
BBC LEARNING ENGLISH

Summer-born kids



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NB: This is not a word-for-word transcript

Rob

Hello and welcome to 6 Minute English. I'm Rob...

Neil

... and I'm Neil. Hello.

Rob

Well Neil I've got a question for you straight away. Were you a summer baby? Were you born in the summer?

Neil

Um...Yes, I was actually. Late summer.

Rob

OK. And did you go to university?

Neil

Yes...? Strange questions here, Rob.

Rob

Not really. My questions do make sense because we're talking about the impact when you were born has on how well you perform at school.

Neil

OK. Are you calling me stupid here, Rob?

Rob

Nothing like that. Well maybe... let's wait and see what the experts have to say. But before that, I've got another question for you.

Neil

OK then – let's see I'm clever enough to answer it!

Rob

OK. Well, based on birth records between 1973 and 1999, what is the most common birthday for a person in the United States? Is it:

- a) 1st January
- b) 16th September
- c) 30th March

Neil

I'm gonna guess 30th March.

Rob

OK. Well, we'll hear the answer at the end of the programme. Another question now. According to research, are summer born babies **more likely** or **less likely** to go to university?

Neil

Well, we are going to hear from an expert. Lorraine Dearden, who is Professor of Economics and Social Statistics at University College London (UCL). She was interviewed by the BBC about summer-born babies. She talks about the research, how well do they do in tests. How do they perform?

INSERT

Professor Lorraine Dearden, University College London

All the research has shown that summer born kids **perform** much worse in tests right through up until the age of eighteen and even ... they're less likely to attend higher education.

BBC interviewer

I mean, these are **startling** statistics 20% are less likely to go to university.

Professor Lorraine Dearden, University College London

Absolutely.

Rob

That was Professor Lorraine Dearden with some really really surprising statistics – startling statistics, in fact.

Neil

Yes, she says summer born kids perform much worse in tests.

Rob

Yes, these summer born kids perform worse at school right through until the age of eighteen when they might be thinking about going to university.

Neil

Yes, university. That's **higher education**.

Rob

So the professor said, according to research, summer babies are less likely to go to university - 20% in fact.

Neil

Really? Well, don't forget Rob, I told you I'm a summer baby. Well, I went to university.

Rob

Yes, of course. These are just **statistics** – just figures. But if you are a parent of a child starting school these statistics are worrying.

Neil

Well they shouldn't worry. There are lots of people who were born in the summer that have done very well at university, thank you. And some of them are now professors.

Rob

OK. Or BBC presenters... like you Neil.

Neil

Yes, like me. But here is the problem. Let's say you have a child. He's a boy, born in August. He's now 4 years old so he can start school this September. But in his class there are students whose birthday is coming very soon so they're going to be 5 – that's almost a year older than your child.

Rob

So parents want their kids to do well at school – they are concerned - and now the government is trying to help – they're trying to **address** those **concerns**. England's schools minister Nick Gibbs says that the government wants to change the **admissions** rules for schools.

Neil

The rule now in much of England is that children must start school in September after their fourth birthday.

Rob

The schools minister says these rules should be changed. "Parents know their children best," said Mr Gibb.

Neil

Parents don't want to send their children to school before they are ready.

Rob

So here is the proposal – or suggested new rules. If a child is born in the summer, parents could **delay** the child's start of school by up to a year.

Neil

So the child will start school at 5 years old. Great, but does our expert Professor Lorraine Deardon think that's a good idea. Is this the way to **address the problem** of the age difference?

INSERT

Professor Lorraine Deardon, University College London

Ah no, it's not. I mean, basically, the reason why these children do worse in tests right throughout their life is simply that they are up to a year younger than their September born colleagues and this does nothing to address this.

Neil

Professor Lorraine Deardon. She says that the new **policy** does nothing to address the problem of the age difference.

Rob

There are still going to be 4 year olds in the class. Perhaps there will be more 5 year olds now because parents can delay their child's start at school.

Neil

Yes, the new policy addresses the concerns of parents that their children are not ready for school at 4 years old....

Rob

... but there will always be this age difference in a classroom and many of the younger children will do worse in tests. Professor Deardon says that the proposal to change the schools admission policy does nothing to address this.

OK, time now for the answer to the question I set you at the beginning of the programme. I asked: based on birth records between 1973 and 1999, what is the most common birthday for a person in the United States? Is it:

- a) 1st January
- b) 16th September
- c) 30th March

Neil

And I guessed the 30th March.

Rob

But you are wrong I'm afraid. The answer is actually the 16th September. Happy birthday to whoever was born then anyway.

Neil

Yeah. OK, Rob. Can you tell us the words we learned today again please?

Rob

Of course. We heard:
more likely / less likely
perform
higher education
startling
statistics
admissions
delay
policy
concerns
address the problem

Neil

Well, that's the end of 6 Minute English. Please do join us again soon.

Both

Bye.

Vocabulary

more likely/ less likely

probably / probably not

perform

(here) to show ability – how well you do something

higher education

university or college

startling

very surprising or shocking

statistics

show the number of people doing something

admissions

(here) the people joining the school

delay

to do something later

policy

shows an opinion (here) of the government

concerns

worries

address the problem

solve