



ESL Podcast 552 – Reviewing Job Applications

GLOSSARY

stack – a large number of objects that are placed on top of each other vertically

* Ms. DuPois has a huge stack of papers to grade this weekend.

pile – a group of things that are put in the same place, next to and on top of each other, maybe in a disorganized way

* Yasuhiro put his dirty clothes in a pile on top of the washing machine and hoped that his roommate would wash them for him.

candidate – a person who wants to receive a particular job or who hopes to be elected for a particular position

* Which candidate did you vote for?

to be worth a second look – for a person or thing to have enough good qualities or characteristics so that it should still be considered for something and not rejected, even though it isn't perfect

* That school doesn't offer everything we're looking for, but it's definitely worth a second look.

an embarrassment of riches – too much of a good thing; having too many things to choose from

* It was an embarrassment of riches when they walked into their grandparents' home to find cookies, cakes, and candy waiting for them.

pathetic – very sad and disappointing because something is not good enough or sophisticated enough

* The movie was a pathetic retelling of the story in the novel. I didn't like it at all. The book was much better.

material – substance; something that will be used in a particular way for a particular purpose

* Do you really think she's babysitting material for the neighbors' children?

to work for peanuts – to work for very little pay; to work in a very low-paying job

* Why do you work for peanuts in non-profit organizations? You could get a much better-paying job in a private company.

to hold down a job – to have and keep a job; to hold on to a job

* With her drinking problem, it was difficult for her to hold down a job.



ESL Podcast 552 – Reviewing Job Applications

reference – a person who is familiar with one's work, abilities, talents, and personality and is willing to share his or her opinion with another person regarding whether one would be good or bad in another position

* He asked his former boss to serve as a reference for his application for graduate school.

to hold on to a job – to be able to keep a job; to work in a single job for a significant period of time, especially when it is a difficult job; to hold down a job

* Why can't Ines hold on to a job? No matter where she works, she always gets fired within the first month.

to job-hop – to change jobs frequently, without being in a job long enough to really do it well or be promoted

* After college, Danitsa job-hopped for a few years before she figured out what she really wanted to do professionally.

standout – a person or thing that is much better than others and attracts attention because it is better

* Stanislav was a standout in all his high school classes, and everyone knew he was getting perfect grades.

educational background – the type of education that one has, including where and when one has studied, and which degrees one has earned

* Mitch has an impressive educational background, with undergraduate degrees in biochemistry and microbiology and a Ph.D. in pharmacology from one of the best universities in the country.

interview – a formal meeting between a job applicant and the person who will decide who should get the job, used to ask questions and find out whether the person would be able to do the job well

* During the interview, be sure that you let them know how much you'd enjoy working there and why you're the best applicant for the job.

to snatch up – to grab; to get or use something very quickly, before anyone else can get or use it

* The shoppers snatched up all the best deals within the first 20 minutes that the store was open.

you and me, both – a phrase used to show that one completely agrees with what another person has said

* - I hope this war ends soon.
- You and me, both.



ESL Podcast 552 – Reviewing Job Applications

COMPREHENSION QUESTIONS

1. What does Jonathan mean when he says he thinks only two people are “employee material”?
 - a) Only two of the people submitted the right application materials.
 - b) Only two of the people are related to current employees.
 - c) Only two of the people might be good employees.
2. Which of these statements are true about people who work for peanuts?
 - a) They get paid with food instead of money.
 - b) They don’t get paid very much.
 - c) They work in the food industry.

WHAT ELSE DOES IT MEAN?

stack

The word “stack,” in this podcast, means a large number of objects that are placed on top of each other vertically: “Alice always has a large stack of books next to her bed, because she likes to read before she falls asleep.” A “haystack” is a large amount of hay (straw; plant eaten by farm animals) that has been collected for use later: “How many haystacks do you need for the horses each winter?” The phrase “to find a needle in a haystack” means to search for something that will be impossible or extremely difficult to find: “Harry hopes to find the beautiful young woman he saw on the subway, but New York is a huge city, so it’s going to be like finding a needle in a haystack.”

material

In this podcast, the word “material” means substance, or something that will be used in a particular way for a particular purpose: “Tara loves her boyfriend, but her parents don’t think he’s husband material.” The word “material” also means fabric: “Rayleen bought some beautiful purple cotton material to sew a dress and a matching jacket.” The word “material” sometimes means important or relevant: “The lawyer keeps talking about things that aren’t material to the case, and the judge is getting tired of it.” “Materials” can also be the things that one uses to study, work, or make a presentation: “Her backpack was full of textbooks, notebooks, pens, and other study materials.” Or, “Did you bring any audio-visual materials for the presentation?”



ESL Podcast 552 – Reviewing Job Applications

CULTURE NOTE

A job application is an applicant's "first impression on" (the way that one is initially perceived or seen by) the "hiring manager" (the person who is responsible for deciding who will get a job), so it must be perfect. Unfortunately, many job applicants make mistakes in their application.

