



ESL Podcast 538 – Finding the Perfect Gift

GLOSSARY

gift – present; something that is given to another person, especially on a birthday or holiday

* Meghan receives birthday gifts from her parents, grandparents, and all of her aunts and uncles.

present – gift; something that is given to another person, especially on a birthday or holiday

* Ties and socks are common presents for Father's Day.

to knock (someone's) socks off – to impress someone very much; to do something that surprises someone in a good way, usually because it is very good, nice, and unexpected

* It sounds like you really knocked their socks off in the interview! You'll definitely get the job.

gift certificate – a piece of paper that one buys at a store and lets one spend a certain amount of money at that store, usually given to another person as a present

* For his birthday, Joao asked for gift certificates to his favorite clothing store.

gift card – a small, rectangular piece of plastic that looks like a credit card and lets one spend a certain amount of money at a specific store, usually given to another person as a present

* They gave her a \$50 gift card to the bookstore as a graduation present.

to pick out – to choose; to decide which one of something one would like to have or buy

* Why did we pick out such an ugly color of paint for the bathroom walls?

to put thought into (something) – to think about something carefully, considering all the options or considering another person's opinion

* Bettina hardly put any thought into college, and just decided to go the university closest to her parents' home.

to rack (one's) brain – to spend a lot of time thinking about something, especially when it is very difficult and one cannot find the answer or solution

* Eberhard has been racking his brain for months, trying to figure out how he can make enough money to pay all of his bills, but it seems impossible.



ESL Podcast 538 – Finding the Perfect Gift

to get carried away – to go overboard; to do too much of something; to take something to an extreme

* Harold always gets carried away decorating for Halloween, putting pumpkins and ghosts all over his house and yard.

to please (someone) – to make someone happy and satisfied

* Arpad tries to please his parents by always getting good grades at school.

it's the thought that counts – a phrase used to show that even though something didn't work as planned, one appreciates the effort and consideration that went into doing something

* - I planned a beautiful picnic in the park for my girlfriend, but it was ruined by the rain.

- Don't worry about it. It's the thought that counts.

disappointed – unhappy because something isn't as good as one wanted it to be, or because something didn't happen as one had expected it to

* We were all really disappointed when the company lost its biggest client.

to hold (something) against (someone) – to not forgive someone for something that happened; to be angry at someone for something that happened in the past; to blame someone for something that happened

* How can you still hold it against me for hitting your car? That happened years ago and I paid for the repair.

to boggle (one's) mind – to confuse someone; to be very surprising for someone; to be difficult or impossible for one to understand

* Gunter is an award-winning researcher, so it boggles my mind how he always complains about his career.

to work (oneself) up – to become very angry, excited, or worried about something

* Paola always works herself up before her parents come to visit, trying to clean her house perfectly before they arrive.

to return – to take something back to the store where it was bought so that one can exchange it for something else or get one's money back

* You can return purchases to our store for 30 days with the original receipt.



ESL Podcast 538 – Finding the Perfect Gift

COMPREHENSION QUESTIONS

1. According to Fae, why wouldn't her mother like a gift certificate?
 - a) She couldn't use it to buy socks.
 - b) It would show that Fae wasn't very thoughtful.
 - c) She wouldn't know which store to use it at.
2. Why is Fae worried about getting her mother the wrong gift?
 - a) Because her mother will never forgive her.
 - b) Because her mother only likes expensive gifts.
 - c) Because her mother was disappointed by last year's gift.

WHAT ELSE DOES IT MEAN?

to get carried away

The phrase "to get carried away," in this podcast, means to do too much of something, or to take something to an extreme: "When they cleaned out the garage, they got carried away and accidentally threw away some things they wish they had kept." The phrase "to carry (something) too far" means to do too much of something so that it becomes a problem: "Joseph always enjoys telling jokes at the office, but last week he carried it too far." The phrase "to carry (something) off" means to do something that is very difficult, especially if other people did not believe that one could do it: "I can't believe you sold your home for that much money! How did you carry it off?" Finally, the phrase "to carry (someone) through" means to help someone through a very difficult situation: "Her faith in her religion carried her through her son's death."

to please

In this podcast, the verb "to please (someone)" means to make someone happy and satisfied: "He buys flowers at least once a month because he knows they please his girlfriend." The phrase "please yourself" is used to tell someone that he or she is free to do whatever he or she wants, but that one doesn't really think it's a good idea: "You're going to skip class? Please yourself." Or, "Please yourself, but I'm going to bring an umbrella in case it rains." Finally, the word "please" is sometimes used to show disbelief, or to show that one does not believe what another person has said or done: "Alicia thinks she can win the beauty contest? Oh, please! There's no way that will happen!"



