

# Lesson 6 – Public Transportation

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Welcome to Lesson 6 of the Everyday English Speaking Course, about public transportation – first, let’s learn some vocabulary!

The central place in the city where you go to get a bus or a train is called a **station** (bus station or train station). The different points where you can get on or get off a bus or train are called **stops**. Another word that is often used in train stations is **platform** – this is the area inside the station where you wait for the train.



This is a **platform** in a **train station**.

*(photo by Kevin.B)*

We use the verb **take** to describe general use of buses and trains, for example:

- “I **took** the bus from New York to Philadelphia.”
- “You need to **take** the 3:15 train if you want to get there by 6:00.”

We use the phrasal verbs **get on** and **get off** to describe the specific actions of entering and leaving the bus/train. You can also **transfer** from one bus to another bus, or from one train to another train, for example:

- “If you want to go to the museum, **get off** at the next stop.”
- “You need to **get on** the B train and then **transfer** to the L train.”

Finally, bus and train systems have **lines**. Lines are the regular routes that the buses or

trains travel. Each color on the map below represents a **line** in the New York City subway. The black dots are **stops**.



## Conversation #1 – Asking for information

**Nancy:** Excuse me – does this bus stop at Central Park?

**Fred:** No – this is the express bus. You need to take the M53 local – you just missed it.

**Nancy:** Oh no. How often does it come?

**Fred:** Every few minutes – you won't have to wait long.

**Nancy:** Okay. How far is it to the park?

**Fred:** About seven or eight stops.

**Nancy:** Thanks!

*(on the bus)*

**Nancy:** Could you tell me when we get to Central Park?

**Bus Driver:** Sure, no problem.

**Nancy:** Do you mind if I sit here?

**Amanda:** No, go right ahead.

*(15 minutes later)*

**Bus Driver:** Ma'am? You can get off here for Central Park.

## Conversation Vocabulary & Phrases:

Whenever you want to talk to someone you don't know, you can begin by saying **excuse me...**

If you're not sure if a bus or train goes to your destination, you can use these phrases:

- **"Does this bus stop at...?"**
- **"Does this bus go to...?"**
- **"Is this the bus to...?"**

Fred informs Nancy that it's an **express** bus, and she needs to take the **local** bus. An **express** bus or train is one that does NOT make all the stops – it skips (passes) some stops. A **local** bus or train makes all the stops along the way.

He also tells her that she just **missed the bus** – the bus departed before she arrived. In English we always say "**missed** the bus / train / flight" (not "**lost** the bus / train / flight.")

To ask about the time of a bus or train, you can say:

- **"How often does it come?"**
  - "Every hour."
  - "Every half-hour."
  - "Every ten minutes."
- **"When's the next bus/train?"**
  - "At 6:45."
  - "In twenty minutes."

- “Not until 8.”  
(“not until” is used when there will be a long time to wait)

And to ask about distance, you can say:

- **“How far is it to...?”**
- **“How many stops until...”**
- **“How long does it take to get to...”**

The person might respond in number of stops (as in the conversation) or in number of minutes (“About 15 minutes”).

Nancy wasn’t sure when to get off the bus, so she used this phrase to ask the driver to tell her: **“Could you tell me when we get to Central Park?”** – you can ask this to the driver, or to another passenger on the bus. When it’s time, the other person will say:

- **“You can get off here.”**
- **“This is your stop.”**

Unfortunately, if there is a problem, then the other person might say:

- **“You missed your stop.”**
- **“We already passed it.”**
- **“You’re on the wrong bus.”**
- **“This bus doesn’t go to Central Park.”**

Finally, if you want to sit down, but you’re not sure if there is a person occupying the seat (or if a person has put their bag on the seat) you can say:

- **“Do you mind if I sit here?”**
- **“Is this seat free?”**
- **“Is this seat taken?”**

## **Conversation #2 – Buying a ticket**

**Brian:** Hi. I’d like a ticket to Boston, please.

**Agent:** One-way or round-trip?

**Brian:** Round-trip – leaving tomorrow morning and coming back on Saturday afternoon.

**Agent:** OK, what time do you wanna leave? The train to Boston runs every hour, on the hour, starting at 6 AM. The 6, 7, and 8 AM trains are peak hours.

**Brian:** Then I'll take the 9:00 train.

**Agent:** And on Saturday afternoon there are trains leaving Boston at 2:30, 4:30, and 6:30.

**Brian:** Um, actually, maybe I'll just buy a one-way ticket now, 'cause I'm not quite sure what time I wanna come back. Can I buy a ticket on the train?

**Agent:** Yeah, but it's gonna be more expensive.

**Brian:** Oh. Well, in that case, I'll take the 4:30 train. How much is the fare?

**Agent:** It's \$24 each way, so that comes to \$48 total.

**Brian:** Is there a discount for students?

**Agent:** Yup, I'll just need to see your student ID.

**Brian:** Here you go. Can I also have a copy of the schedule?

**Agent:** Sure.

## Conversation Vocabulary & Phrases

To ask for a train ticket, you can say:

- **I'd like...**
- **Can I have...?**

Then complete the sentence with a **one-way ticket** if you only want a ticket from New York to Boston... or a **round-trip ticket** if you want a ticket from New York to Boston AND a return ticket from Boston back to New York.

The agent says that the train runs **every hour, on the hour** – meaning exactly at 6:00, 7:00, 8:00, etc. Some buses and trains have more expensive fares for **peak hours**. Peak hours are times like 7:00 – 9:00 AM and 4:00 – 7:00 PM, when many people are going to work or coming home from work. An **off-peak** train is usually less expensive.

