



ESL Podcast 545 – Getting Around Without a Car

GLOSSARY

to have got (something) covered – to have something under control; to be in control of a situation; to know how to handle or deal with a situation

* Yes, there's a lot of work to do by Friday, but don't worry. Insley says he's got it covered.

skateboard – a flat, rectangular board with rounded ends connected to four small wheels, so that a person can move quickly by standing on it, pushing one's foot against the ground to increase speed and change direction

* Vinny's mother won't let him ride his skateboard unless he wears a helmet.

dirt road – an unpaved road; a road that is covered with rocks or dirt instead of asphalt or concrete

* It's almost impossible to drive down that dirt road during the rainy season because it gets too muddy.

no big thing – no big deal; not important; not something that one is worried about

* Hideako lost \$30,000 in the stock market, but it's no big thing. He has millions.

bike – bicycle; a type of transportation with two wheels and a seat, where one moves by pedaling (moving one's feet in a circle to turn the wheels)

* If you ride your bike to the grocery store, how will you carry home your groceries?

rollerblades – special shoes with a single line of wheels on the bottom, much like roller skates

* On the weekends, Caitlin likes to wear her rollerblades to the park.

Segway – an electric machine with two wheels and a small flat area to stand on, used for transporting one person, with the person standing on it and controlling the speed and direction with the movement of one's body

* We were surprised to see security guards riding Segways at the mall, but I guess they can move around more quickly and easily on a Segway than by walking.

in the meantime – while something else is happening; until something else happens

* I ordered a new jacket online, but it won't arrive until next week. In the meantime, I'll just have to keep wearing this old one.



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worst case scenario – the worst possible situation; a phrase used to describe the most negative, unpleasant thing that might happen

* Go ahead and buy the new car. Worst case scenario, if you can't make the payments, you can always sell it to someone else.

to commute – to travel between one's home and workplace

* Bouvier has a one-hour commute, but because he takes the train, he can spend that time reading and making phone calls.

to fess up – to confess; to tell the truth; to say something that one would rather keep a secret

* Fess up! You went into my room and looked through my things, didn't you?

well-being – one's physical, mental, and emotional health

* My wife keeps telling me: If want to improve your well-being, start taking better care of yourself. Eat right, exercise, and get enough sleep.

ulterior motive – a secret reason for wanting to do something, especially when one is pretending to want to do it for another reason

* Xavier is encouraging his older sister to get a tattoo, and he says he's doing it because he knows she wants one, but his ulterior motive is that he wants one too, and he thinks their parents will let him do it once she has already done it.

scooter – a small motorcycle that isn't very powerful, or a flat, rectangular board with rounded ends connected to four small wheels and with a tall handle for one to hold onto, so that a person can move quickly by standing on it, using one's foot against the ground to increase speed and change direction

* On sunny days, all the little kids on our street ride scooters up and down the sidewalks.

next to nothing – almost nothing; almost free; for a very small amount of money

* Eve bought a home for next to nothing, because it's right next to the airport and no one else wanted to live in such a noisy place.

to pawn off – to get rid of something by selling it, especially if that thing has very little value or worth

* I can't believe you were able to pawn off that ugly old boat that doesn't even float. Who did you sell it to?



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to look out for (someone's) best interest – to do what is best for another person; to help another person

* Mitch has always looked out for my best interest, inviting me to professional conferences and letting me know about interesting job opportunities.

con artist – a person who makes money by tricking other people, making them think they are doing something to help themselves when it actually helps the con artist

* The police are trying to find the con artist who's been calling elderly people, pretending to call from the bank and getting them to share their account information so he can steal their money.

COMPREHENSION QUESTIONS

1. Which type of transportation needs electricity to work?

- a) A bike.
- b) Rollerblades.
- c) A Segway.

2. What does Caitland offer to Bruno?

- a) She offers to sell him her scooter.
- b) She offers to give him a ride to work on her scooter.
- c) She offers to lend him her scooter.

WHAT ELSE DOES IT MEAN?

to have got (something) covered

The phrase “to have got (something) covered,” in this podcast, means to have something under control or to know how to handle or deal with a situation: “Stop worrying about everything! I’ve got it all covered.” The phrase “to cover a story” means to report on a story: “Who’s covering the city council meeting?” The phrase “a cover up” is used to describe the actions of people who are trying to make it seem as if something never happened: “The police are being accused of organizing a cover up to hide the department’s internal corruption.” Finally, the phrase “under cover” means to work secretly, especially with a disguise: “The detective is working under cover, pretending to be a member of the gang so that he can learn all their secrets.”



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to pawn off

In this podcast, the phrase “to pawn off” means to get rid of something by selling it, especially if that thing has very little value or worth: “You’ll never be able to pawn off those old, worthless records. You should just throw them away.” When playing chess, a “pawn” is one of the short pieces that isn’t very valuable and is placed in the front row: “He began the game by moving his middle right pawn forward two spaces.” The phrase “to be (someone’s) pawn” means to be used or manipulated by someone, especially when one does not realize what is happening: “Griffin is very good at making other people be his pawn, and sometimes they don’t even realize it for weeks or even months.”

