



ESL Podcast 77 – Shopping at the Mall

GLOSSARY

mall – a large shopping structure that contains many different stores

* There were 24 stores and eight places to eat inside the mall.

department store – a large store that sells many different types of items, which are organized into different sections (departments) so that customers can find an item more easily

* The department store sold clothes, appliances, kitchen supplies, and bedroom furniture, among other things.

parking structure – parking garage; a tall structure with several levels where drivers can park and leave their cars temporarily

* Troy parked his car on the fifth level of the parking structure.

window display – the clothes and items shown in the large window at the front of a store, meant to make people interested in entering the store

* The shoes in the window display got Gertha's attention, so she went into the store to try them on.

sales clerk – an employee who helps shoppers in a store, hoping that the shoppers will make a purchase

* The sales clerk helped Jacinto choose a good gift for his wife.

rack – a section of bars or poles where clothes are hung in a store

* Kathy looked through the clothes on the rack to see if anything was available in her size.

to browse – to shop without looking for a specific item; to look through the items in a store without deciding to buy something

* There were no books that Emil wanted to buy, but he decided to browse through the selection anyway in case something looked good.

on sale – at a lower price than usual; cheaper than usual

* This brand of cereal usually costs \$3.75 per box, but it was on sale this week for \$2.50 per box.

in the back – in the back section of the store where employees can go but customers cannot; in the part of a store where extra items are kept

* Alisha thought that the shoes did not come in her size, but an employee found her size in the back.



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to be marked down – to be priced lower than usual; to be labeled with a lower price than usual

* The price of the rocking chair was marked down from \$99 to \$75.

to try (something) on – to put on clothes in a store to find out if they fit properly and look nice before deciding whether or not to buy them

* When Christopher tried the jacket on, he realized that the sleeves were too short.

to fit perfectly – to be the correct size and shape for someone's body

* Rolanda's new blouse fit perfectly and looked very nice on her.

register – a machine that one's money is put into when buying an item at a store; the area of a store where customers make purchases and where one goes to pay

* Thad went to the register to pay for the groceries he wanted to buy.

to ring (someone) up – to take someone's money in exchange for the items one wants to buy; to sell an item to someone and formally record the sale

* Shaneka went to pay for the hat and gloves she wanted to buy, and the employee quickly rang her up.

There's a first time for everything. – a phrase used to say that any type of event that occurs must happen a first time before it can happen again; a phrase used when an event happens even though the event has never happened before

* Mr. Molnar was always late for meetings, so when he showed up early, his co-workers commented, "There's a first time for everything."



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CULTURE NOTE

Surplus Store Shopping

Every government or large organization buys a lot of “supplies,” things they need for daily “operations” (running of a business or organization) or special purposes. Normally, they order these items “in bulk” (large quantities; large numbers). It is usually cheaper to buy supplies this way and the government can often “negotiate” (ask for) a better price “per” (for each) item when buying in bulk.

What happens when the government or large organizations buy too much or too many of something, or if things change and there’s no need for those supplies anymore?

In the United States, you can find some of these items in surplus stores. When you have a “surplus,” you have too much or too many of something. For example, young children sometimes can have surplus energy if they don’t have enough physical activity.

When the government or a large organization has a surplus, it sells those items to “surplus stores,” which “in turn” (then; afterwards), sell them to customers who visit their stores. Some surplus stores specialize in “military” (part of the government that deals with the country’s security, including the Army, Navy, Air Force, and the Marines) items. Other surplus stores buy anything that the government or other large organizations sells them. Sometimes you can find the strangest and most “curious” (unusual) things in a surplus store.



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COMPLETE TRANSCRIPT

Welcome to English as a Second Language Podcast number 77 – At the Shopping Mall.

This is English as a Second Language Podcast episode 77. I'm your host, Dr. Jeff McQuillan, coming to you from the Center for Educational Development in beautiful Los Angeles, California.

On this episode, we're going to go shopping at the mall. Let's get started.

[start of story]

I needed a new pair of pants for a wedding I was attending next week, so I went to the mall during my lunch hour. The mall had a big variety of stores, including two department stores, so I was sure to find something that was just right. I found a space in the parking structure and entered the mall through the main entrance. This was right next to the food court.

Okay, where to start?

I headed to one of the two department stores. On the way there, though, I saw a nice pair of pants in a window display of a men's clothing store. I decided to go in. As I walked in, I saw a sales clerk hanging some shirts on a rack.

She said, "Hi, can I help you find something?"

"Oh, I'm just browsing," I said.

"Okay. Let me know if you need any help." I told her thanks, and started looking around the store. There were some nice sweaters folded on the shelves and some dress pants on the racks. I made my way toward the back of the store and found the same pair of pants I saw in the window display. And, they were on sale! They were 50 percent off. I started looking for my size. There were plenty of smalls and larges, but no mediums.

