Your English Toolbox

VOCABULARY · EPISODE 195

Why Does Popcorn Pop? | Curious English

English learning resource · EN

Key words & expressions · English

6 learning entries

Study task: Listen again and notice the expressions you studied.

1

build up

DEF

To increase gradually over time.

It often describes pressure, tension or energy that grows little by little.

Pressure builds up inside the kernel.

Traffic began to build up near the bridge.

2

burst open

DEF

To break open suddenly, often because pressure pushes from inside.

It describes a sudden opening or rupture; it is more vivid than simply “open.”

The kernel bursts open when the pressure becomes strong enough.

The ripe seed pod burst open in the heat.

3

moisture

DEF

A small amount of water inside or on something.

It refers to water already in or on a material; it does not necessarily mean that the material is wet.

Popcorn also needs enough moisture inside the kernel.

A dry sponge has little moisture.

4

kernel

DEF

One single seed from a corn plant.

In this episode, it is the small hard piece of corn that can pop, not the popped snack.

One kernel popped before the rest.

A popcorn kernel contains water and starch.

5

starch

DEF

A natural substance in plants and foods such as corn, rice, and potatoes.

In popcorn, heated starch expands as steam is released from the kernel.

Bread and potatoes both contain starch.

A popcorn kernel contains water surrounded by starch.

6

shell

DEF

A hard outer covering that protects something.

For popcorn, the hard outer covering is more precisely called the hull.

A nut's shell protects the part we eat.

The popcorn shell, or hull, keeps the contents inside.