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**ESL Podcast 8 - The Commute Home and Running Errands**

**GLOSSARY**

**quitting time** – the end of the business day; time to leave work and go home

\* At quitting time, they all turn off their computers, put on their jackets, and walk to the metro station.

**to signal** – to do something (make a movement or turn on a light) to let other drivers know what you plan to do

\* The car's lights were broken so the driver had to signal where he was going by holding his arm out of the window.

**to turn** – to move right or left from one street onto another street

\* Right-hand turns are not allowed here because the street is closed today.

**to merge** – to move your car into the flow of other, faster-moving cars

\* Merging onto the freeway was one of the scariest parts of learning how to drive.

**traffic** – the flow of cars; the number and speed of cars

\* Today there was so much traffic that driving home took almost two hours. Normally it's a 40-minute drive.

**stop-and-go** – traffic that moves very slowly, with lots of stopping

\* Southern California is well known for its stop-and-go traffic in the morning hours.

**to stall** – a car that is not working and has stopped in the road

\* Her car stalled in the middle of the street so she had to ask other people to help her push it to the side of the road.

**fast lane** – the far left lane of a highway or freeway, where cars drive the fastest

\* Grandpa always gets frustrated when he sees a slow-moving car in the fast lane.

**to back up** – to block traffic so that cars are stopped or moving very slowly for a certain distance behind the problem

\* The accident has backed up traffic for four miles. Hopefully the police will clear the accident soon so that cars can begin moving again.

**surface streets** – roads within a city, not highways or freeways

\* Driving on surface streets is slower than driving on a freeway, but it lets you see more interesting things.



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**fridge** – short for refrigerator; a kitchen machine that keeps food cold

\* Do we have any eggs in the refrigerator or do I need to buy more?

**market** – grocery store; a store that sells food and other household things

\* Could you please buy some bread and milk at the market after work today?

**cooked** – food that has already been prepared; food that can be eaten right away or only needs to be heated to eat

\* This meat is already cooked so it won't take long to make the sandwiches.

**checkout stand** – the place where one pays for food bought at a market

\* Sir, this checkout stand is only for customers who have 10 or fewer items.

**cashier** – the person who takes customers' money and gives them receipts

\* That store is hiring cashiers who are friendly and are good at math.

**bagger** – the person who puts a customer's purchases into a plastic or paper bag

\* That bagger must be new because he's putting the milk on top of the eggs. They're going to break!

**cart** – a large container with wheels that is used to carry food purchases in a market and to one's car

\* How did this bag of candy get into my shopping cart? My children must have put it there when I wasn't looking.

**to load up** – to put purchases or other items into a car; to put a lot of things into a space

\* As soon as we load up the car with these suitcases, we'll be ready to drive to the airport.



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### CULTURAL NOTE

#### Lawyers

Lawyers typically “advise” (give advice to) and “represent” (speak for) clients in courts, at government agencies, or in private legal matters. They also “interpret” (help others understand) laws, “rulings” (official court decisions), and “regulations” (rules; laws) for individuals and businesses.

Most lawyers work mainly in offices. However, some travel to attend meetings with “clients” (customers) at various locations, such as homes, hospitals, or “prisons” (where the police place people suspected or convicted of crimes). Some lawyers gather “evidence” (things showing someone’s guilt of innocence); others appear in court.

Becoming a lawyer usually takes seven years of full-time study after high school. This includes four years of “undergraduate study” (first four years of college) followed by three years of law school. Most states require future lawyers to complete a juris doctor (J.D.) degree from a law school “accredited by” (given official permission by) the American Bar Association (ABA), which is the national organization that gives individuals permission to work as lawyers.

Law students often gain “practical” (work; hands-on) experience by participating in school-sponsored “legal clinics” (where people can go for free or low-cost legal advice), in practice “trials” (the arguing of a case in court) under the supervision of experienced lawyers and judges, and through research and writing on legal issues for a school’s law “journals” (academic or school publication).

Part-time or summer jobs in law “firms” (companies), government agencies, and “corporate” (a large company’s) legal departments also provide valuable experience. These experiences can help law students decide what kind of legal work they want to focus on in their careers. These experiences may also lead directly to a job after “graduation” (completion of a degree).

Becoming licensed as a lawyer is called being “admitted to the bar” and licensing exams are called “bar exams.” To practice law in any state, a person must be admitted to its bar under rules established by that state. The requirements vary from state to state.



## **COMPLETE TRANSCRIPT**

Welcome to English as a Second Language Podcast number 8: The Commute Home and Running Errands

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

In this episode, I'll talk about commuting home and running some errands.