ESL Podcast 538 – Finding the Perfect Gift

CULTURE NOTE

Many Americans enjoy giving and getting gift cards because they “ensure” (guarantee; make sure something happens) that the “recipient” (the person who receives the gift card) can pick out exactly what he or she wants to have. With a gift card, no one needs to worry about “pretending” (making something seem to be true when it really isn’t) to like a gift when they would really prefer to have something else.

However, people have begun to realize that there are many “pitfalls” (hidden problems) to using gift cards. Some gift cards have “hidden” (not easily seen) “fees” (money that must be paid), such as “activation fees” (money paid to begin using a card) or fees that are paid each time the card is used. Other gift cards “expire” (cannot be used after a certain date), so if the recipient doesn’t use the card before that expiration date, the gift card loses all of its “value” (the amount of money something is worth).

In addition, studies have shown that many gift cards are never used. According to Consumer Reports magazine, in 2006 there were \$8 billion in unused gift cards. Gift cards might not be used because they are lost or forgotten, or because the recipient doesn’t want to buy anything at that particular store.

Gift cards can still be good presents, but it’s important to make sure that the gift card is for a store where the recipient enjoys shopping. Also, it is a good idea to buy “retail cards,” which are sold by a particular store, instead of “bank cards,” which are sold by a bank and can be used almost anywhere, because bank cards “tend to have” (usually have) higher fees.

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



ESL Podcast 538 – Finding the Perfect Gift

COMPLETE TRANSCRIPT

Welcome to English as a Second Language Podcast number 538: Finding the Perfect Gift.

This is English as a Second Language Podcast episode 538. I'm your host, Dr. Jeff McQuillan, coming to you from the Center for Educational Development in beautiful Los Angeles, California.

Support this podcast by going to our website and becoming a Learning Guide member. You can also make a donation on our website to help keep these podcasts free for everyone.

This episode is called "Finding the Perfect Gift." It's a dialogue between Fae and Pablo about someone who's looking to find a gift. Let's get started.

[start of dialogue]

Fae: Help! I still need to buy a gift for my mother and I can't seem to think of the perfect present, something that'll really knock her socks off.

Pablo: Why don't you just get her a gift certificate or a gift card? That way, she can pick out her own gift.

Fae: Oh, she would hate that. She would think that I didn't put any thought into buying her a present at all, while I've been racking my brain to think of something she'll like. Maybe I should buy her a car!

Pablo: Now, don't get carried away. You get like this every year. I know you want to please your mother, but remember, it's the thought that counts.

Fae: I wish that were true. If I get her the wrong gift, I'm afraid she'll be disappointed, or worse, she'll hold it against me for the rest of my life.

Pablo: It boggles my mind how you can work yourself up like this every year.

Fae: How can I not? You know my mother.

Pablo: Yes, I do, and I have one piece of advice for you: Buy her a gift she can return.

[end of dialogue]



ESL Podcast 538 – Finding the Perfect Gift

Fae says to Pablo, “Help! I still need to buy a gift for my mother and I can’t seem to think of the perfect present, something that’ll really knock her socks off.” A “gift” and a “present” are the same thing; it’s something that you give another person. A gift is something that you don’t expect the other person to give you anything in exchange for; you’re not asking the other person to give you any money. Gifts and presents are always free, although it has become popular in the last few years on television to talk about how people could get a free gift. But all gifts – all presents are, by definition, free. Fae says, “I can’t seem to think of the perfect present, something that’ll really knock her socks off.” “To knock (someone’s) socks off” is an informal expression meaning to impress someone very much, to do something that surprises someone but in a good way – in an unexpected way.

Pablo says, “Why don’t you just get her a gift certificate or a gift card?” A “gift certificate” is a piece of paper that you buy at a store that you give to someone, and it allows that person to go to that store and use it to buy things. A “gift card” is similar except it looks like a little credit card, and you are able to give that to someone and they can buy whatever they want. Pablo says, “That way (meaning by doing that, by buying her a gift card), she can pick out her own gift.” “To pick out” is a phrasal verb meaning to choose, to select, to decide which of something you want. Some people don’t like that. In fact, Fae says, “Oh, (her mother) would hate that. She would think that I didn’t put any thought into buying her a present at all.” “To put thought into (something)” means to think about something carefully, to think of all the options, to think what of what that person’s opinion would be, what their likes and dislikes are, and to choose something carefully, just for that person. A gift card or a gift certificate means that you really haven’t thought about it at all, and you just picked a store and you gave them a gift card for it. So, many people don’t like gift cards and gift certificates, but they’re very popular.