Brian says, “**How much is the fare?**” The word **fare** is a special word that refers to the price of transportation tickets. He also asks about a discount for students. You can also say:

- “**Is there a discount for children?**”
- “**Is there a discount for senior citizens?**”  
(*senior citizen = 65 years old or more*)

### Conversation #3 – Getting a taxi



A **taxi** is sometimes also called a **cab**.

Photo: [Ilya Plekhanov](#)

There are 3 ways to get a taxi in the United States: First, you can **phone a taxi service** and arrange for a taxi to pick you up at a specific time. To do this, you can say,

- “**I need a taxi to pick me up at (place/address) at (time).**”  
“I need a taxi to pick me up at 241 Main Street at 7:00 tomorrow morning.”
- “**I’d like a taxi as soon as possible – I’m at 1185 Brooklyn Avenue.**”

The second way to get a taxi is to **go to a place where there are many taxis** already waiting (like outside the airport or train station). Finally, you can **hail a taxi** (call a taxi) on the street. To do this, you stand close to the street and extend your arm when you see a taxi coming.

*Let's look at a conversation you might have with the taxi driver.*

**Gina:** Could you take me to the Greentree Hotel on 7<sup>th</sup> Avenue and 32<sup>nd</sup> Street?

**Driver:** Sure – hop in.

*(hop in = an informal way to say “get in the car”)*

**Gina:** How much will it be?

**Driver:** About... 25 to 30 bucks.

*(bucks = a slang word for dollars)*

**Gina:** Okay, and how long does it take to get there?

**Driver:** Probably 15 or 20 minutes.

**Gina:** Sounds good.

**Driver:** Do you have any bags?

**Gina:** Yes – these two.

*(LATER)*

**Gina:** Are we almost there?

**Driver:** Yes – it's just around the corner.

**Driver:** This is it.

**Gina:** Great. How much do I owe you?

*(= how much do I need to pay?)*

**Driver:** \$26.50

**Gina:** Here's 30 – keep the change.

**Driver:** Thanks. I'll get your luggage.

## Conversation Vocabulary & Phrases

To tell the taxi driver your destination, use the phrase **“Could you take me to...?”**

Some taxis have a **flat rate** – a fixed price for the trip – and others use a **meter**, the equipment that increases the price depending on the distance.



This machine is called a **meter**.

Photo: [Henry Salomé](#)

Before you get into the taxi, it's a good idea to ask:

- **“How much will it be?”**
- **“How long will it take to get there?”**

If the ride is taking longer than you expected, you can ask:

- **“Are we almost there?”**
- **“How much longer?”**

For paying, use these phrases:

- **“How much do I owe you?”**
- **“How much is it?”**

In the United States, it's common to give a taxi driver a **tip** (extra money for the service). The tip should be about 15% of the fare. You can do this by giving the driver extra money and saying:

- **“Keep the change.”**  
*(if you want him to keep all the extra money)*



- If the fare is \$12 and you give the driver \$20, you can say, **“Just give me back \$5”** (so the driver will keep \$15).

Finally, if you want to get out of the taxi early, you can say:

- **“You can let me off here.”**
- **“This is fine.”**

The taxi will then **pull over** (go to the side of the street) and stop, so that you can get off.

You’ve finished Lesson 6! Now take the quiz to test your memory of the phrases from this lesson.

## Quiz – Lesson 6

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### Question 1

I'd like a \_\_\_\_\_ ticket to Philadelphia for tonight.

- A. leaving      B. one-way      C. one-stop

### Question 2

I'll \_\_\_\_\_ the earliest train tomorrow.

- A. have      B. leave      C. take

### Question 3

You \_\_\_\_\_ your stop - you should have gotten off at 42nd Street.

- A. lost      B. missed      C. wrong

### Question 4

Is there a flat rate or do you use the \_\_\_\_\_?

- A. machine      B. meter      C. numbers

### Question 5

You need to get off at the second-to-last \_\_\_\_\_.

- A. line      B. stop      C. point

**Question 6**

Does this bus \_\_\_\_\_ to the Museum of Natural History?

- A. pass                      B. arrive                      C. go

**Question 7**

How \_\_\_\_\_ does it take to get there?

- A. much                      B. long                      C. far

**Question 8**

Could you please \_\_\_\_\_ when we get to the museum?

- A. get me off                      B. let me know                      C. advise

**Question 9**

You can \_\_\_\_\_ here.

- A. let me off                      B. put me off                      C. take me off

**Question 10**

The off-peak \_\_\_\_\_ is \$5 less.

- A. fee                      B. money                      C. fare

**Question 11**

Take the B train one stop, then \_\_\_\_\_ to the D train.

- A. exchange                      B. move                      C. transfer

**Question 12**

Here's \$40 - keep the \_\_\_\_\_.

- A. fare                      B. change                      C. coins

**Question 13**

If you're in a hurry, take the \_\_\_\_\_ train - it'll get there faster.

- A. exact                      B. express                      C. extreme

**Question 14**

When's the \_\_\_\_\_ bus?

In about twenty minutes.

- A. future                      B. next                      C. often

**Question 15**

Excuse me - is this seat \_\_\_\_\_?

- A. gone                      B. passed                      C. taken

**Quiz Answers**

**1.B 2.C 3.B 4.B 5.B 6.C 7.B 8.B 9.A 10.C 11.C 12.B 13.B 14.B 15.C**