Let's get started!

[Start of story]

It's five o'clock and it's quitting time. I put a few files into my bag, grab my mug, and say goodnight to the rest of the people in my area. I go to the parking garage and get into my car. I signal my turn onto the street and drive toward the freeway onramp. I merge as best as I can onto the freeway, which is always a bit of a hassle at this hour. Traffic is stop-and-go all the way from downtown. I hear on the radio that there's a stalled car in fast lane near La Brea, backing up traffic all the way to Hoover. I decide to get off the freeway and to take surface streets for the rest of the trip.

I need to make a stop on the way home. I know that the fridge is empty, so I decide to stop by the market. I get there and I pick up some French bread, a bag of apples, a few bananas, some pasta, tomato sauce, and a cooked chicken. Luckily, they have a lot of checkout stands open, and I get through the line pretty quickly. I thank the cashier and the bagger and push my cart to my car. I open the trunk and load everything up. Just then my wife calls me on my cell phone. She was going to be a little late getting home and asks me to make something for dinner. Tonight, I will be the cook.

[End of story]

This episode is called "The Commute Home and Running Errands." "Commute," you know, means driving back and forth from your house to your work. "To run an errand" (errand) means to do something, usually something outside of your house. For example, going to the grocery store, going to the drug store, stopping by the post office to mail a letter, these are things that you have to do that are not



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part of your work but that you need to do in your daily life. And, we call these things errands, and the verb is to run an errand.

Our story says, "It's five o'clock and it's quitting time." "Quitting time" is the time that you stop working. "To quit" (quit) means to stop, so quitting time is the time that you stop working at the end of the day. "I put a few files into my bag," I "grab my mug," - my coffee mug - and I "say goodnight to the rest of the people in my area." If you work at a big company, usually you are divided into smaller groups that work on the same topic - the same type of work. So, there is an accounting section and there is a sales section. One way to describe those smaller groups is an area, so people in your area would be people who work next to you on the same things that you do.

"I go to the parking garage and get into my car. I signal my turn onto the street." "To signal" (signal) means to indicate, and in a car it means to turn on what we call the "blinker" (blinker). The blinker is what indicates whether you are going to turn left or right. So, when you are driving your car and you want to make a turn, you have to signal, are you going left or are you going right. And of course, in the back of the car, there's a little light that goes on and off, we would say it "flashes" (flashes). "To flash" means to go on and off quickly.

So, "I signal my turn" - left or right - "onto the street and drive toward the freeway onramp. I merge as best as I can onto the freeway." "To merge" on the freeway or to merge when you are driving means that there are two lanes - two cars next to each other - but the road is getting more narrow. The road becomes smaller and now you only have one lane, so these two lines of cars have to go into the same lane, and we call that merging. "To merge" (merge) as a verb means to take two things and to put them together. We talk about companies that merge; one company buys another company and they merge - they come together. Well, in traffic when you are driving, to merge means to go from two lanes to one lane, and you have to go into and combine with another lane of traffic.

"I merge as best as I can, which is always a bit of a hassle at this hour." A "hassle" (hassle) is the same as a problem. So, it "is always a bit of," meaning a little bit - somewhat of a problem "at this hour. Traffic is stop-and-go all the way from downtown." We use that word "traffic" (traffic) to mean the cars on the street or the cars on the freeway. You may ask someone, "How was traffic?" and they may say, "Oh, it was terrible. Traffic was really bad on the freeway this afternoon." So, it refers to the number of cars and how easy it is to move on the freeway or the street. When we say traffic is "stop-and-go," we mean that cars are stopping then they go forward maybe ten feet, 20 feet, then they stop again.



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When there are too many cars on the freeway or on a road, you cannot just drive straight through, you have to stop, wait for the other car and then go, so stop-and-go traffic means that the traffic is moving very slowly.

“I hear on the radio that there’s a stalled car in the fast lane near La Brea.” I'm listening to the radio - to the drive time traffic report, and they tell me that there is a stalled car. “To stall” (stall) means here to stop - to stop working. It doesn't mean that the car will never run again - will never work again. Usually, when we use the verb stall, we mean that it is stopped for a temporary time because it has some problem. So, a stalled car is a car that has stopped working, and if you are on the freeway and your car stalls, you will, of course, cause a problem for the other drivers. Normally, you try to get your car onto the shoulder. The shoulder is the part of the freeway where you can stop your car and not get in the way of anyone else. It's on the right hand side or the left hand side; you can have a shoulder on either side of the freeway.

