



ESL Podcast 593 – Staying Home from School

GLOSSARY

to play hooky – to not go to school when one is supposed to; to skip classes

* Did you ever play hooky when you were in high school?

to put one over on (someone) – to trick someone; to fool someone; to hide what one is doing from someone

* Michele tried to put one over on her boss by saying she had to go to a funeral, but he knew she was really taking the day off to go to the beach.

to fake – to pretend that something is happening, especially to pretend to be sick when one really isn't

* Clarisse says she loves him, but I think she's faking it and is really just interested in his money.

to give (someone) such a hard time – to be difficult on someone; to insist that someone follow the rules; to bother someone about what he or she is doing

* I don't know why they're giving Xavier such a hard time about getting in a car accident. Even the police and the insurance company agree that it wasn't his fault.

to cut class – to skip class; to not go to a class when one is supposed to

* Rick got in a lot of trouble when he cut class to go see a movie.

foolproof – something that cannot fail or create problems; something that will definitely be successful and have the intended results

* If this hair dye is so foolproof, how did I end up with green hair?

to get caught – for one's actions to be discovered when one was trying to secretly break the rules; to not be able to hide one's bad behavior

* Oscar got caught reading his sister's diary.

to forge – to create a false document, especially signing someone else's name

* Wynona forged a copy of her birth certificate to make it look like she had been born in another state.

to keep (one's) eyes and ears open – to observe through listening and seeing; to try to find information by being very attentive and observant

* If you keep your eyes and ears open, you'll learn a lot about how this company works.



ESL Podcast 593 – Staying Home from School

to pick (something) up – to begin to understand something without having it explained to oneself, usually because one is observing and paying attention to that thing

* Nobody ever taught Mathias how to dress well. He just picked it up over the years.

to pretend – to act like something is true; to use one's imagination, even though one knows that something is not possible or real

* When Ethan was a little boy, he spent a lot of time pretending to be an astronaut.

excused absence – a period of time when one is not in school or at work, but one has permission to be away, usually because one is sick or has another obligation

* Brisah had a lot of excused absences last month, because she had a lot of health problems and needed to see her doctor often.

to get out of (something) – to find a way to avoid doing something that one is supposed to do but does not want to do

* How did Liam get out of mowing the lawn again? Isn't he supposed to do that every week?

out of the goodness of (one's) heart – in a selfless way; because one is a good person and wants to help, not because one will receive any benefit, often used sarcastically

* Did you really believe that he was going to help you out of the goodness of his own heart? I'm sure the only reason he offered to help was because he thought he'd make some money somehow.

to owe (someone) one – to be indebted to someone; to owe someone a favor; to need to do something nice for another person because he or she has done something nice for oneself

* If you help me write this report, I'll really owe you one. I promise to help you with your report next month.

You scratch my back and I'll scratch yours – a phrase used to show that if Person A does something nice or helpful for Person B, Person B will do something equally nice or helpful for Person A

* Sure, I can help you move this weekend, but you'll need to help me the next time I move. You scratch my back and I'll scratch yours.



ESL Podcast 593 – Staying Home from School

COMPREHENSION QUESTIONS

1. What does Carin mean when she says, “I may cut class now and then”?
 - a) She sometimes leaves class early.
 - b) She sometimes falls asleep during class.
 - c) She sometimes doesn’t go to class.
 2. Why does Carin say, “You scratch my back and I’ll scratch yours”?
 - a) She’ll help Hwan in exchange for a backrub and massage.
 - b) She’ll do Hwan a favor if he’ll help her later.
 - c) They’ll feel uncomfortable if they lie to their mother.
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WHAT ELSE DOES IT MEAN?

to fake

The verb “to fake,” in this podcast, means to pretend that something is happening, especially to pretend to be sick when one really isn’t: “Do you really have a headache, or are you just faking it so you don’t have to go to the meeting?” In sports, the verb “to fake” means to make someone think that one will move in a particular direction, but then actually move in a different direction: “The soccer player faked a move to the right, but then moved the ball around the other player toward the left.” Finally, the phrase “to fake (someone) out” means to trick or fool someone, or to make someone think that one will do something when one actually plans to do something else: “Sarah has been pretending to go to the office each morning, but she actually lost her job two months ago. She’s really faking her family out!”

to forge

In this podcast, the verb “to forge” means to create a false document, especially signing someone else’s name: “High school students are paying this guy \$150 to forge driver’s licenses for them so that they can appear older and be able to buy alcohol.” The verb “to forge” also means to create something new or to strengthen a relationship: “Do you think those two companies will ever forge a strong partnership?” When talking about metals, “to forge” means to use a lot of heat to change the shape of something: “He’s using a very hot fire to forge that piece of metal into a horseshoe.” Finally, the phrase “to forge ahead” means to make progress or to advance: “They’re forging ahead with their plans to open a restaurant.”



