



ESL Podcast 111 – Last Minute Holiday Shopping

GLOSSARY

to procrastinate – to wait to do an action instead of doing that action now or as soon as one is able to do it; to delay doing something, usually something unpleasant

* Natasha had time to do her chores in the afternoon but she procrastinated, so she had to wash her clothes and clean her room late at night.

to end up – to result in; for a situation to end in a way that one usually does not plan or expect

* The meeting ended up being more fun than Lorenzo thought it would be.

as long as (one's) arm – very long; a list with many items on it

* Shaquana did not feel well and her list of symptoms and pains was as long as your arm.

to wait until the last minute – to wait to do something until one cannot wait any longer to do it; to act immediately before the deadline

* Brandon had nine days to write the report, but he waited until the last minute and wrote it the night before it needed to be finished.

to brave – to do a task that requires courage; to meet, confront, or work with something, like a crowd of people, that one finds scary or unpleasant

* The snow was very heavy and the roads were icy, but Andrea chose to brave the storm and drive home.

packed – full; when something has as many objects in it as it can hold or almost has as many objects in it as it can hold

* The packed box had so many documents and notebooks in it that the papers could no longer fit and were beginning to fall out.

to fight off – to confront or struggle with someone or something that creates a problem with doing a task; to confront someone or something that is annoying or unpleasant

* Jay did not want to talk about how his evening had been and fought off his curious friends' questions.

bargain hunter – someone who actively looks for lower prices when shopping; someone who looks for ways to buy as many items as possible for the lowest cost possible

* The bargain hunter had a heavy box of coupons and always knew when the local stores had sales, discounts, and lowered prices.



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out of stock – when the last item has been sold; not in the store and unable to be purchased

* Whitney could not buy her favorite cereal because it was out of stock, so she had to buy a different cereal instead.

register – the place in a store where people pay for items they want to buy

* After Charles found what he wanted to buy, he walked to the register to pay for his items.

to check out – to buy an item or items; to pay money to a store worker so that one can own the item or items one wants to buy

* Pamela found the dress she wanted to buy and checked out, paying the cashier the exact amount of money in cash.

It never fails. – It always happens.; a statement one makes about a situation or event that one does not like, but that happens often or frequently

* When Ricky saw that it was raining, he said, “It never fails! Every time I want to go to the beach, the weather is bad.”

to wrap – to cover a gift or package with fancy paper and other coverings to decorate it

* Valerie wrapped her mother’s birthday gift in pretty pink paper.

gift wrap – fancy or decorative paper one uses to cover a present or gift (an item one gives to another person); fancy paper one folds around a gift to cover it

* Tomas bought silver and gold gift wrap to use for his sister’s Christmas present.

ribbon – a long strip of fabric, or a material like fabric, that is tied around a gift or present; a thin strip of cloth that one ties around a gift to decorate it

* The package was tied with a glossy piece of blue ribbon.

bow – ribbon (a strip of fabric) that is tied into several loops and knots and decorates the top or front of a gift

* The gift was covered in yellow paper and was decorated with a large orange bow placed on top.

Scrooge – Ebenezer Scrooge, a character from a book written by Charles Dickens called *A Christmas Carol*, who hates Christmas and anything related to Christmas; a person who dislikes pleasant things

* Melissa hated traveling to her parents’ house before and after Christmas, and the busy traffic and long trip made her feel like Scrooge.



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Ba humbug! – a saying used by Ebenezer Scrooge to show dislike or disgust; a phrase one uses to show dislike for something festive or something linked to Christmas

* When Shawn teased Ladonna about her dislike for buying Christmas gifts, Ladonna shouted, “Ba humbug!”

CULTURE NOTE

Wishing Others a Good Holiday

Americans say “Happy Holidays” in December and early January as a general and non-religious greeting to wish people a happy holiday season, which usually includes Hanukkah, Christmas, Kwanzaa, and New Year. A lot of people still say “Merry Christmas,” even though the person they are speaking to may not celebrate Christmas. More and more, to avoid this situation, people say “Happy Holidays,” which may be even more popular now than “Merry Christmas” as a general holiday greeting. After Hanukkah, Christmas, and Kwanzaa have passed, people usually simply say “Happy New Year.”