The sales clerk was walking by just then so I asked her, "Do you have any other sizes in the back?" But, I was out of luck. This was all they had. "But," she said, "I have another pair of pants in a medium and they've been marked down, too. Would you like to try them on?"



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I said I did and followed her to the dressing room. She said, “My name is Cheryl. Let me know if you need anything else.” I tried the pants on and they fit perfectly. I liked the color, too.

I took the pair of pants to the register. The sales clerk asked, “Are you ready?” I told her I was and she started ringing me up. The clerk told me the total and asked me, “How would you like to pay for this?”

“With my MasterCard,” I said and handed her my credit card.

She processed the card and asked me sign the credit card receipt. She handed me a copy and a bag with my new pair of pants in it. She said, “There you go. I hope you like the pair of pants. Thanks for coming in.”

I thanked her and left. I couldn’t believe I got my shopping done so quickly. There’s a first time for everything.

[end of story]

Our story begins with me explaining that “I needed a new pair of pants for a wedding I was attending” – or going to – “next week, so I went to the mall during my lunch hour.” A “mall” (mall) is a large shopping structure, a large building that contains many different stores. The mall I went to had a large or “big variety of stores,” meaning it had many different kinds of stores.

The mall had two department stores. A “department store” is a large store that sells many different kinds of items, which are typically organized into sections or departments. “Department stores” might sell clothing. They might sell bicycles. They might sell dishwashers. Department stores in the U.S. sell lots of different kinds of things. I knew that this mall had two department stores, “so I was sure to find something that was just right,” meaning that was perfect for me.

I found a “space,” meaning a space for my car, “in the parking structure.” A “parking structure” is basically a parking garage that usually has more than one level. It could have two stories. It could have five stories. In some of the bigger malls in the U.S., there are seven or eight levels to the parking. That’s called a “parking structure.” If there’s just one level of parking and it’s outside, we would call that a “parking lot.” So, I went to the parking structure and found a space.

I “entered the mall through the main entrance.” The “main entrance” would typically be the place where most people enter into, in this case, the mall. I say, “This was right next to the food court.” In American malls, there’s often a “food



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court” (court) which is basically an area for small restaurants to serve food. Usually, there are a set of tables and chairs in the middle of an area, and the small restaurants – typically, seven or ten restaurants – are there selling food, and you can buy food from many of the restaurants and then sit down at one of the tables.

I say that “I headed to one of the two department stores.” “To head to” means to go in the direction of. “On the way there” – as I was walking to the department store – “I saw a nice pair of pants in a window display of a men's clothing store.” A “window display” (display) is an area that has a large piece of glass in front of it where stores put things that they are selling so people can see them as they walk by. You could have a window display in a store that was right on the street, or you could have a window display, as in this case, in a store inside a mall. “I decided to go in,” meaning I decided to walk into this men's clothing store.

“As I walked in” – while I was walking in – “I saw a sales clerk hanging some shirts on a rack.” A “sales clerk” (clerk) is an employee at a store who helps people find what they need and pay for the things they want to buy. A “rack” (rack) here means a section of bars or poles where clothing is hung or put in a store. If you have a dress shirt, or possibly a dress for a woman, you’d probably want to put it on a rack. You’re not going to fold it up and put it on a shelf on a flat piece of wood. You want to put it on what would be called a “hanger” (hanger) so that it hangs from a pole – basically, a large metal stick. Clothing is put on racks so that people can go through them quickly and find what they need.

The sales clerk said, “Hi, can I help you find something?” That's a very common expression when you walk into a store. The sales clerk will ask you if you need help. I say, “Oh, I'm just browsing.” “To browse” (browse) means to be shopping but not looking for anything specific. It's a good thing to say to a sales clerk when you walk into a store when you don't really want the sales clerk to help you or to try to sell you something. You just want to be left alone. Then, you can say, “Oh, I'm just browsing. Thank you.” The sales clerk knows then not to bother you unless you ask for help.

The sales clerk in this case says exactly that: “Okay, let me know if you need any help” – ask me if you want me to help you. “I told her thanks, and started looking around the store.” I found some dress pants on some racks. “Dress pants” are nice pants – not jeans, but pants you could wear, for example, to a wedding. “I made my way toward the back of the store and found the same pair of pants I saw in the window display.” “To make your way” somewhere is to move in that direction.



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It's often the case in stores that they will put the items, the products, the things that are on sale – that are discounted – in the back of the store. They want you to walk through all of the new expensive things before you get to the cheap things in the back. Well, I was looking for the cheap things. So, I walked to the back of the store and found the same pair of pants I had seen in the window display. I then say, “They were on sale!” When we say something is “on sale,” we mean it is at a lower price. It has been discounted. You pay a lower price than what you would normally pay.

