

# Brexit Explained



(Photo credit: Marco Verch)

## Intermediate (B1-B2)

*What is Brexit?*

Brexit is an abbreviation for “British exit” from the European Union (the EU). The EU is a group of countries in Europe who work together on political and economic issues. Britain has been a member of the EU since 1973 but it is currently in the process of separating from the economic block.

In 2016, the UK government held a public vote about Brexit called a referendum. They asked the people whether they wanted to *leave* the EU, or *remain*. The results were 52% leave and 48% remain.

*How did it happen?*

There are three main political parties in the UK: The Conservatives (right wing), The Labour Party (left wing), and The Liberal Democrats (liberal and centre-left). There are also some smaller parties like The Green Party, The Scottish National Party (SNP), and The UK Independence Party (UKIP).

The former British Prime Minister, David Cameron, promised the Brexit referendum in 2013 ahead of the general election in 2015. He didn't personally support Brexit, but hoped that it would encourage the public to vote for his party, The Conservatives, in the election. He wanted to avoid losing votes to UKIP (a small, far-right party) because some people supported their idea of leaving the EU.

The Conservatives *did* win the 2015 election and the Brexit vote was scheduled for 2016.

*What happened after the referendum?*

After the referendum, David Cameron resigned and Theresa May became the new Prime Minister. She decided that the Brexit date would be the 29 March 2019.

However, the UK did not leave the EU in March as planned because the government couldn't pass the Brexit bill through parliament. In July 2019, after failing to make a plan with the EU, Theresa May resigned as Prime Minister.

The new Prime Minister, Boris Johnson has recently called another election for 12 December 2019. He hopes to win a majority so that he can continue with his Brexit plans. The Labour party has said that, if they win the election, they will hold a second referendum. The Liberal Democrat party has said that they would cancel Brexit if they got into power (they are a small party and it is very unlikely that they would ever win a majority).

Newspapers and the media have called the December election the "Brexit election" because the result will determine what happens to the UK's relationship with the EU.