



ESL Podcast 305 – Describing People’s Body Types

GLOSSARY

costume – clothing worn to dress like another person or thing, often for the theater or for Halloween

* Suri is going to be a sheep in the school play, so his mom is making him a sheep costume.

to sort (something) out – to organize and group objects by type

* We need to sort out these old pictures, putting the best ones in photo albums and throwing away the rest of them.

play – a performance with live actors at a theater; drama

* The Death of a Salesman, written by Arthur Miller, is a famous American play.

broad-shouldered – with wide shoulders; with a large distance between one’s shoulders

* Many football players are broad-shouldered.

petite – small; short and thin; with small bones; less than 5-feet 4-inches tall

* I’ve always been petite and most of the pants I buy are a little too long.

thin – slender; skinny; not fat; not overweight

* Freddy started exercising and lost 100 pounds. Now he’s thin and no longer overweight.

slender – thin; skinny; not fat; not overweight

* Nancy was always very slender, even after having four children!

pear-shaped – with a curvy body that has a shape like a pear; with a thin top and waist, and wide hips and bottom

* Many women complain about being pear-shaped and try to lose fat in their hips.

hourglass figure – the shape of a woman’s body with large breasts, a small waist, and large hips

* The women who win beauty competitions often have hourglass figures.

skinny – thin; slender; not fat; not overweight; too thin

* Rebecca is too skinny! She needs to start eating more.



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stocky – short but with a big body, yet not overweight; short but with large muscles and bones

* Camilo is very stocky, so he has to buy very big clothes, even though he isn’t fat.

muscular – with big and strong muscles

* Dinkar is very muscular because he lifts weights in the gym for an hour every day.

flabby – fat; with a lot of fat and extra skin hanging from one’s body; overweight

* Elan was in great shape before he broke his leg. He says he’s flabby now and can’t wait until he can exercise again.

long-legged – with long legs; with legs whose length is a large percentage of one’s total height

* My teacher said that you have to be long-legged to become a ballerina.

to drop out – to decide not to do or finish something; to stop doing something that one has said one would do; to stop participating in something

* Did you hear that Anna dropped out of the school soccer team?

replacement – substitute; a person or thing that takes the place of someone or something else

* Vicky stopped working here last week, so we need to hire her replacement as soon as possible.

to get out of (something) – to have an excuse for not doing something; to find an acceptable reason for why one cannot do something; to not have to do something

* I wish there were a way to get out of the presentation tomorrow. I’m so nervous!



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COMPREHENSION QUESTIONS

1. Which word describes the pair of pants that would fit Pierre?
 - a) Long.
 - b) Short.
 - c) Pear-shaped.
2. Why does Bryan need to replace Ike in the play?
 - a) Because Ike dropped onto the stage floor.
 - b) Because Ike decided not to be in the play.
 - c) Because Ike is volunteering to help with the costumes.

WHAT ELSE DOES IT MEAN?

play

The word “play,” in this podcast, means a performance with live actors at a theater: “Were you ever in a school play?” As a verb, “to play” means to do something to have fun: “The children spent the whole day playing at the park.” The verb “to play (something)” means to participate in an activity or game that is designed to help people have fun: “Do you want to play Monopoly with me?” Or, “Lots of young children like to play hide-and-seek.” When we talk about music, the verb “to play (something)” means to use a musical instrument to make music: “Ulysses knows how to play the saxophone.” Finally, the phrase “to play (something) down” means to act as if something isn’t as important as it really is: “Denise is playing down her knee injury, but it’s really very bad and she won’t be able to play volleyball again.”

thin

In this podcast, the word “thin” is used to describe people who are slender, skinny, or not overweight: “Jorge was very thin as a child, but he became heavier as an adult.” Or, “Cherise has a very long, thin face.” The word “thin” can also be used to describe objects that are long and have a very small width: “Please use this knife to cut the ham into thin slices.” Or, “Some suits are made from dark blue cloth with very thin gray lines.” Finally, the word “thin” can be used to describe a liquid that has a lot of water: “Panchita forgot to put potatoes and flour in the soup, so it was very thin.”



