

**Saratoga Library English Conversation Club:
Housing and Homes
May 28, 2026**

Housing as shelter can be considered a basic human need. Housing provides protection against the **elements** such as cold, heat, wind, rain, and snow. It also provides a place of privacy away from the public eye where daily activities take place such as preparing meals and spending time together. Yet, housing can be difficult to find especially in an area like the Bay Area.

Sometimes a house is called a home, especially when we have an emotional attachment to it. It could be where you spent your childhood. A home's location, style and access to schools, parks, and other **amenities** can tie a **household** to a greater community to **reinforce** cultural or economic bonds.

Housing in many other countries can take many different forms. They include single family detached homes, apartments, townhomes or row houses, **condominiums**, **mobile homes**, **duplexes** or boarding homes. We will discuss housing today. First review the vocabulary and dialog.

Vocabulary: Review these words and match them to their meanings.

1. amenity (uh-'men-uh-tee)	a. affection, fondness, or sympathy for someone or something
2. attachment (uh-'tach-ment)	b. the weather, especially strong winds, heavy rain, and other kinds of bad weather.
3. condominium or condo ('kon-duh-min-ee-uhm or kon-doh)	c. a single-family house that is connected to another similar house by a common sidewalk; there could be a row of townhouses; sometimes they are called row houses.
4. duplex (doo-pleks)	d. a pre-made structure, built in a factory on a permanently attached platform that can be moved to a location
5. elements ('el-uh-ments)	e. to strengthen
6. household ('house-hold)	f. a housing unit in a complex like an apartment but the units are owned by individuals, not rented.
7. mobile home (moh-buhl home)	g. a residential building with two separate units or apartments
8. reinforce (ree-in-'fors)	h. a home and the people who live in it
9. townhome ('town-home)	i. a desirable or useful feature or facility of a building or place. For example, a swimming pool can be an amenity.

Answer Key:

1-i; 2-a, 3-f; 4-g; 5-b; 6-h; 7-d; 8-e; 9-c

DIALOG: Practice the vocabulary words in this dialog with three people.

Kelly: Did you hear that Bob wants to buy a **condo**?

Andy: Yes, he's looking for a place with fewer roommates and more **amenities**.

Riley: But it might be too expensive. I know of a **mobile home** for sale but it's in a different community.

Kelly: Yes, he has mixed feelings. He has a close **attachment** to some people in his **household**.

Andy: Bob says all he needs a place to protect him from the **elements** – nothing fancy.

Riley: Come to think of it, my cousin Mark just bought a **townhome** nearby.

Kelly: Maybe he would welcome a roommate.

Andy: If it's close by, it will **reinforce** Bob's **attachment** to this community.

Riley: Yes, I'll ask Mark if he's looking for a housemate.

Saratoga Library English Conversation Club: Housing and Homes May 28, 2026

Warm up Questions

1. What type of home or house would you like to live in?
2. Is housing difficult to find in your community? Housing is very expensive in the Bay Area. Many communities and leaders are trying to address this problem. The following article provides one idea that helps people on a tight budget find housing while also helping older people stay in the homes and communities that they are attached to.

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Younger and Older Adults Connect by Sharing Housing



Michael Wortis, 85, and Siobhan Ennis, 27, are roommates in Burnaby, British Columbia, Canada. (Photo Courtesy Of Siobhan Ennis Via The Washington Post)

Nadia Abdullah, 22, was about to finish college. She was looking for a place to live in Massachusetts. “I couldn’t find anything to fit my **budget**,” she said.

At the same time, 61-year-old Judith Allonby was thinking of moving out of her house. Her parents had died. Her **two-story house** felt too big for one person. It also needed a lot of work.

Now the two women live together. They were paired up by a home-sharing group called Nesterly. It matches young **renters** with older people looking to add to their **income** or share their space. Such pairings are becoming more common.

Perfect Match

Nadia and Judith couldn’t be happier. Nesterly ran a **background check** on both women. They were paired up because their needs matched well.

Judith rented the first floor of her home to Nadia for \$700 a month. Nadia agreed to help with housework, gardening, and grocery runs. In return, she got a great place to live in a safe **neighborhood** not far from work. The two have lived together for three years now. “Judith has become like my family,” Nadia said. “She even allowed me to **adopt** a cat.”

A Growing Trend

Donna Butts runs a group that connects people of different **generations**. A generation is all the people born around the same time. Parents belong to one generation, and their children belong to the next.

