



ESL Podcast 87 – Hotel Housekeeping

GLOSSARY

to book – to make a reservation; to arrange to have or use something at a future time, often paying for it early

* The earlier you book your flight, the cheaper it will be.

to turn out – to result or end up in a particular way

* Applying for that job turned out to be one of the best things I've ever done.

dump – an old, ugly, dirty, broken, and poorly maintained building that is almost falling apart

* As an intern, Harrison didn't have much money, so he couldn't afford a nice apartment and instead he lived in a dump.

sight unseen – without seeing something before one has to make a decision about it, especially when talking about major purchases

* What made you decide to buy a car sight unseen? Didn't you want to test-drive it first?

run down hotel – a hotel that is in very poor condition and is not a very nice place to stay

* Why are we staying in this run down hotel? Weren't any rooms available in the nicer hotels?

decor – the way a room is decorated, including the wallpaper, bedding, light fixtures, mirrors, and artwork

* Fiona changed the decor of her living room simply by hanging some new artwork and changing the pillows on her couch.

"Do Not Disturb" sign – a small sign that a hotel guest hangs on the outside of his or her room door to indicate that he or she is sleeping and does not want to be bothered or interrupted, even for the room to be cleaned

* Unfortunately, we forgot to hang on the door the "Do Not Disturb" sign, so we were woken up early in the morning when a hotel employee knocked on our door.

housekeeping – the group of hotel employees who clean the rooms that guests stay in, making them ready for the next guests

* Housekeeping gave us clean towels, new rolls of toilet paper, and new soap, and even put little candies on our pillows.



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made up – for a room in a hotel to be prepared for a guest

* After just a few minutes of making the bed, hanging the towels, and wiping the bathroom counters, the room was made up and ready for our guests.

maid – a woman whose job is to clean, especially in a hotel or a very large, wealthy home

* We're not rich enough to have a maid. If you want your room to be clean, you'll have to clean it yourself.

to make the bed – to put sheets, blankets, and pillows where they should be on a bed, making sure they are flat and smooth

* Why do you bother making the bed each morning? You're just going to lie down in it again at night.

to re-stock the mini-bar – to replace the drinks and snacks in a small refrigerator in a hotel room when a guest has used some or all of them

* I hope they re-stock the mini-bar with those little chocolate truffles. They were delicious!

to vacuum – to clean the carpet with a large machine that sucks up dirt

* My uncle is allergic to cats, so we need to vacuum up all the cat hair before he arrives tomorrow afternoon.

front desk – the part of a hotel where employees greet guests, give them their room keys, answer their questions, and solve any problems they may have

* Let's ask the man at the front desk to recommend a good Italian restaurant near the hotel.

to connect (someone) – to put someone in communication with another person or department

* Thank you so much for connecting me with Julian! He was able to help me a lot.

toiletries – liquids, gels, and pastes that are used to clean oneself and/or make oneself more beautiful, such as toothpaste, soap, and lotion

* If you forgot to pack your toiletries, we can buy you a toothbrush at the drugstore.

the run-around – an attempt to avoid giving someone a direct answer or to avoid being helpful in some way

* Shane went to four different government agencies, but they all gave him the run-around and he still doesn't know where he's supposed to submit the form.



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CULTURE NOTE

Housekeeping Services

All hotels provide basic housekeeping services by keeping the rooms clean and “well-stocked” (with all the necessary supplies). However, nicer hotels provide many additional services.

For example, in nice hotels, housekeeping might provide “turn-down service” in which the “staff” (employees) prepare the room before the guest goes to bed. Turn-down service includes “turning down the sheets,” or folding back the top part of the blankets and sheets so that the guest can get into bed easily. Turn-down service might also include putting a pair of “slippers” (shoes worn only indoors to keep one’s feet warm) next to the bed and a “mint” (a candy that freshens one’s breath) on the pillow. The turn-down service could also include “dimming the lights” (making the lights less bright) and turning on quiet, relaxing music.

Housekeeping can also “supply” (provide) a “cot” (a folding bed) or a “rollaway bed” (a bed that can be moved easily because it is on wheels). Guests might request these types of beds when many people are staying in the room. It is not unusual to request a cot for a young child, for example.