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CULTURE NOTE

In the United States, some clothing stores “specialize” (make themselves different from other stores) by selling clothes for people of specific sizes. These “specialty stores” are popular with people who have unusual sizes, because sometimes it’s hard for these people to find clothing that “fits” (is the right size for one’s body) at regular stores.

Some specialty stores are for “petites,” or women who are less than 5-feet 4-inches tall and have small bones. When petite women buy regular clothes, the pants and “sleeves” (the part of a shirt or dress that covers one’s arms) are too long. Petite clothing is made for shorter bodies. Most regular “department stores” (large stores that sell clothing and other things) have a “petite section,” but specialty stores offer better “selection” (the variety of what is sold).

Other specialty stores sell clothing in large sizes for people who weight more or are overweight and need clothes that are bigger. Some specialty stores sell “plus-size” (very large size) clothing and “lingerie” (underwear) for women. As Americans continue to get larger and larger, plus-size specialty stores are becoming more common.

Overweight men often shop at specialty stores that are called “big-and-tall” stores. These stores have men’s clothing for men who are overweight and/or very tall. Big-and-tall stores have clothing sizes that men can’t find in regular department stores. They also sometimes have shoes that fit men who have larger feet and who have difficulty finding shoes in regular shoe stores.

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



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COMPLETE TRANSCRIPT

Welcome to English as a Second Language Podcast number 305: Describing People’s Body Types.

This is English as a Second Language Podcast episode 305. I’m your host, Dr. Jeff McQuillan, coming to you from the Center for Educational Development in beautiful Los Angeles, California.

Visit our website at eslpod.com and download a Learning Guide for this episode that will help you learn English even faster. You get all of the vocabulary, definitions, additional cultural notes, additional explanations of vocabulary not on the audio part of this podcast, as well as a complete transcript of this episode. You can also visit our ESL Podcast Store, where we have some premium courses on business and daily-life English that we think you’ll be interested in.

This episode is called “Describing People’s Body Types,” describing their physical characteristics – what their body is like. Let’s get started.

[start of dialogue]

Remi: We need to get these costumes sorted out. I’m not sure we have ones that will fit each person in this play.

Bryan: Let’s see. We need a shirt for Hector. He’s broad-shouldered, so this one would be too small. Any luck finding one over there?

Remi: No, but I think I found a dress for Lee Ann. She’s petite and thin, and I hadn’t been able to find anything that would fit someone that slender. All of the other dresses are for women with either pear-shaped or hourglass figures.

Bryan: Okay, at least that’s some progress. What about Malcolm? Unlike his brother who is tall and skinny, he’s big and fat. How are we going to find one to fit him?

Remi: He’s not fat! He’s stocky. He is really muscular and not at all flabby. Oh, here’s a pair of pants that would fit Pierre. These are perfect, since he’s not long-legged like all of the other men.

Bryan: We’re actually doing pretty well, I think.

Remi: We just need a costume for you.



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Bryan: Me?! What do you mean? I’m not in this play.

Remi: Oh yes, you are. Ike dropped out, so they need a replacement and you’re the only one who isn’t already in the play.

Bryan: Oh, no. I thought I could avoid being in the play by volunteering to help with the costumes!

Remi: Sorry, but I don’t think you can get out of it this time.

[end of dialogue]

Our dialogue begins with Remi saying, “We need to get these costumes sorted out.” A “costume” (costume) is clothing that you wear to look like someone else. For example in a play, you might put on a costume for your “character,” the person you are “portraying,” or the person you are playing in that production. A “costume” could also be for Halloween, for example.

So, Remi and Bryan are talking about costumes, perhaps for a play, and Remi says, “We need to get these costumes sorted out.” To “sort out something,” or to “sort something out,” is a two-word phrasal verb that refers to organizing and grouping – putting together objects by similar characteristics, by the type. So, I may have 20 pieces of paper on my desk – actually, I have about 100 pieces of paper on my desk – I need to sort them out. I need to put papers related to the podcast in one place, papers related to my household bills in another place, papers related to my vacation in a third place; that’s to “sort something out.”