About 18% of Americans live in homes with more than one adult generation. That rate is rising as more young people have trouble paying for housing and older people want to stay in their homes. Both groups can feel lonely.

Saratoga Library English Conversation Club: Housing and Homes May 28, 2026

“With young adults and older adults feeling the most [alone], connecting them is the right thing to do,” Butts said.

Students and Seniors

A few U.S. colleges have programs that pair up younger and older **housemates**. Molly McDonough, 22, is a music student in Iowa. Her college offers rent-free housing for music students who move into a senior living center. In return, students perform a few times a month for their neighbors.

“It gives me some live performance practice and helps me save on rent,” McDonough said. Arlene Devries studied singing at the same college. She is now 81. She and McDonough became close friends.

“Molly is so talented,” Devries said. “We’re delighted to have her here. It gives us all a lift to have someone younger living with us.”

Friends for Life

In Canada, a program called HomeShare matched Michael Wortis, 85, with Siobhan (shiv-awn) Ennis, 27. The two like to garden together, share meals a few times a week, and watch movies. “Michael is such a great person,” Ennis said. “I love having him as my roommate. ... We’ll be friends for life.”

Discussion Questions

1. What do you think of this idea of connecting older and younger adults to share housing?
2. What kinds of problems might arise with this type of arrangement?
3. What advantages are there with this type of shared living situation?
4. Do you think this type of shared housing would work in your community? Why or why not?
5. Do you wish you had access to a service like Nesterly or HomeShare?
6. What amenities are important to you in a home?
7. What is most important to you in looking for a community to live in?
8. What types of homes have you lived in throughout your life?
9. If you were looking for a housemate, what qualities would you look for?
10. Describe what your “dream” home would be?

Types of Dwellings

If you have extra time, read these descriptions of different types of dwellings and answer the comprehension questions.

Dwellings can come in all shapes or sizes. Most modern homes have a place to cook food, a place to eat, places to sleep, and a place for personal hygiene. These things are usually done in separate rooms, which are called the kitchen, the sitting or living room, the bedroom(s), and the bathroom. Here are some types of homes that you might find in the United States:

Detached house (Single Family Home)

In some countries such as the United States, Canada, Australia and New Zealand many families live in “detached houses” which are separate from other buildings and surrounded by their own yards. Detached simply means separate or not connected to another house.

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Cottage

A cottage is a usually small frame, one-family house that might be on a farm, in the countryside, on the property of a larger house, or at a vacation area.

Townhome, Townhouse or Row House

A townhouse or townhome is a building that has more than one house side-by-side covered by one roof. Semi-detached houses are very common in some cities and can be single story or several stories high. A home that is made up of two connected units is called a “duplex.”

Bungalow

In some places, the word “bungalow” is used for any house that is all on one level. A bungalow often has a hall down the middle of the house to let the breeze blow through. Bungalows are often seen in countries with hot summers, in India, Southeast Asia, South Africa, parts of the United States, South America, Australia, and New Zealand. The word came from the Hindi and Urdu words for Bengal.

Hut

A hut is a primitive dwelling, usually made of materials such as wood, stone, grass, palm leaves, branches, fabric, cardboard, corrugated metal, or mud. People who build and live in huts use techniques that have been used for hundreds of years.

Mansion

A mansion is a large grand house, usually with two stories and sometimes more. A mansion often has beautiful architecture, and it is assumed that the person for whom it was designed and built was rich. Mansions often have beautiful gardens. A well-known mansion is Filoli in Woodside, California.

Palace

A palace is a house that is very grand. Many palaces are homes of royal or aristocratic people. Some old palaces have been modified by people who lived there over many hundreds of years. The largest palace in the world is the Louvre which was built in Paris for the Kings of France. It is now a famous art museum.

Comprehension Questions

1. What type of house is usually the home of royalty?
2. What type of house shares a roof with the other homes next to it?
3. What type of house type simply means ‘disconnected’ from other houses?
4. What type of house is extremely large, with a variety of rooms, but is not as grand as a palace?
5. What type of house is a basic home that is made of mud, straw, or palm branches?
6. What type of house is usually located in the country, and often used as a vacation home?

Comprehension Answers

1 – Palace; 2 -Townhouse; 3 - Detached or Single Family Home; 4 – Mansion; 5 – Hut; 6 - Cottage

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TYPES OF HOMES



Single Family
Home



Cottage



Hut



Townhomes



Mobile Home



Apartment
Building



Mansion



Palace



Duplex

References

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