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**Neil:** Welcome to Question and Answer of the Week. I'm Neil.

**Feifei:** 大家好, 我是冯菲菲。《你问我答》节目会解答大家在英语学习中碰见的问题。今天的问题有关伦敦经常能看见的一幕。It's a very common sight in London, right?

**Neil:** It is. Let's hear Jin Lu's question:

### Question

*I see on the streets of London lots of billboards with 'to let' on it. At first I didn't understand what it meant. So I guessed maybe it was supposed to be toilet but without the 'i'. So I'm wondering how this phrase is used.*

**Feifei:** 金璐在伦敦经常能看到一些广告牌上写着两个神秘的单词, 这两个单词的组成像是 toilet 少了字母 i. But there's no missing 'i' though, Neil.

**Neil:** No, there's no missing letter. They are definitely two separate words: 'to' and 'let'. To Let. And as some of our listeners will know, these 'to let' boards are put up outside properties which are available for rent.

**Feifei:** Properties 房子。如果一套房子或公寓是供出租的 for rent, 那么房子外面的广告牌就会写有 'to let'. Which seems a bit strange. The boards say 'to let' not 'to rent'.

**Neil:** Yes, it does seem strange. But English speakers use the word 'let', meaning to rent out a property to someone.

**Feifei:** 我觉得这个表达是房地产市场里的一个行话。It's not something you or I say when we want to find a place to live.

**Neil:** Yes. 'To let' seems to be a formal term that is used when people own a property and they are advertising it to the rental sector. But when someone is looking for a place to live, and they don't want to buy – they rent a flat or house.

**Feifei:** 一个人可以付钱租一套房子 rent a property, 一套房子供出租 to let. Correct?

- Neil:** That's right. If you need a property and don't want to buy, you rent it – houses, flats, offices, shops... But although we use 'rent' for property, for other things we usually use the word 'hire.'
- Feifei:** 当我们付钱租用一样东西时，除了租房子以外，应该用单词 hire. 比如说“你租了辆汽车 you hire a car”.
- Neil:** And you can hire a suit, if you go to a wedding, for example.
- Feifei:** 你可以租 hire 一套婚礼礼服。And what else?
- Neil:** I looked some examples up online – I typed in 'for hire' and I found so many things for hire: bicycles for hire, suits for hire, carpet cleaners for hire.
- Feifei:** 供租用的地毯清洗机。还有可以租用的化妆舞会服装 fancy dress costumes for hire.
- Neil:** And rooms for hire – for example a room where you could have a party or a meeting. 'For hire' in this case means for a short time, a couple of hours or maybe a few days. 'To let' means for a long time, usually a few months - and only for buildings.
- Feifei:** Room for hire 是临时、短时间的出租，room to let 是长期出租。这下明白了！那能不能总结一下单词 rent 和 hire 在使用上的区别呢？
- Neil:** It seems to me that we use 'rent' mostly for property, and for a longish time. And we use 'hire' for things which we're using for a short time.
- Feifei:** 我们用 rent 来描述一样可以相对长期租用的东西，而 hire 描述可以短期租用的东西。But what about renting a car?
- Neil:** That's American English, and in British English it's usually hire a car. But people will understand if you ask to rent a car.
- Feifei:** 好的，明白了。我还有最后一个问题，在公司招聘新员工的时候，为什么么说 hiring staff?
- Neil:** Yes – that's an interesting one. The idea of the word 'hire' is 'pay money for something for a fixed amount of time', so English people talk about hiring staff, meaning 'paying someone to do some work' – in other words, employing someone. We never rent people!
- Feifei:** I'm not for rent! 今天节目里我们探讨了 rent, hire 和 to let 的用法和区别。And thank you to Jin Lu for her question. 如果你在学习中遇到任何问题，欢迎发邮件给我们。我们的邮箱是 [questions.chinaelt@bbc.co.uk](mailto:questions.chinaelt@bbc.co.uk). Bye till next time!
- Neil:** Bye!