

BBC Learning English

6 minute English

Big hills and small mountains



Yvonne: Hello, I'm **Yvonne Archer** - this is '6 minute English' - and today, Callum's with me. Hi Callum...

Callum: Hi Yvonne

Yvonne: Now this week, we ask: is there any difference between a really big hill and a small mountain? Dictionaries basically say that a hill is not as high as a mountain - and a mountain is higher than a hill! Anything to add, Callum?

Callum: Well, if big hills and small mountains were the same, we probably wouldn't need separate nouns for them in English for them, would we?

Yvonne: Good point. But before we find out more, here's a question for you: Which of these three places is proud to have the world's highest hill? Is it:

- a) Beverley Hills
- b) Dar Es Salaam or
- c) Oklahoma

Callum: Ummm - this is just going to be a guess because I really have no idea. I'm going to guess at Oklahoma.

Yvonne: Okay, we'll find out the answer at the end of the programme!
Recently, a report from the BBC's David Bamford had some people thinking that in Snowdonia, North Wales, people were making a mountain out of a molehill! But before we hear about that story, here's a look at some of the language we'll come across. Callum, what can you tell us about 'Ordnance Survey maps'?



Callum: Well, 'Ordnance Survey' is the name for Great Britain's official mapping agency. So their maps are known as the most accurate, the most up-to-date and most reliable maps available –even the government relies on them. And even – and I do too. When I go walking, I always take an Ordnance Survey map with me and my compass.

Yvonne: Excellent! So we'll hear 'Ordnance Survey maps' in today's report - but listen out for the answer to this question as well: How high is a mountain?

For many years now, Wales has been very popular with both tourists and mountaineers – people who enjoy climbing mountains. So, how would you feel if what you proudly think of as your local mountain is officially classified as - a mere hill?

DAVID BAMFORD

That's been the case 'til now for Mynydd Graig Goch, in North Wales. The locals KNEW it was a mountain - that's why they called it Mynydd - the Welsh word for 'mountain'. But British Ordnance Survey maps classified it as a hill because it was assumed to be under two thousand feet high - that's six hundred and nine metres - the recognized minimum height for a mountain.

Yvonne: So how high is a mountain? Callum?

Callum Well anything over two thousand feet high – now that's six hundred and nine metres high – that's a mountain.

Yvonne: And anything under - or less than - two thousand feet high is officially - a hill. So what happened - with our mountain in Wales – what happened there?



Callum: The report said that Ordnance Survey assumed it was less than two thousand feet high - but they didn't actually know for sure that that was true.

Yvonne: Ooh - a big mistake, eh?! But luckily, a group of mountaineers who live in the area used very reliable equipment to measure their mountain and they proved that it's definitely not a hill. It's six inches high – or fifteen point two centimetres higher than the minimum - so Ordnance Survey will change their map.

Callum: Hurray for Wales, they've finally got their extra mountain!

Yvonne: Yeah...

Callum – you're a film buff... do you know anything about a film with a similar story?

Callum: Well yes, there was a romantic comedy with the actor Hugh Grant in 1995. And that was called "The Englishman Who Went Up a Hill, But Came Down a Mountain".

Yvonne: I love that title! Now as we hear what the film is about, try to guess what 'a cartographer' is – what's 'a cartographer'?

DAVID BAMFORD

In the film, a Welsh community fought the attempts of two English cartographers to downgrade their local mountain to a hill. And they did so by carrying mounds of earth up to the summit when the cartographers weren't looking.

Yvonne: Oooh - that was very naughty! Callum, what did the community do to make sure that their mountain wouldn't become a hill – making it less important?



Callum: Well, what they did was they took 'mounds of earth' – which is piles of soil - up to the summit – and that's the highest point on a mountain or hill, that's the summit. And so they did that to make sure that it was high enough to be a mountain when the officials measured it.

Yvonne: Crafty - and what's 'a cartographer', Callum?

Callum: Well, a cartographer is an official whose job it is to draw maps.

Yvonne: Great. Now onto today's big question: Which of these three places is proud to have the world's highest hill? Is it:

- a) Beverley Hills
- b) Dar Es Salaam - or
- c) Oklahoma

Callum, what was your answer?

Callum: Well, my answer was just – purely just a guess. I guessed at Oklahoma because Beverley Hills, well that's a very rich suburb of Los Angeles and I don't think there are any really big hills there. Dar Es Salaam – I don't know anything about Dar Es Salaam – I've never been there. But I've never been to Oklahoma but I can remember from movies and so on, that it's – quite a few mountains and hills there. So it's purely a guess but I'm going to go for Oklahoma.

Yvonne: Excellent guess and well worked out actually, because you're absolutely right!

Callum: Whoo! Excellent – oh yes!

Yvonne: So well done to you Callum. And that's all for today's '6 minute English'.

Y + Callum: Goodbye!