

When will she arrive?

Waiting, waiting, waiting. It's difficult to do sometimes. I found myself waiting a couple of weeks ago at Seattle International Airport. My sister and my two nephews were coming for a two week visit, so I made the three hour drive over the mountains to pick them up. I don't often go to Seattle, but I love to. It's a gorgeous place, if you like forests, the sea, and modern buildings. So, I take any opportunity I can to drive there. The airport is actually outside of Seattle, half way between Seattle and Tacoma, and is therefore called Sea-tac airport. It is a smart, modern facility that, believe it or not(1), smells of coffee. How wonderful! You might think that I'm joking, but it's true. You know that Seattle is where Starbucks started, and Seattle is known for being the coffee capital of the U.S. In fact, it has more coffee houses per 100,000 residents than the U.S. has overall(2). So, even the airport is fully equipped with coffee all over the place. While I waited for my sister to arrive, I found myself(3) at one of the many coffee shops. I bought my soy latte, and wandered around a magazine shop. The plane had come in on time, there was no delay(4). However, because the flight was an international one, my sister and her boys had to go through immigration(4) and customs(4). That is a time consuming necessity. Also, the flight was full, so the two hundred or so sleepy passengers took extra long to arrive at baggage claim. I kept on returning to the arrivals escalator, to see if anyone from the flight had turned up. Nope(5). It took about an hour and a half for the travelers to arrive. It was interesting to stand back and see the different people step off the escalator. There was a real mix of shapes and sizes, ethnicities, and demeanors(6). Some people were dressed professionally, pulling behind them small, black cases on wheels, and obviously focused on business. Others were more casual, looking for family or friends, and openly emotional. There was a tall, military man returning from service abroad(7), who was greeted by his young wife and three year old daughter. She had stood at the top of the empty escalator and called "Daddy, daddy!" impatiently. When he finally arrived and picked her up, she stared at him for a long time with an unsure, curious expression. Then came the stragglers(8): a very hairy man carrying a large, framed picture, a tall African lady with tons of luggage, and a skinny young man with a huge cello case. What a variety of people! Then, last but not least(9), my sister and her two boys came up the escalator with big smiles. Finally, they were here. We hugged and kissed, and immediately started chatting and giggling about the journey. We picked up the luggage and were in the car before we knew it.

1. 'Believe it or not' is not an essential phrase. It is light hearted and introduces the idea that something interesting or unusual will be mentioned:

- a. My daughter has, believe it or not, joined a traveling circus.
- b. Believe it or not, that very small shop grossed half a million dollars last year.

2. 'Overall' is another way of saying 'all together' or 'in general' or 'added up':

- a. There were some imperfections, but overall the performance was a success.
- b. The population, overall, prefers coffee to tea.

3. To find oneself can be used with any person:

- a. We found ourselves penniless, out of petrol, and in the middle of nowhere.
- b. So, you met the prince in the party, and before you knew it, you found yourself in the palace! Unbelievable!

4. 'Delay, immigration, customs' are all useful words to do with international travel.

- a. The plane was delayed, I had trouble in immigration, and customs confiscated my Elvis toothbrush!
- b. The plane was on time, thank goodness. My visa was still valid, so I got through immigration

quickly, and then I had nothing to declare in customs.

5. 'Nope' is basically 'no' but with attitude. It is used frequently in the U.S.

a. Do you want to go out tonight? Nope!

b. I've lost the receipt for the bookshelves. Could you look for it? Nope!

6. 'Demeanor' means the manner or behavior of someone:

a. She looked elegant and formal, but her demeanor was unsure.

b. I can tell by his demeanor that he is confident.

7. 'Abroad' is often used instead of 'overseas'. The two are interchangeable:

a. She will study abroad for six months to learn a different language.

b. They had studied overseas all year, and had decided to stay longer.

8. 'Straggler' describes the odd, few people who are the last to arrive, either from a journey, trip, or race:

a. At the end of the Tour de France we see the stragglers coming in. Some are well known cyclists who unfortunately fell off their bikes, and others are less known riders.

b. The displaced villagers got to the shelter by nightfall, the stragglers arriving by midnight.

9. 'Last but not least' is a quick way of saying "I'm mentioning this person last (on the list) but he is just as important as anybody else".

a. Ladies and gentlemen, we have Princess Sofia, Prince Filipo, and, last but not least, their little sister Princess Angelica.

b. Here we have to crown your dinner tonight, last but not least, a pineapple chocolate bomb for dessert.

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