

Lesson 34: The Accident

George tells Mrs. Douglas some bad news about the delivery of her piano. Listen to their conversation and answer the comprehension questions below:

Listening Comprehension

- 1. The piano is supposed to be delivered at...**
 - a. nine
 - b. ten
 - c. twelve
- 2. George is late because of...**
 - a. a traffic accident
 - b. an accident with the piano
 - c. a wrong address
- 3. The piano is...**
 - a. broken
 - b. lost
 - c. not the right model
- 4. Who was responsible for the first incident with the piano?**
 - a. George
 - b. one of the workers
 - c. the manufacturer of the piano
- 5. Mrs. Douglas needs the piano next week because...**
 - a. the academy needs to start classes
 - b. there will be a competition
 - c. there will be a Christmas performance
- 6. What happened to the piano at the repair shop?**
 - a. it fell down the stairs
 - b. it was stolen
 - c. the incompetent repairman broke it
- 7. What is George's solution?**
 - a. borrowing a piano from another academy
 - b. ordering a replacement piano
 - c. paying for the piano to be fixed

Conversation Text

George Willard: Hello? Is this Mrs. Douglas at the Yorktown Music Academy?

Mrs. Douglas: Yes, it is. **May I ask who's calling?**

George: This is George Willard, from Willard's Piano Movers.

Mrs. Douglas: Ah, hello, George! We're expecting you at ten. Everyone's very excited to see the new instrument. There's even a journalist here from the local paper who came to take pictures!

George: Mrs. Douglas, **I'm afraid** we won't be there at ten.

Mrs. Douglas: Oh, it's perfectly understandable if you're **held up** by traffic.

George: It's not that... it's... well, there's been an accident.

Mrs. Douglas: An accident, Mr. Willard?

George: Actually, more like a **catastrophe**.

Mrs. Douglas: Oh my goodness! Mr. Willard, please tell me about the piano. Is it—is it *lost*?

George: No ma'am, not lost.

Vocabulary

May I ask who's calling? = This is a polite phrase to ask about the identity of the person who initiated the phone call

I'm afraid = We can use "I'm afraid" to introduce bad news. It doesn't mean you're literally scared

held up = delayed

catastrophe = a HUGE disaster

Mrs. Douglas: Well then, what happened? Where is the piano?

George: It's here at the **warehouse**, it's just... in no condition to be played.

Mrs. Douglas: Please, *please* don't tell me—

George: I'm afraid so. You see, our lift was **on the fritz** so we had to load the piano into the truck **manually**. And one of our guys, well, he got **butterfingers**.

Mrs. Douglas: Butterfingers?

George: This particular worker is normally very **conscientious**. But this time I think he just got a little nervous. I mean—**it's not every day** you handle a \$250,000 piano.

Mrs. Douglas: Mr. Willard, *please cut to the chase*.

George: As I was saying, our boy was a little **high-strung** and I guess he either didn't strap the **harness** on correctly, or maybe his fingers just didn't have a good **grip**. Next thing we knew the piano crashed down to the ground.

Mrs. Douglas: Oh, this is terrible! What I am going to tell the **board of directors**? We have pianists who've flown in from all

Vocabulary

warehouse = a building where items are stored

on the fritz = not working

manually = by hand, without the help of machines or automatic processes

butterfingers = when something slips out of your hands, you can say you have "butterfingers"

conscientious = careful, paying attention to details

it's not every day = it's rather rare

cut to the chase = get directly to the main point

high-strung = nervous and tense

harness = strips of material that hold something and prevent it from falling

grip = the strength of your hold on something

board of directors = group of people who guide a company or organization

over the world for the competition next week!

George: Well ma'am, forgive me if I'm **out of line**, but maybe you can take some comfort in the fact that the instrument you purchased was a real work of art. One-of-a-kind craftsmanship, and **durable** as the Appalachian Mountains.

Mrs. Douglas: Mr. Willard, how can you **have the gall** to suggest that our players perform on an instrument that's been *dropped on the ground*?

George: Actually, that's precisely what I'd suggest if that'd been the end of it. **Truth be told**, there were only a couple of **scrapes** on the instrument after the first fall.

Mrs. Douglas: The *first* fall?

George: You see, we took a slight **detour** in order to **touch up** the varnish on the piano, and at the repair shop, there were some steps we had to navigate. The piano started to **tip over** and before we could balance it, it tumbled down the stairs.

Mrs. Douglas: Mr. Willard, that is enough! I am simply **astounded** at your **incompetence**. How could you let a **priceless** work of art fall off a truck *and* down a **stairwell**?! I just want to know how and when you are going to fix it!

Vocabulary

out of line = inappropriate

durable = strong and long-lasting

have the gall = have the courage/arrogance (also "have the nerve")

Truth be told = Honestly

scrapes = damage caused by rubbing off the outer surface of the material

detour = different route from the planned path

touch up = make small repairs/improvements to

tip over = incline, lose balance and start to fall

astounded = extremely surprised and shocked

incompetence = lack of knowledge and common sense

priceless = extremely valuable

stairwell = set of stairs

George: Your **outrage** is certainly justified, ma'am. But I've already **taken the liberty of** ordering you a new piano of the same model. The manufacturer understands the emergency and is **expediting** the shipment, so we'll bring it to you the moment it's ready.

Mrs. Douglas: Well *that's* some good news! When can we expect it?

George: Three to four months, ma'am.

Vocabulary

outrage = strong anger

taken the liberty of =
done without asking
permission first

expediting = processing
faster than normal

Vocabulary Quiz

Complete each sentence with a word from the box. Three words are not used.

catastrophe	grip	high-strung	on the fritz	scrape
conscientious	had the gall	incompetent	out of line	taken the liberty
durable	held up	manually	outraged	tip over

1. Does she cut your hair _____, or does she use an electric shaver?
2. Hi, nice to see you! I've _____ of ordering you a drink - I hope you like margaritas.
3. If you tend to be _____, you should probably avoid jobs which are dangerous and stressful.
4. There's a _____ on the side of my car from where a kid ran into it with a bicycle.
5. It's really hot in the office because our air conditioner's _____.
6. The construction project is currently _____ because we're waiting for permits from the city.
7. The oil spill was an environmental _____ - it killed a lot of wildlife and polluted the beaches.
8. Be careful! If you bump into the table, the wedding cake could _____.
9. This backpack is extremely _____ - I've taken it on years of hiking trips and it's still in great condition.
10. When the murderer got a very light sentence, the victim's family was _____.
11. You were definitely speeding - so you were _____ when you started arguing with the police officer.
12. I'm looking for an accountant who's _____, because we need to record every single detail of the finances.

Speaking Task

Imagine you are Mrs. Douglas – what would you do in this situation?

- Would you cancel the piano competition, or would you try to get another piano quickly? (How?)
- Would you be angry with George, or would you appreciate his efforts to help?
- Would you use George's company again, or not?
- How would you explain this whole situation to the board of directors?

Record your answer at www.speakpipe.com/espressoenglish or send the MP3 to homework@espressoenglish.net for feedback!

Answers

Comprehension Questions

1. b
2. b
3. a
4. b
5. b
6. a
7. b

Vocabulary Quiz

1. manually
2. taken the liberty
3. high-strung
4. scrape
5. on the fritz
6. held up
7. catastrophe
8. tip over
9. durable
10. outraged
11. out of line
12. conscientious