So how do you wish someone a good holiday if it’s not December, especially for many of the more minor holidays, such as Labor Day, Memorial Day, and President’s Day? And even the more popular ones, such as Halloween and Thanksgiving? People almost always say “Happy + [name of holiday]”: “Happy Labor Day,” “Happy President’s Day” (though people “seldom” (rarely; almost never) say this), “Happy Halloween,” and “Happy Thanksgiving.” It is also very common for people to say, “Have a good/nice + [name of holiday],” such as “Have a good Labor Day” or “Have a nice Memorial Day.” And if someone says this to you, you can say in response: “Thanks. You, too.”

Keep in mind that “holiday” can also mean “vacation,” the days away from work or school when you can relax and have fun. You may hear people say “Have a good holiday” if the days off from work or school “coincides” (occur at the same time) with a federal or state holiday. However, if someone is taking a week off from work for their own purposes, then it is far more common to say, “Have a good/nice vacation.”



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COMPLETE TRANSCRIPT

Welcome to English as a Second Language Podcast number 111: Last Minute Holiday Shopping.

This is English as a Second Language Podcast episode 111. I'm your host, Dr. Jeff McQuillan from the Center for Educational Development in beautiful Los Angeles, California.

On this podcast, we're going to talk about last minute holiday shopping. Let's go!

[start of story]

Every year, I tell myself that I won't procrastinate in doing my holiday shopping. And, every year, I end up with a shopping list as long as your arm and about 24 hours to get it all done. Waiting until the last minute means that I have to brave the crowds out doing their last minute shopping.

First, I have to find a place to park in the parking lot, which is always packed. Then, I have to fight off the bargain hunters who are there for the holiday markdowns. With so many shoppers, the shelves are usually a mess and a lot of items are out of stock. When I've finally picked out what I want to buy, there are usually long lines at the register. Just when I'm about to check out, I always remember that I've forgotten one last thing. It never fails!

When I get home with the presents, I have to wrap them. Hopefully, I haven't forgotten to get gift wrap, ribbons and bows, and holiday cards. By the time I'm finished, I'm exhausted and I feel like Scrooge. Ba humbug!

Why do I do this to myself every year? Next year, I'm starting my holiday shopping in September. Then again, I said that last year.

[end of story]

Today we are doing some last minute holiday shopping. When we say we're doing something at the "last minute," we mean we're doing it right before it has to be done. We're waiting until we have no more time left. This is, of course, about holiday shopping and that usually is around Christmas or Hanukkah or whatever it is you celebrate. I mentioned that every year, I tell myself I won't "procrastinate" in doing my holiday shopping. "To procrastinate" (procrastinate) means to wait until the last minute. Another expression we'd say is "to put it off." "To put



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something off” means to say, “Oh, I’ll do it later, not right now, maybe later” – that’s procrastinating. Students, for example, who wait until the night before a big exam to start studying, are procrastinating.

I say that I “end up with a shopping list as long as your arm” every year. The expression “to end up with” means that as a result of or because of something. For example, here because I procrastinate, I end up with a long shopping list. The shopping list, I mentioned, is as long as your arm. And that’s an expression meaning something that’s very, very long. Usually, we use that expression in talking about a list of things or a listing of items of some sort – basically, a long list. I said that waiting until the last minute means that “I had to brave the crowds out doing their last minute shopping.” Well, we’ve talked about what it means to wait until the last minute. “To brave the crowds” – “to brave” (brave) – means to have to put up with or tolerate the crowds of people. A “crowd,” of course, is many people. So “to brave the crowds” means that I have to go out with – or go out to a store with many people and I have to be able to put up with that – to tolerate it, to not let it bother me.