Some hotels “pride themselves on” (take pride in) little details, like folding “hand towels” (towels used to dry one’s hands) into special shapes, making them look like birds or flowers. Housekeeping might also fold the end of a toilet paper roll so that it ends in a “point” (a sharp edge) rather than a straight line.

In nice hotels, it is “customary” (normal; expected) to “tip” (give extra money to) the housekeeping staff members who provide all these services. A “typical” (usual) tip is between \$1 and \$5 each day, depending on the type of hotel and the amount of service housekeeping provides.



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COMPLETE TRANSCRIPT

Welcome to English as a Second Language Podcast number 87: Hotel Housekeeping.

You are listening to English as a Second Language Podcast episode 87. I'm your host, Dr. Jeff McQuillan, from the Center for Educational Development in beautiful Los Angeles, California.

Today's podcast is going to be about staying in a hotel room and getting services from housekeeping. Let's get started.

[start of dialogue]

I'm so glad that the hotel I booked didn't turn out to be a dump. The last time I went on vacation, I booked it online sight unseen, and it turned out to be a run down motel. This hotel was completely different. The décor was tasteful and updated, the staff was friendly, and the rooms were well-maintained.

Well, that is, until my second day there. When I left my room in the morning, I had removed the "Do Not Disturb" sign from my door so that housekeeping would know I needed my room made up. When I got back in the afternoon, though, it hadn't been done properly. The maid had made the bed, cleaned the bathroom, and re-stocked the mini-bar, but she hadn't vacuumed the carpet and didn't leave any soap or clean towels. I called down to the front desk to make a complaint.

"Front desk. How may I help you?"

"Hello. I'm in room 1201 and housekeeping didn't leave any soap or clean towels. And, the floor still needs to be vacuumed."

"Oh, I'm so sorry. Let me connect you with housekeeping." I waited on hold.

"Housekeeping."

"Yes, this is room 1201. The maid who cleaned my room didn't leave any soap or clean towels, and the floor needs vacuuming."

"Okay. I'll get someone up there right away to take care of that."



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About 10 minutes later, the maid knocked on the door. I stepped out of the room and she left the toiletries in the bathroom and vacuumed. That was pretty quick service. I'm glad I didn't get the run-around.

[end of dialogue]

Today we are traveling and staying at a hotel. I begin the story by talking about how I was glad that the hotel I booked didn't turn out to be a dump. The verb "to book" (book) has nothing to do with books that you read, it's another word for a reservation or to reserve. So, "I reserved a room" is the same as "I booked a room." We tend to use that verb particularly for hotels, but you can also say "I booked a flight to New York," meaning I bought an airplane ticket. I said that the hotel didn't turn out to be a dump. "To turn out" means it didn't result in, it didn't end up. "End up" "turn out" are two verbs that mean in this case pretty much the same thing, that the final result wasn't. The hotel, I said, wasn't a "dump" (dump). That's a...again, a very particular expression – special expression we use for a house or a hotel or some building that is not very clean, that isn't very well managed or organized – not very clean, that would be a dump. A "dump" is also a place where you put garbage and trash. Every city has a city dump where the trash and garbage that is collected is put, and that's where the expression comes from: it's a ugly, dirty place.

I said that I booked my vacation hotel online sight unseen. The expression "sight (sight) unseen (unseen)" means that I didn't look at it, that I didn't have a chance to physically go there and see what it was like before I booked it. So if I'm going to travel to another city, such as San Francisco, and I book a hotel room, and I've never seen the hotel, well then, I'm booking it sight unseen. I said that the hotel I booked for my vacation turned out to be a run down motel. To be "run down" means that it's old, it needs repairs, there are many things that are broken or dirty. You can have a run down hotel. You could have a run down car, an old car doesn't look very nice. A "motel" (motel) is similar to a hotel (hotel), but usually a motel is smaller. It comes from the expression "motor hotel," I believe. It's a hotel that usually is for people who are staying a short amount of time, not very luxurious, not a nice place, but often a clean place, not necessarily a run down place. That's a motel. I said that the "décor" (décor), which is, I'm sure, a French word. In English, it means the decorations, how it looks. "The staff," I said, "was friendly (the "staff" are all the people that work at the hotel, the employees) and the rooms were well-maintained," meaning they were clean and they didn't need repairs and so forth.