Fae says, “I’ve been racking my brain to think of something she’ll like.” “To rack (rack) your brain” means to spend a lot of time thinking about something, especially something that’s very difficult – a problem that’s very difficult to solve. In this case, the problem is which gift Fae should buy her mother. “Maybe I should buy her a car,” she says. Pablo says, “Now, don’t get carried away.” “To get carried away” means to do too much of something, to take something to an extreme; we might also say “to go overboard.” “To get carried away” means to do too much of something. The verb “carry,” however, has many different meanings. You know where to look, our Learning Guide, where you can find additional explanations.



ESL Podcast 538 – Finding the Perfect Gift

Pablo says, “You get like this every year (meaning you get into this way of thinking every year). I know you want to please your mother, but remember, it’s the thought that counts.” “To please (someone)” means to make someone happy, someone you like, someone that you are trying to satisfy. “Please” has a couple of different meanings, however; once again, take a look at the Learning Guide for some more explanations. Pablo says, “it’s the thought that counts.” This is an expression – a phrase we have that means even if the person doesn’t like the gift, they will appreciate the thought that went behind it: the fact that you tried to find something good for them. “It’s the thought that counts.”

Fae says, “I wish that were true (meaning that’s not true for my mother). If I get her the wrong gift, I’m afraid she’ll be disappointed.” “To be disappointed” means you’re unhappy because someone didn’t do what you expected or something didn’t result in the way that you wanted it to. Fae says, “worse, she’ll hold it against me for the rest of my life.” “To hold (something) against (someone)” is another phrasal verb meaning not to forgive someone for something that happened, to continue to be angry at someone for something that happened in the past. Fae thinks that her mother will be mad at her for the rest of her life – which could be a very long time!

Pablo says, “It boggles my mind how you can work yourself up like this every year.” “To boggle (boggle) (someone’s) mind” means to confuse someone, to do something that is very surprising, very confusing, very difficult for another person to understand. It means that you’re really confused about something; you’re really surprised about something. “Why my brother decided to leave his job boggles my mind,” I’m completely confused by it. Usually we use this expression when we somehow disapprove or disagree with whatever the outcome or result was.

Pablo says it boggles his mind how Fae works herself up like this every year. “To work yourself up” means to get very worried about something or to get very angry about something. If your girlfriend decides to end your relationship, your friend might say, “Don’t get worked up about it (don’t get worried about it; don’t get angry about it). There are other fish in the sea (is an expression we would use in that case).” “There are other fish in the sea (in the ocean)” meaning there are other women out there that you can find to be your girlfriend – maybe!

Fae says, “How can I not (meaning how can I not work myself up)? You know my mother.” Pablo says, “Yes, I do, and I have one piece of advice for you (a piece of advice is one thing that you are recommending to someone): Buy her a gift she can return.” “To return” here means to take something back to the store where you bought it so that you can get something else, or they will give you the



ESL Podcast 538 – Finding the Perfect Gift

money was paid for the gift. We actually have what are called “gift receipts,” which are popular, I’m sure, in other places. These are receipts that the store will give a person; it doesn’t have the amount of the purchase – the amount that you paid, but it allows the person to bring back to a store to exchange it for something else. Of course once they bring it back, then they’ll know how much it was, so it’s kind of a silly practice really, but that is what a gift receipt is, when you are going to return something.

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

[start of dialogue]

Fae: Help! I still need to buy a gift for my mother and I can’t seem to think of the perfect present, something that’ll really knock her socks off.

Pablo: Why don’t you just get her a gift certificate or a gift card? That way, she can pick out her own gift.

Fae: Oh, she would hate that. She would think that I didn’t put any thought into buying her a present at all, while I’ve been racking my brain to think of something she’ll like. Maybe I should buy her a car!

Pablo: Now, don’t get carried away. You get like this every year. I know you want to please your mother, but remember, it’s the thought that counts.

Fae: I wish that were true. If I get her the wrong gift, I’m afraid she’ll be disappointed, or worse, she’ll hold it against me for the rest of my life.

Pablo: It boggles my mind how you can work yourself up like this every year.

Fae: How can I not? You know my mother.

Pablo: Yes, I do, and I have one piece of advice for you: Buy her a gift she can return.

[end of dialogue]

If this script knocked your socks off, you can thank Dr. Lucy Tse, who did such a great job!

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



English as a Second Language Podcast
www.eslpod.com

ESL Podcast 538 – Finding the Perfect Gift

English as a Second Language Podcast is written and produced by Dr. Lucy Tse, hosted by Dr. Jeff McQuillan, copyright 2009 by the Center for Educational Development.