Many job applicants "fail to" (do not) follow the application instructions included in the job description. For example, the instructions might "state" (say) that applicants should include their "salary history" (information about how much money one was paid for work in the past) or "contact information" (telephone, email address and/or mailing address) for three references. If an application does not include this information, the hiring manager may "eliminate" (no longer consider) that applicant, even if he or she is "otherwise" (in other ways) very well qualified for the job, because that applicant was unable to follow the instructions.

Other job applicants make the mistake of sending a "generic" (not specific or not changed to a particular job or organization) resume and "cover letter" (a one-page letter sent with one's application). If the resume and cover letter don't specifically "address" (talk about) how the applicant is qualified for that particular job, or why the individual wants to work for that particular company, the hiring manager might "overlook" (not pay enough attention to) that application. Also, a generic cover letter shows that the applicant didn't "take the time" (use very much time) to learn about the company.

Even worse, some applicants have "typos" (typing mistakes) in their cover letter, or they forget to change some important part of the cover letter. For example, applicants might forget to change the job title if they are "adapting" (using something old for new purpose) a cover letter that they have used before. This is definitely not the way to make a good first impression on the hiring manager.

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



ESL Podcast 552 – Reviewing Job Applications

COMPLETE TRANSCRIPT

Welcome to English as a Second Language Podcast number 552: Reviewing Job Applications.

This is English as a Second Language Podcast episode 552. I'm your host, Dr. Jeff McQuillan, coming to you from the Center for Educational Development in beautiful Los Angeles, California.

The best way to improve your English is to listen to this episode and to look at the 8- to 10-page Learning Guide that we have on our website for episode, and all of our current episodes. Go to eslpod.com, become a member of ESL Podcast, and you can download those Learning Guides for every current episode.

This episode is a dialogue between Missy and Jonathan. They're talking about people who are "applying for work" at their company, people who are asking to be hired as employees. It's going to go over a lot of different vocabulary related to interviews and job applications. Let's get started.

[start of dialogue]

Missy: Okay, let's sort this stack of applications into three piles: good candidates, those worth a second look, and definite "no's."

Jonathan: Well, that didn't take long. With this poor economy, I thought we'd get an embarrassment of riches, but these applications are pretty pathetic. I only see two of these people as employee material.

Missy: Yeah, well, it might have something to do with the salary we're offering. Not everybody is willing to work for peanuts.

Jonathan: Isn't that the truth! Some of these applicants have never held down a job before and don't have a single reference. These others don't seem to be able to hold on to a job, job-hopping every few months.

Missy: Well, at least we have these two standouts. They both have the right educational background and level of experience. Should we call them in for interviews?

Jonathan: Yeah, and I hope they haven't already been snatched up by another company.



ESL Podcast 552 – Reviewing Job Applications

Missy: You and me, both.

[end of dialogue]

Missy says to Jonathan, “Okay, let’s sort this stack of applications into three piles.” “Let’s sort (let’s organize) this stack (stack) of applications.” A “stack” is a large number of objects that are placed on top of each other so that you have, vertically, several things on top of each other. We talk about a stack of papers; we could refer to a stack of plates in the kitchen, one on top of the other. Missy’s talking about a stack of applications. An “application” is the written information that someone who is trying to get a job at your company fills out, or completes, and gives to you; it gives you their basic information. Missy wants to sort the stack of applications into three piles (piles). A “pile” is a group of things that are in the same place, either next to each other or on top of each other, but not very organized. A stack would probably be considered organized, but a pile would be things that would not be very neat. Maybe some things are “crooked,” some things aren’t exactly on top of the other things. That would be a pile of things. I should mention that “stack” has a couple of different meanings in English besides this one; take a look at your Learning Guide for some additional definitions.

So Missy wants to sort the applications into three piles: good candidates, those worth a second look, and definite “no’s.” A “candidate” is a person who wants to receive a particular position or get a particular job. So, a job candidate would be somebody who wanted to work at your company. A political candidate would be someone who wanted to have a certain political office: the president, a senator, and so forth. The expression “worth a second look” means that this person or this thing is good enough, has good enough qualities or characteristics that you want to consider it a little more. It may not be perfect, but it’s good enough. You say, “Okay, well, these are good candidates, definite ‘yes’ people.” These are people who aren’t perfect, but we want to look at more closely again. They’re worth a second look.