“Last minute shopping,” of course, is what we’ve been talking about here, shopping at the last minute. Now, when you go the store near the holidays in December, they’re always “packed.” And to be “packed” (packed) means that they’re full – full of people. The opposite of “packed” would be that they were dead – that is, there was no one there.

I said I had “to fight off the bargain hunters who were there for the holiday mark-downs.” “To fight off” literally means that someone is attacking you, and you have to defend yourself. But, of course, we’re not using this literally. This is a metaphor – it’s an analogy. You’re not actually fighting people. Well, sometimes, if it’s a lot of difficult people you might be fighting, but normally, “to fight off” here is not to be taken literally. We don’t mean we actually fight people.

“Bargain hunters” are people who are looking for a bargain. And a “bargain” (bargain) is a low price on something – what we would call a “good deal.” Someone says, “Oh, that’s a bargain” – means that’s a good price – a low price. A “hunter” is someone, normally, who, for example, hunts animals like deer or whatever animal – geese – but here again, it’s not literally a hunter. It’s someone who is looking for. So, to hunt can also mean in this context, to look for. A “markdown” (markdown) is when a store reduces or lowers the price. So, often, during the holiday shopping season there will be lower prices at the store and these are called “markdowns.”



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Well, I said that with so many shoppers, “the shelves are usually a mess and a lot of items are out of stock.” The “shelves” are the place where, in a store, they put the things that you want to buy. You can have a shelf – is the singular – “shelves” (shelves) is the plural. The idea of it being a “mess” (mess) means that nothing is in order, that everything is thrown together and it’s not very neat. “To be a mess” is the opposite of to be neat. “Out of stock” – three words – “out of stock” – means that the store doesn’t have any more left. It runs out, we would say. “To run out” means that you sell all of the ones you have and you don’t have any more to sell.

I said that I finally “picked out” what I wanted to buy. “To pick out” means to select, to choose, but there are usually long lines at the “register.” The “register” – sometimes called the “cash register” – is where you go in a store to pay for what you are going to buy. And when you are going to pay for your merchandise, your items, you are going to check-out. “I want to check-out at the register” means I want to pay for my things at the register.

I said that usually, I always forget at least one thing. And I use the expression “It never fails” – means it always happens. “It never fails. It always rains when you go to the beach,” meaning every time I go to the beach, it rains – “It never fails.”

When I get home with the presents or the gifts, I have to “wrap” them. And to “wrap (wrap) a present or a gift” means to put paper – colored paper usually – around it and you tape it up so it looks nice. The paper is called “gift wrap” – two words – “gift” “wrap.” Ribbons and bows are also sometimes used on presents. A “ribbon” is usually a half-inch, maybe one inch piece of material that you – It’s like a big piece of string or rope that you put around the present. And a “bow” is like a little flower that sits on top of the present that is made out of, usually, the same material as the ribbon.

A “holiday card” – when you have a gift, you often give a holiday card – and whatever holiday you celebrate. I said, “By the time I’m finished, I’m exhausted.” “To be exhausted” means to be very tired, to be so tired, you can’t do anything else. “I often feel like scrooge. Ba humbug!” Well, “scrooge” (scrooge) is a fictional person. He is a symbol for someone who doesn’t like Christmas or who doesn’t like the holidays. Charles Dickens wrote a story called “The Christmas Carol” and the main character – the main person in the story – was “Scrooge.” “Scrooge” was an old business owner who was mean and didn’t like Christmas, didn’t like children. So, someone says, “Don’t be a scrooge” they mean don’t be like Scrooge – mean and hate Christmas or hate New Year’s or whatever the holiday. The expression “Ba humbug” – and that’s two words – “ba” (ba) and “humbug” (humbug) – was something from the story that Scrooge would say.



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Someone would say, “Merry Christmas!” and he’d say, “Oh, ba humbug!” – means I don’t like it. I don’t believe in it. I think we shouldn’t bother doing it. And it’s usually related to someone talking about Christmas and not liking Christmas or not wanting to celebrate Christmas.

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

[start of story]

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[end of story]

Today’s script was written by Dr. Lucy Tse of the Center for Educational Development.

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

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