Well, I then said that on my second day in the hotel I removed the "Do Not Disturb" sign from my door so that housekeeping would know I needed my room



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made up. Couple of expressions there: “Do Not Disturb,” that’s the sign the hotel gives you to put outside your door so that in the morning the “maid,” the person who cleans the room, doesn’t knock on your door or come into your...your hotel room if you’re still sleeping for example. I like to sleep late, especially when I’m on vacation, so I always put the “Do Not Disturb.” “To disturb” means to bother, so you’re saying don’t bother me, don’t wake me up. I use the term “housekeeping,” and “housekeeping,” of course you probably know, is the word that we give to the department in a hotel that cleans and makes the beds, changes the sheets and the towels, and so forth. That’s all one word: “housekeeping.” “To keep house” as a verb would mean to make sure everything is clean and organized and so forth.

I said I needed my room made up. That two-word verb, “made up,” here means, for a hotel, that it needs to be cleaned, that the bed sheets need to be changed, that new towels need to be put in the bathroom. This is to make up a room. My room needed to be made up. Now, “made up” can also mean invented, like “I made up a story” means I invented a story, I created a story that isn’t true. But here, it’s a...as a verb it means to clean and so forth in a hotel room.

The maid made my bed. “Maid” (maid) is, as we said before, the person that cleans the room, and “to make the bed” means to put new sheets on, and to make sure the sheets are tight, and that it’s...the bed looks nice. That’s to make the bed. So the maid had made (“make” in the past tense is “made”) the bed. She re-stocked the mini-bar. The “mini-bar” is my favorite part of the hotel room; it’s that little refrigerator and there are usually in American hotels little bottles of alcohol, which you can buy. They’re not free; they’ll charge you for them when you leave the hotel – when you check out of the hotel. That’s called a mini-bar, and “to stock,” or “to re-stock” means to put things in there. So if they re-stock the mini-bar, that means that I took some things out – I drank some things, and now they’re putting new ones back in. Mini-bars have things other than alcohol; they have soda pop, like Coke and Pepsi, that sort of thing as well. The maid had not vacuumed the carpet. “To vacuum,” of course, is to take a machine, which is called a vacuum that lifts the dirt up from a carpet. And, so therefore I called the front desk to make a complaint. The “front desk” is sometimes called “reception,” and that’s the place where when you first walk into the hotel you check in, and where you check out of the hotel. In some countries it’s common for you to leave your key to your room when you leave the hotel, and to pick the key back up when you come back. But in American hotels, that’s very...that’s not the way it is done. They give you a key, usually an electronic key like a credit card, and that is your key. You don’t get a physical key to your hotel room that you leave at the front desk.



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I called down and I told the housekeeping – I asked for housekeeping, and the person at the front desk said, “Let me connect you,” in other words, let me connect you to that telephone that you need speak to, or the person you need to speak to. And when housekeeping answered the phone, I said, “Yes, this is room 1201.” In other words, I am on the 12th floor of the hotel. Notice that we don’t say room one thousand two hundred and one, or we don’t say room one two zero one, although you could say that. It’s much more common to say twelve zero one, or even more common in the United States: twelve oh one. We, of course use, oh and zero to mean the same thing many times. And I complain, of course, about my room, and about 10 minutes later, the maid comes up and knocks on my door. And then I said I stepped out of the room. “To step out of the room” means I left the room. Sometimes that expression, “to step out,” means to go somewhere, to leave to somewhere. “I’m going to step out for a few minutes” means I’m going to leave and be back in a few minutes. The maid left the toiletries in the bathroom. The word “toiletries” comes, of course, from “toilet,” or the bathroom or the restroom, but those are all the things that you might use in a bathroom, like mouthwash or shampoo or things for your hair like conditioner. Those are all toiletries.

At the end of the story, I said I was glad I didn’t get the run-around. “To get the run-around,” and “run-around is normally hyphenated (run-around). “To get the run-around” means that you are not getting a straight or an honest answer from people, or that they are not doing what they are supposed to do to help you. So for example you go to a store and you complain that the – I don’t know – the iPod Nano is scratching, and they say, “Well, no, that’s not really a problem. It’s...it’s okay...well, you know,” that is getting the run-around, when they’re not giving you what you expect.

Now let’s listen to the dialogue, and this time at a native rate of speech.

[start of dialogue]

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[end of dialogue]

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From Los Angeles, I'm Jeff McQuillan. Thanks for listening. We'll see you next time on ESL Podcast.

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