ESL Podcast 593 – Staying Home from School

CULTURE NOTE

American students are expected to go to school each weekday, but “perfect attendance” (going to all classes every day) is rare. Schools understand that students “occasionally” (sometimes, but not very often) need to miss class. However, students must explain their “absence” (not being somewhere) and let the school decide whether it was an “excused” (allowed) or “unexcused” (not allowed and needing to be punished) absence.

Many students miss school when they are “ill” (sick). If they are gone for just a day or two, their parents call the school or send a “note” (a written explanation). If they will miss school for a longer period of time, they might need a note from the doctor’s office.

Students might also miss school due to a “family emergency,” such as the illness or death of a family member. Sometimes a student’s “extra-curricular” (related to school, but not related to core subjects like math and English) activities, like sports events and music competitions, can cause an absence. These are usually excused absences unless they “occur” (happen) too frequently.

Occasionally families will take their children out of school for a few days to go on a family vacation or to do some other type of family activity. Schools generally “frown on” (do not approve of) this, but they might “grant” (issue; give) an excused absence if they think it has some educational “merit” (value; worth). If the school probably won’t excuse the absence, the parents might lie about why the child was out of school, perhaps saying that he or she was sick.

When students miss class, most teachers let them “make up the work,” completing the assignments that the other students did that day and taking “make-up exams” (the same or a slightly different test given later).

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



ESL Podcast 593 – Staying Home from School

COMPLETE TRANSCRIPT

Welcome to English as a Second Language Podcast number 593: Staying Home from School.

This is English as a Second Language Podcast episode 593. 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. Go there to download a Learning Guide for this episode, and to win a million dollars – really! No, not really.

This episode is a dialogue between Carin and Hwan, it's about a child who does not want to go to school, a very common scenario – a very common situation. Let's get started.

[start of dialogue]

Carin: We're going to be late for school. Hurry up!

Hwan: I'm not going to school today. I'm sick.

Carin: You're not sick. You're playing hooky. You're not going to put one over on Mom. She'll know you're faking. Get up! Let's go!

Hwan: No, she won't, and why are you giving me such a hard time? It's not like you've never played hooky before.

Carin: I may cut class now and then, but I have a foolproof way of doing it so I don't get caught.

Hwan: You mean you forge notes from Mom to let you get out of class for doctor's appointments and things like that. I know all about that.

Carin: Who told you?

Hwan: I keep my eyes and ears open. I pick things up.

Carin: If you know so much, then you should know that pretending to be sick never works. Mom will make you go to school anyway. There are better ways to get an excused absence.



ESL Podcast 593 – Staying Home from School

Hwan: How? I have a test in biology today and I have to get out of it. Help me!

Carin: I suppose I could, out of the goodness of my heart.

Hwan: Come on. If you do, I'll owe you one, a big one.

Carin: All right. You scratch my back and I'll scratch yours. Here's what you have to do...

[end of dialogue]

Carin says to her brother Hwan, "We're going to be late for school (we're going to arrive late). Hurry up (go faster)!" Hwan says, "I'm not going to school today. I'm sick." Carin says, "You're not sick. You're playing hooky." "To play hooky" (hooky) means to not go to school when you are supposed to, or to leave school early without permission. Carin says, "You're not going to put one over on Mom." "To put one over on (someone)" is a somewhat complicated expression; it means to fool someone, to trick someone, to make someone believe something that isn't true. It's a somewhat informal expression: to pull one over on someone. Mom will know, Carin says, that you're faking. "To fake" (fake) means to pretend that something is happening, especially here to pretend to be sick when you aren't really sick; to act like you're sick, but you're not actually sick. "Fake" has some other meanings as well; take a look at the Learning Guide for those.

Hwan says, "No, she won't (meaning she won't know I'm faking), and why are you giving me such a hard time?" "To give (someone) a hard time," or "such a hard time" means a couple things. It could mean to be difficult on someone, to be yelling at them or to be criticizing them. It may mean simply to insist that someone follows all the rules. In general, it refers to bothering someone about something they are doing or not doing: "My wife gave me a hard time for not bringing home milk when I went to the grocery store."