I started looking for my size; I started looking for a pair of pants that would fit me. “To fit” someone means that the clothing looks good on them. I say, “There were plenty of smalls and larges, but no mediums.” Sizes of clothing come basically in one of three categories: small, medium, or large. “Medium” would be in between, of course, “small” and “large.” They're not exact terms. And different stores will have different ways of deciding what's a small versus a large versus a medium. It can be a little confusing. When you buy clothing on the Internet, they'll usually have a chart – an area that you can see what they mean by a small, what the actual size in inches is of the piece of clothing, for example.

“The sales clerk was walking by just then,” right at the time I was looking, “so I asked her, ‘Do you have any other sizes in the back?’” When you ask a sales clerk if they have something “in the back” or “in back,” you are asking whether they have anything that is not out for the public to see, that is stored in the back of the store, typically, that they haven't put out for people to buy yet. Sometimes people will buy things and the store hasn't had time to put new items to replace the ones that have been purchased. That's why you always want to ask if the store has more sizes in back if you can't find your size on the rack or in the front parts of the store.

I then say, “I was out of luck. This was all they had.” That means that the sales clerk told me they did not have more sizes in the back, and therefore I could not buy a medium of the pair of pants I wanted. “But,” she said, “I have another pair of pants in a medium” – in a medium-size – “and they've been marked down too.” When we say something has been “marked (marked) down,” we mean the price has been lowered. The item has been discounted. You will pay a lower price now that it has been marked down. It's really just another way of saying “on sale.”

The clerk asked me if I would like to try them on. “To try on” clothing means to put it on your body to see if you like it, to see if it fits. I said I did want to try the pair of pants on, and I followed her back “to the dressing room.” The “dressing room” is the place in a clothing store where you can try on clothes. Basically they're little closets that you can walk into that typically have a mirror in them so



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you can look at yourself and see how wonderful you look in the new piece of clothing. The clerk gave me her name and said that I should let her know if I needed anything else.

I say, “I tried the pants on and they fit perfectly. I liked the color, too.” So, I say, “I took the pair of pants to the register.” The “register” (register) is a machine, nowadays typically a computer, that is used to record whatever you are purchasing and a place to put the money you give them to buy the item, to buy the product. When I say it records it, I mean it enters it – nowadays, into a computer system – so the store knows how many people bought that particular item. A “register” used to be just a place where you would give them the money and they would keep the money. Now, it's a more sophisticated computer.

The clerk asked, “Are you ready?” I told her I was, and “she started ringing me up.” “To ring up” someone or “to ring someone up” is a phrasal verb meaning to take someone's money in exchange for something they are buying from you. “To ring someone up” is to take the money, give them a receipt, and give them what they are buying. That's the process of ringing someone up. Basically, it's taking the money.

The clerk told me the “total” – the amount I had to pay – and asked how I would like to pay for this. What the clerk is asking here is do I want to give her cash, or do I want to use a credit card? Many years ago, a lot of stores would also accept personal checks, but that's not very common in most stores anymore. You have to pay either with cash or credit card. I told the clerk I would be paying with my MasterCard type of credit card, and I “handed” her the card; I gave her the card.

“She processed the card” – she rung me up – “and asked me to sign the credit card receipt.” You have to sign the receipt so the credit card company can verify that it's you. Nowadays, you often sign the credit card slips electronically with a pen on, again, a small pad, a small little machine, that's connected to the computer that records your signature as you write it. The clerk gave me a copy of the receipt and a bag with my pants in it. She said, “There you go. I hope you like the pair of pants. Thanks for coming in,” meaning thanks for coming into the store and buying something. I thanked her and left.

I then say, “I couldn't believe I got my shopping done so quickly. There is a first time for everything.” This expression, “There is a first time for everything,” is one that we use when something happens for the first time and, usually, that you have never experienced before. Sometimes the phrase is used almost to make a joke. Someone says, “Are you going to go camping this weekend?” You might say, “Well, no. I hate camping, but maybe there's a first time for everything.”



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Of course, whenever you do something, you have necessarily to do it a first time before you can do it a second time. The idea of the expression, then, is that this is something that I've never done before. Or, if you're trying to make a joke, it might be something that you probably won't do, but it would be possible for you to do.

Now is listen to the story, this time at a normal speed.

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[end of story]

Thanks to our wonderful scriptwriter for her wonderful scripts, and thank you for listening.

From Los Angeles, California, I'm Jeff McQuillan. Come back and listen to us again right here on ESL Podcast.

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