CULTURE NOTE

Most Americans drive to work, but those who do choose to use “public transportation” (shared transportation) have many choices. Many commuters use buses, subways, trains, “ferries” (large ships to cross rivers or lakes), and even bicycles. But there are also some more unusual “forms” (types) of public transportation.

For example, San Francisco, California is famous for its “cable cars,” which “sit” (stand) on “rails” (long, thin pieces of metal on the ground that trains ride over), but also are connected to an “overhead” (above; in the sky) “cable” (a long, strong, twisted piece of metal) that gives them “power” (electricity) and guides them through the city. In other cities, similar forms of transportation are called “trolleys,” “trolley buses,” or “streetcars.”

A “monorail” is similar to a train or subway, but its “track” (the route a train or trolley follows) has only one rail instead of two. Chicago, Illinois is famous for its “elevated” (raised above the ground) monorail known as the “El” or “L.”

One very unusual form of public transportation is a “buscycle,” which is a 15-“passenger” (rider) bus that has been “stripped down” (with almost everything removed) so that the engine is replaced with bicycle-like seats for the passengers. Passengers must “pedal” (move one’s feet in a circle to move the wheels) together to make the buscycle move. Originally created in Boston, Massachusetts, the buscycle isn’t really a “practical” (realistic) form of transportation, but it is a fun and interesting way for people to work together and move as a team.

Comprehension Questions Correct Answers: 1 – c; 2 – a



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COMPLETE TRANSCRIPT

Welcome to English as a Second Language Podcast number 545: Getting Around Without a Car.

This is English as a Second Language Podcast episode 545. I'm your host, Dr. Jeff McQuillan, coming to you from the Center for Educational Development in beautiful Los Angeles, California.

Our website is eslpod.com, but you probably already know that. You probably know that you can go there to download a Learning Guide for this episode to help you improve your English even faster. You might know that the Learning Guide contains all of the vocabulary, definitions, sample sentences, additional definitions, comprehension questions, cultural notes, and a complete transcript of this episode.

What you probably don't know is that this episode is a dialogue between Caitland and Bruno, talking about different ways that you can transport yourself from one place to another without having a car. Let's get started.

[start of dialogue]

Caitland: How are you planning on getting to school and to your job without a car?

Bruno: I've got it covered. I have my skateboard.

Caitland: Your skateboard won't be any use on those dirt roads.

Bruno: No big thing. I'll just take my bike.

Caitland: Your bike was stolen, along with your rollerblades, remember?

Bruno: Oh, yeah. Maybe I'll save up and buy a Segway.

Caitland: Those things are really expensive. What'll you do in the meantime?

Bruno: Maybe I'll take the bus. Worst case scenario, I give myself more time and I walk. Why are you so interested in how I'm going to commute? Fess up.

Caitland: I care about your well-being, that's all.



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Bruno: Oh, yeah? I don't buy it. There's got to be an ulterior motive.

Caitland: Well, I do have an old scooter that would be just what you need to get back and forth from school and work. It uses very little gas and I'll let you have it for next to nothing.

Bruno: I knew it. You're trying to pawn off that old scooter on me. Forget it!

Caitland: I'm just looking out for your best interest, that's all.

Bruno: Isn't that what all con artists say?

[end of dialogue]

Caitland begins the dialogue by saying to Bruno, "How are you planning on getting to school ("how are you going to get to school," she could say) and to your job without a car?" Bruno says, "I've got it covered." When we say "we have (something) covered," or "we have got it covered," we mean to say that we have the situation under control. You know what you're going to do to handle, or deal with, this situation or this problem. So Bruno says, "I've got it covered," I know what I'm going to do. He says, "I have my skateboard." "Skateboards" are flat, rectangular boards, usually with rounded edges and they have four small wheels on them, and you can put your foot on the skateboard and use your other foot to push yourself, and you then use the wheels of the skateboard to go faster than you could by walking. Skateboards have been popular among teenagers for many years. They weren't popular when I was a teenager; but then again, they had not yet invented the wheel!

So, Bruno says that he's going to take his skateboard. Caitland says, "Your skateboard won't be any use on those dirt roads." When we say "it won't be any use," we mean that it will not be able to be used. "Dirt roads" are also called "unpaved roads." A "paved road" is a road that has cement or asphalt, something hard that a car can easily drive on. "Unpaved" would be a road that is just the ground – just the earth, with nothing on top of it.

Caitland says that your skateboard won't be any use on those dirt roads, and Bruno says, "No big thing." "No big thing" is an informal way of saying it's not important, it's not something to be worried about. We might also say "it's no big deal." It's no big thing – it's no big deal. "I'll just take my bike (my bicycle)," which of course is a vehicle with two wheels and a seat, and you move the wheels around using something called "pedals," which go on your feet. Your feet push the pedals, move them up and down to make the wheels move.