Hwan says, "It's not like you've never played hooky before," Carin. Typical of a sister, of course! Carin says, "I may cut class now and then, but I have a foolproof way of doing it so I don't get caught." "To cut class" is an expression meaning to not go to one of your classes in school that you are supposed to go to. We might also say "to skip (skip) class." If you don't go to school at all, we could say "I'm going to skip school today." "To skip (anything)" means not to do it, even do you are supposed to do it. Carin says she has a foolproof way of doing something. "Foolproof," which is one word, is something that cannot fail; it



ESL Podcast 593 – Staying Home from School

will never create problems, something that will always be successful. There is a foolproof way to lose weight – stop eating so much! Foolproof way. I give that advice to you for free, not even going to charge you for that!

So, Carin has a foolproof way of skipping school so she doesn't get caught. "To get caught" is one of the many verbs with "get" in it. "To get caught" is to be discovered when you are trying to secretly break the rules; when you do something wrong, and then someone finds out about it, such as your mother or your wife or your boss. Those would be three people who might find out you are doing something wrong; you would get caught by them.

Hwan says, "You mean you forge notes from Mom to let you get out of class for doctor's appointments and things like that." "To forge" (forge) means to create a false document, especially when you sign your name to something that isn't yours. You make your name look like the other person you're writing. That's a forged document, and that is the verb "to forge." There are some other uses of this verb that can be found in, of course, the Learning Guide.

Carin says, "Who told you?" Who told you that I forge notes from Mom to get me out of class? This is a common technique I should say before moving on. Children who write a note and then sign their mother's name telling the school that they have a doctor's appointment and so they have to leave school at 2:00. Hwan says, "I keep my eyes and ears open. I pick things up." That's how he knows. Remember, Carin asked him, "Who told you?" about her secret. "To keep your eyes and ears open" means to observe the situation by listening and seeing; to be very attentive we might say; to be looking at the situation closely. Hwan says that he picks things up. "To pick something up," or "to pick up something" is a phrasal verb, meaning here to begin to understand something even though no one explained it to you, because you are observing and paying attention to this thing. Hwan is observing Carin; he's understanding what's going on, even if no one told him. "To pick up something" can also mean to lift something up in the air with your hand. You can also use this verb to mean to stop somewhere and get something: "I'm going to pick up some milk on the way home." "Pick up" can also be when a man tries to get a woman interested in him. He may try to pick her up, try to get her to go with him and perhaps have a romantic relationship. That is another use of this phrasal verb; it's a rather common and somewhat complicated one.

Back to our story: Carin says, "If you know so much (if you are so smart Hwan), then you should know that pretending to be sick never works." "To pretend" means to act like something is true even if it isn't. It's similar here to the verb "to



ESL Podcast 593 – Staying Home from School

fake.” Carin says that pretending to be sick “never works,” it is never a successful strategy. “Mom will make you go to school anyway. There are better ways to get an excused absence.” An “excused absence” is a period of time when you are not at school or at work but you have permission not to be there; it’s okay for you not to be there.

Hwan says, “How? I have a test in biology today and I have to get out of it.” “To get out of (something)” is a phrasal verb – a phrasal expression meaning to find a way to avoid doing something that you are supposed to do: “How do I get out of cleaning the dishes after dinner tonight?” Of course, I will clean the dishes after dinner tonight, but I might think about a way I could get out of it!

Carin says, “I suppose I could (I could help you), out of the goodness of my heart.” The expression “out of the goodness of your heart” means because you are a good person, because you want to help the other person. But this expression is often used sarcastically, as a joke, meaning they don’t really do it because they are good people, they want something from you. And, in fact, that is what Carin is doing here.

Hwan says, “Come on (meaning help me). If you do (if you do help me), I’ll owe you one, a big one.” “To owe (owe) (someone) one” means that you owe them a favor; you will do something for that person if they do something for you. That’s what the expression is: “I owe you one,” or “I’ll owe you one.” Or if someone did a favor for you, they may say to you, “You owe me one,” meaning you owe me a favor. Carin says, “All right. You scratch my back and I’ll scratch yours.” This is an old expression: “You scratch my back and I’ll scratch yours.” Your “back” here means the back of your body, between your head and your waist. “To scratch” means to take your hand – your fingers, and move them back and forth. When you have an itch, when something itches, you scratch it. You have this sensation on your skin, and you take your fingers and you put your fingers on your skin and you move them back and forth; that’s to scratch. Of course, scratching your back can be a very pleasurable experience sometimes. The expression really means I’ll do a favor for you if you’ll do a favor for me. Carin then says, “Here’s what you have to do.” But of course, we do not learn those secrets in the dialogue!

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

[start of dialogue]

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ESL Podcast 593 – Staying Home from School

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[end of dialogue]

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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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