Jonathan says, “Well, that didn’t take long. With this poor economy, I thought we’d get an embarrassment of riches, but these applications are pretty pathetic.” The expression “an embarrassment of riches” means you have too much of a good thing, or you have too many good things to choose from. He’s saying here that he thought they would get lots of good applications, too many for them to choose from, but instead they got applications that were pathetic (pathetic). Something that is “pathetic” is very sad; in this case, very disappointing. It’s not good enough. “Pathetic” is a very strong, very negative way of describing something. Jonathan says, “I only see two of these people as employee material.” The word “material,” here, means something that is used in a



ESL Podcast 552 – Reviewing Job Applications

particular way for some particular purpose. In this case, these are people who might make good employees; they're employee material. "Material" has other meanings in English; take a look at the Learning Guide for some more detailed explanations of those.

Missy says, "Yeah, well, it might have something to do with the salary we're offering (the amount of money that we will pay this person). Not everybody is willing to work for peanuts." The expression "to work for peanuts" means to work for very little pay, to work at a very low paying job. Missy is saying here that the reason they didn't get a lot of good applications is that people don't want to work for such a low salary.

Jonathan says, "Isn't that the truth (meaning I agree with you completely)! Some of these applicants have never held down a job before." "To hold down a job" means to have and to keep a job for a long time, or at least a reasonable amount of time – more than a week, let's say. My father once told me that I could never hold down a job for more than two years, which is about right! Jonathan says many of these applicants "don't have a single reference." A "reference," in this dialogue, means a person who is familiar with your work, who knows you, and who is willing to give their opinion about you to the employer, to the person or the persons that are interviewing you. For example, when I applied for a job at the university I needed to give them three references – three is pretty common for U.S. jobs – and those could be my professors, they could be other people I worked with; they couldn't be my wife or my mother. You don't give your family members as references, although sometimes people will ask for a personal reference, and that will mean a friend who knows you very well. But usually for a job you have professional references, people that you've worked with or worked for.

Jonathan says, "These other applicants don't seem to be able to hold on to a job, job-hopping every few months." "To hold on to a job" is to keep a job; it's similar to "hold down a job." "To hold on to (anything)" means to keep it for a long time; so "to hold on to a job" means to keep the job for a long time. "To hop" (hop) usually means to jump up a short distance in the air while you're going forward. We talk about a rabbit, the animal, who hops. They go up and down in the air as they are moving forward, instead of walking for example. Well, "job-hopping" means jumping – going from one job to another frequently; every few months or every year you have a new job. That would be job-hopping. "Bar-hopping" would be going to different bars to have different drinks. This is called a "pub crawl" (crawl) in England, but in the United States we usually talk about bar-hopping. But we're not bar-hopping in this dialogue, we're talking about people who are job-hopping.



ESL Podcast 552 – Reviewing Job Applications

Missy says, “Well, at least we have these two standouts.” A “standout” (one word) is a person who is much better than everyone else, who’s obviously more qualified. Missy says, “They both have the right educational background,” meaning they have the right kind of education; they’ve studied the right things for this job. They also have the right level of experience; they’ve worked at this kind of job for a long time. “Should we call them in for interviews?” meaning should we ask them to come to the office and meet with us formally so we can ask them questions in an interview.

Jonathan says, “Yeah, and I hope they haven’t already been snatched up by another company.” “To snatch (snatch) up” is a phrasal verb meaning to grab, to get or use something very quickly before other people can get it or use it. After Christmas, on December 26th, all the big shopping stores – the shopping malls have sales, where they lower the price on things. And people get there very early – I mean ridiculously early, 5:00 in the morning, 4:00 in the morning – so they can get the good prices, because they want to snatch up all of the good things at low prices before other people get there and take them, before they don’t have any more left.

So Jonathan is hoping that these two standouts have not been snatched up – have not been already hired by another company. Missy says, “You and me, both.” “You and me, both” means that I completely agree with you; I completely agree with what you said. Notice grammatically it should be “you and I,” but we don’t say “you and I”; the expression is “you and me, both.”

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

[start of dialogue]

Missy: Okay, let’s sort this stack of applications into three piles: good candidates, those worth a second look, and definite “no’s.”

Jonathan: Well, that didn’t take long. With this poor economy, I thought we’d get an embarrassment of riches, but these applications are pretty pathetic. I only see two of these people as employee material.

Missy: Yeah, well, it might have something to do with the salary we’re offering. Not everybody is willing to work for peanuts.



ESL Podcast 552 – Reviewing Job Applications

Jonathan: Isn't that the truth! Some of these applicants have never held down a job before and don't have a single reference. These others don't seem to be able to hold on to a job, job-hopping every few months.

Missy: Well, at least we have these two standouts. They both have the right educational background and level of experience. Should we call them in for interviews?

Jonathan: Yeah, and I hope they haven't already been snatched up by another company.

Missy: You and me, both.

[end of dialogue]

We have an embarrassment of riches at ESL Podcast when it comes to our scripts. That's because they're written by our standout scriptwriter, Dr. Lucy Tse.

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 is written and produced by Dr. Lucy Tse, hosted by Dr. Jeff McQuillan, copyright 2010 by the Center for Educational Development.