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Caitland says, “Your bike was stolen, along with your rollerblades, remember?” “Rollerblades” are special shoes that have a single line of wheels on the bottom; they’re similar to roller skates. “Roller skates” are shoes that have four wheels on them, just like a skateboard, one in each corner. “Rollerblades” have just a single row of small wheels. Rollerblading is still popular especially here in California. If you go over to Venice Beach or the Santa Monica Beach you can see people rollerblading. I tried rollerblading once or twice, but was not very good at it.

Bruno says, “Oh, yeah. Maybe I’ll save up (maybe I’ll save my money) and buy a Segway.” A “Segway” (Segway) is an electric machine with two wheels and a small, flat area that you stand on. It sort of looks like the old Roman chariots, except there aren’t any horses in front. “Chariots” were vehicles that they used with horses to move around in. They used to have chariot races in the Roman Empire – the ancient Roman Empire. Well, Segways are sort of like chariots. They’re two wheels and a flat space to stand, and then you have something that comes up vertically that you can hold onto and steer the Segway. You can think of it as a little car, with just two wheels, in some ways. But it’s only used for moving along the sidewalk, it’s not fast enough to go on the street; it’s not like a motorcycle, for example.

Caitland says, “Those things (meaning Segways) are really (or very) expensive. What’ll you do in the meantime (what will you do in the meantime)?” “In the meantime” means while you’re waiting for something else to happen, or until something else happens. I’m sitting at a cafe waiting for my friend, it’s 2:30 in the afternoon, my friend is arriving at 3:00. So in the meantime, I’m going to read the newspaper.

Bruno says, “Maybe I’ll take the bus. Worst case scenario, I give myself more time and I walk.” “Worst case scenario” means in the worst possible situation; the worst situation that could happen. A “scenario” is a likely event, a certain situation that will take place in the future. “Worst case” means the worst possible situation. Bruno says, “Why are you so interested in how I’m going to commute?” “To commute” is to travel between your home and where you work – unless you work at home, of course. Bruno says, “Fess up.” “Fess up” is short for confess. “To confess” means to tell the truth, or tell something that perhaps you did wrong that you want to keep a secret. If the police arrest you after you robbed a bank – after you stole money from a bank, they may ask you to confess, meaning tell them what happened. Of course if you do, you’re gonna go to jail. If you don’t, you’ll probably go the jail, too. So, depends on the situation. The last time I robbed a bank, oh, probably 10 years ago, I decided not to fess up, and for my



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punishment they made me teach at the university. So, you have to be careful about these things!

Where were we? “To fess up” means to, again, to confess. So, Bruno knows that Caitland is asking these questions for some reason, he’s trying to find out why. Caitland says, “I care about your well-being, that’s all.” Your “well-being” is your physical, mental, and emotional health; all of those things combined. Bruno says, “Oh, yeah? I don’t buy it (meaning I don’t believe it). There’s got to be an ulterior motive.” An “ulterior motive” is a secret reason for wanting to do something. You’re pretending like you’re doing it for one reason, but you’re really doing it for another reason. So, you see a beautiful woman at the café, and you’re unmarried, and you walk over there, and you ask her what book she’s reading. Well, you really don’t care what book she’s reading, you’re just looking for an excuse to talk to her; you have an ulterior motive for asking the question.

Caitland says, “Well, I do have an old scooter that would be just what you need to get back and forth from school and work.” A “scooter” is sort of like a very small motorcycle. It can also be a flat, rectangular board, kind of like a skateboard, but it has either an engine on it – a very small motorcycle-like engine, or some scooters are basically just like skateboards except they have a stick that comes up vertically that you can hold onto to steer the scooter. So, Caitland has a scooter she wants to sell to Bruno that he can use to go back and forth to school and work. This scooter has a motor on it, because Caitland says, “It uses very little gas and I’ll let you have it for next to nothing,” meaning I’ll sell it to you at a low price – next to nothing.

Bruno says, “I knew it. You’re trying to pawn off that old scooter on me. Forget it!” “To pawn (pawn) off (something)” is a phrasal verb meaning to get rid of something by selling it, especially if it isn’t worth very much money. You just are trying to get rid of it, and you try to get the best price you can. The word “pawn” has a couple of other meanings in English as well, very different meanings. Find those in the Learning Guide for this episode.

Caitland says, “I’m just looking out for your best interest, that’s all.” To look out for (someone’s) best interest” means that you are trying to do what is best for the other person; you’re trying to help the other person. Bruno says, “Isn’t that what all con artists say?” A “con (con) artist” is a person who makes money by tricking other people – by fooling other people, making them think they are doing something to help them, when actually they are basically stealing their money. A “con” is when someone tricks you out of your money. It stands for “confidence.” You get the person’s confidence – you get them to trust you, and then you steal their money. That’s basically what a con artist does.



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Now let's listen to the dialogue, this time at a normal speed.

[start of dialogue]

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[end of dialogue]

The script for this episode was written by Dr. Lucy Tse.



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From Los Angeles, California, I'm Jeff McQuillan. Thank you for listening. Come back and listen to us next time on ESL Podcast.

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