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Jen: Hello and welcome to Question and Answer of the week. I'm Jen, and I'm joined in the studio today by Li.

Li: 大家好，我是杨莉。

Jen: In this programme, we answer your questions about the English language, and we've got an interesting question today from Wang Xi. Let's hear what she'd like us to help with.

Question

"I have a question about 'ish.' Sometimes I heard someone say 'twelve-ish', meet at 'seven-ish' – do you have added 'ish' words to say?"

Li: Thanks for your question. 王曦常常听到人们在某些英语单词后面加上 'ish', 不知准确意思, 想让我们解释一下有关用法。

Jen: In English, '-ish' is what we call a suffix. That's something which is added to the end of a word to change its meaning slightly.

Li: '-ish' 是一个后缀, 往往出现在一个单词的尾部, 使这个单词的意思有所改变, It's a suffix. So, what does it mean, Jen?

Jen: '-ish' can mean a couple of different things, so let's look at Wang Xi's example first. She said she heard people saying "let's meet at seven-ish." That means that the people will meet at *around* seven o'clock, rather than seven o'clock exactly.

Li: I see... 如果有人对你说咱们七点来钟碰头, 不是七点正, 而是七点左右, 七点前后, 那么这就是 'seven-ish'. So if we have lunch at twelve-ish, it means we'll eat at around twelve o'clock?

- Jen:** Exactly, in this sense, putting 'ish' on the end of a number, means 'around' or 'approximately'.
- Li:** 由此可见，如果把 'ish' 这个后缀放到一个词的末尾，意思就是"大约"或"左右"。 I think I've also heard it used with people's ages? Is that right?
- Jen:** That is right. If you don't know how old someone is, but you have a rough idea, you can use 'ish'. So, if you think someone is around forty years old, you can say they are 'forty-ish'.
- Li:** You English people are so clever - and so lazy too! 说不准一个人的年龄时就加个后缀，比如 30 来岁 thirty-ish 或 40 来岁 forty-ish'.
- Jen:** It's quite straightforward, so far, so let's look at some other examples. '-ish' can also be used with adjectives. What colour would you say my hair is?
- Li:** 你的头发的颜色吗? Well, it's sort of brown, but a bit red too.
- Jen:** So you can say my hair is reddish. My eyes are greenish – that means they are not entirely green, but somewhat green.
- Li:** 在形容词后面也可以加这个后缀，使形容词的程度有所减弱，稍稍有点怎么样。比如稍稍发红的头发和偏绿色的眼睛。这太有用了， I love this suffix!
- Jen:** It's very useful when you are describing things. Let's hear someone describing their home:

Insert

Well I live in a suburb in London, in a small-ish flat, but it's quite nice. My front door is painted a yellow-ish colour and I have baskets of flowers hanging up outside the flat. It's not that difficult to put up hanging baskets; they are heavy-ish when they are full of flowers, but it's still possible to lift them.

- Jen:** So in that insert, we heard a person describing the front of their flat. They described it as 'small-ish' – so, here, it means 'a little bit small', but not too small.

- Li:** He described the basket of flowers as 'heavy-ish' – so does that mean they are slightly heavy?
- Jen:** That's exactly right. So it's quite easy, really: adding 'ish' on the end of a word can make it mean 'approximately', 'around' or 'slightly'.
- Li:** 大家都知道英语单词 **heavy**, 意思是分量很重, 沉重, 如果加上后缀 'ish' 就变成了有点儿重, 有些沉重的意思了。
- Jen:** Hopefully our explanation was easy-ish to understand, Wang Xi!
- Li:** And good luck with learning English-ish.
- Jen:** I think one '-ish' will do when it comes to learning English! If you have a question you'd like us to answer, email questions.chinaelt@bbc.co.uk. Bye for now!
- Li:** Bye!