The car that is stalled is in the fast lane. The fast lane on an American freeway or highway is the first lane on the left, what we would say the far left lane if there are more than three lanes or more than two lanes on the freeway. Here in Southern California we have freeways that have six or seven lanes, so if you want to go fast, normally you go to the lane that is in the far left - the first lane on the left; that's the fast lane. Not everyone drives fast in the fast lane, but it's the common understanding among drivers that if you are in the fast lane, you should go faster than the other cars.

Well, this car is “stalled in the fast lane near La Brea.” “La Brea” is a name of a street here in Los Angeles, and the car is “backing up traffic all the way to Hoover.” “Hoover” is another street here in LA. “To back up traffic” means that the cars are stopped behind you. When we say there is a backup on the freeway, we mean that the cars are moving very slowly or they're stopped, usually because there's an accident, there's construction - they're fixing the freeway and they have one of the lanes closed, or, in our story, it's because a stalled car is in the fast lane. So, the traffic is moving very slowly, it is backed up “all the way to Hoover,” meaning that beginning at Hoover Street, the cars are stopped or are going very slowly, and all the way to La Brea.

“I decide to get off the freeway and to take surface streets for the rest of the trip.” “Surface” (surface) means the top of something, but when we say surface streets, we mean the roads and streets that are not the freeway or the highway. So, the regular roads and streets we would call the surface streets.



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“I need to make a stop on the way home,” I need to go somewhere before I go home. “I know that the fridge is empty, so I decide to stop by the market.” “Fridge” (fridge) is another way of saying refrigerator - it's a short way of saying refrigerator. The fridge is where you put food to keep it cold. So, my fridge is empty which means I don't have any food, so I decide to go to the market. The market here means the supermarket, a place where you can buy food, or it could be a smaller market, what we might call a corner market; that would be a small store. Often, they are located at the intersection - at the corner of two streets.

I get to the market and I pick up some food. “I pick up some French bread,” which is a type of bread, I pick up “a bag of apples,” I get “a few bananas, some pasta,” because I love pasta, some “tomato sauce,” for my pasta, “and a cooked chicken.” In many American supermarkets, you can buy a small chicken that is already cooked for you, so you can just take it home and eat it. If you are lazy, like me, this is a very good way to get some good food, and it is not very expensive. I think it's about maybe six or seven dollars for a cooked chicken. I like to take the chicken and put it into the pasta and tomato sauce and mix them all together.

“Luckily,” the supermarket has “a lot of checkout stands open.” A “checkout stand” is the place where you pay for your food. The verb “to checkout,” (checkout) means to leave and to pay. We use that verb when we are talking about the supermarket. We also use it when we are talking about a hotel. “I'm going to checkout of the hotel,” that means I'm going to leave the hotel and, I hope, pay. A “stand” (stand) here just means the place where you pay for something.

Well, “I get through the” checkout “line pretty quickly” - very quickly. “I thank the cashier,” (cashier) - the cashier is the person who takes my money - “and the bagger,” (bagger) - this is the person who puts your groceries into a bag. In some stores they do not have baggers; you have to bag your groceries yourself. Notice we use the word “bag” (bag) as a verb, meaning to put things into a bag. In American grocery stores you can have either a paper bag or a plastic bag.

Well, the bagger puts my food into my cart, and I “push my cart to my car.” My “cart” (cart) sometimes called a shopping cart, is what you use to move or to take your food to your car - what you put your food into when you are shopping. It's a little like a big box - metal box with wheels on it. So, it helps you move things, you don't have to carry them yourself.



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“I open the trunk and load everything up.” “To load up” means to put things into, in this case, your car. So, if someone says, “I’m going to load up my car,” (load) up, they mean they’re going to put the things that they need to put into their car. We often use that verb when we are talking about moving something in your car, or going on a trip.

“Just then my wife calls me on my cell phone. She was going to be a little late” this evening. She says she is not going to get home at her normal time, and so she “asks me to make something for dinner.” This is not a good idea since I am not a good cook, but I, of course, say yes. “Tonight, I will be the cook” - the person making the food.

Now let’s listen to the story, this time at a regular speed.

[Start of story]

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[End of story]

I suggest you load up your computer or music player with some of the great scripts written by our great scriptwriter, Dr. Lucy Tse. Thank you, Lucy!

From Los Angeles, California, I’m Jeff McQuillan, thank you for listening. Come back and listen to us again right here on ESL Podcast.



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Contributors to this series are Jeff McQuillan, Lucy Tse, and Jessica Brown.