? Does *anybody* come there? What do the people who come want to see?

If you learn better by writing down notes as you listen, it might help you to put the following terms on a piece of paper before we start. That way you can jot down—that means, write quickly—a few short notes about each term as you listen:

- Urban
- Rural
- Population
- Destination
- Tourist Attraction / Attraction
- Produce / Producing

Now start the recording.

After You've Heard the Recording

What do you think? Were these terms new to you? How would you describe your hometown? Is it urban, suburban, or rural? Does it have many tourist attractions? Does your town produce anything famous?

Try using these terms in a paragraph—spoken or written—to describe your hometown. To help you, here are some explanations of the vocabulary words covered, plus a few more.

Vocabulary

Urban: Do you live in New York City? Tokyo? Berlin? Then you live in an '*urban*' area. Urban is simply a word that means 'big city.' There's no limit to how 'small' an urban city can be:

Dresden has 'only' half a million inhabitants and I still think of it as urban. It's more a feeling.

Suburban: This might just be an American invention. As American cities 'grew up' and everyone had a car, it became normal for the middle class to move to small, new towns outside the 'urban centers.' These towns were filled with people who lived outside the city and drove in every day to work. They were the suburbs, or '*suburban*.' ('sub' means 'less than' and we've already talked about the word 'urban,' so it should be pretty clear.) If your town is just outside a much bigger city, your hometown is probably suburban.

Rural: Is your hometown surrounded by farms? By trees? Do you live in a village? Your hometown could be '*rural*.' Rural is the opposite of urban: rural means 'agricultural' or 'small town.' Again, like urban, there isn't a certain number of inhabitants that a town has to have to be rural, it's more of a feeling.

Population: How many people live in your hometown? (In Towanda, my place of birth, there are only four thousand inhabitants!) That's the *population* of your hometown: "Towanda's population is four thousand." Population is the most common way to measure the size of a city.

Inhabitants: Every person who lives in your hometown is an *inhabitant* of that town. The word 'inhabitant' simply means 'person who lives in.' So I'm an inhabitant of Dresden, but I'm also an inhabitant of Germany. When I say that Dresden has half a million inhabitants, it means that Dresden's population is a half million.

Destination: When you get in your car—or get on the train—you probably know exactly where you plan on stopping right? The place that you're going to is your '*destination*.' When I say that a place—a museum, maybe—is a "popular destination," what I mean is that a lot of people make it their destination: they go there.

Tourist Attraction / Attraction: To 'attract' something or somebody is to 'pull' it or them towards you. Magnets attract metal. Honey attracts bees. And some things—like castles, museums, and parks—attract tourists. We call them *tourist attractions*. The things that bring tourists to your hometown are tourist attractions. Because 'tourist attraction' sometimes sounds artificial (like something that was *made* to attract tourists) we sometimes simply say 'attraction.' I guess we mean that it attracts people, and not just tourists that way!

Produce / Producing: To *produce* something is to make it. But when we use '*producing*' as an adjective (to describe your hometown, for example) it means that your hometown makes something. Near Dresden, for example, is the porcelain producing city of Meissen. Meissen makes porcelain that is famous all over the world.