Remi says, “I’m not sure we have ones (costumes) that will fit (or be the right size for) each person in this play.” A “play” is a performance with live actors at a theater. “Play” has a couple of different meanings in English; take a look at our Learning Guide for some additional explanations.

Bryan says, “Let’s see. We need a shirt for Hector. He’s broad-shouldered, so this one would be too small.” To say a person is “broad (broad) -shouldered” means they have very wide shoulders – there’s a large distance between their two shoulders. American football players often are very broad-shouldered; they have lots of muscles – they’re big on the top. Bryan then asks Remi, “Any luck finding one over there?” When you say to someone “Any luck?” meaning have you been able to.

Remi says, “No, but I think I found a dress for Lee Ann. She’s petite and thin, and I hadn’t been able to find anything that would fit someone that slender.”



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These three words, “petite,” “thin,” and “slender” (slender) are similar. To be “petite” means to be small, usually short and thin. “Thin” is the opposite of “fat.” I am fat; my wife is thin – “petite.” Sometimes we say someone who is petite has “small bones.” To be “thin” means to be not fat, not overweight. It’s the same as “slender.” “Slender” is just another word for “thin.” Anyone can be “slender” or “thin”; “petite” usually describes a woman who is not only thin but is also somewhat short and small. The word “petite” comes from the French word meaning small, as do a lot of words in English – coming from the French.

Remi says, “All of the other dresses are for women with either pear-shaped or hourglass figures.” The word “figure” is used to describe the shape of your body. If you say to someone “She has a nice figure,” you mean she’s attractive. A “hourglass” or “pear-shaped” figure is a way of describing a woman’s body – two different kinds of shapes. To be “pear-shaped” means to be in the shape of a pear (the fruit), which means you have a woman who’s thin at top and a little wider at the hips. To be “hourglass” – to have an “hourglass” figure means that a woman has – how shall I say it – large breasts, a small waist, and large hips. So, an “hourglass” is something you use – people used to use many years ago to measure time. And it is often made of glass, and you put sand at the top, and then there’s a very small hole that goes into the part of the hourglass at the bottom. So, it’s wide, thin, and wide. An “hourglass” figure would be a woman who has that kind of shape – that kind of figure.

Bryan says, “Okay, at least that’s some progress,” meaning we are doing better now. “What about Malcolm?” he asks. “Unlike his brother (not like his brother) who is tall and skinny, he’s big and fat.” “Skinny” (skinny) is the same as “thin,” “slender” – not fat. “Skinny” isn’t a negative description, but it could be. You could say someone is “skinny” as a compliment – as a nice thing. But some people, for example a man, might find that to be a negative description – to be “skinny.” Bryan describes Malcolm as not skinny, someone who is “big and fat.”

Remi says, “He’s not fat! He’s stocky” (stocky). Someone who is “stocky” is short, but has a big body. Not overweight, just large muscles and bones; that would be someone who is “stocky.” It’s a neutral or positive description of someone, not a negative description. To be fat is certainly considered negative, even though many Americans are fat. Remi says that Malcolm is “muscular and not at all flabby.” To be “muscular” means to have big, strong muscles – like me and Arnold Schwarzenegger! To be “flabby” (flabby) means to be fat, to have a lot of extras fat, to be overweight. It’s something of an older word, but we still use it.



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Remi says, “Oh, here’s a pair of pants that would fit Pierre. These are perfect, since he’s not long-legged like all of the other men.” To be “long-legged” means to have long legs – legs that are longer as a percentage of your total height. So your legs are taller – or your legs are longer, rather, than what is considered normal.

Pierre is “not long-legged,” Remi says. Bryan then says, “We’re actually doing pretty well, I think.” Remi says, “We just need a costume for you,” Bryan. Bryan says, “Me?! What do you mean? I’m not in this play” – I’m not part of this play. Remi says, “Oh yes, you are” – you are part of the play. “Ike,” one of the other men “dropped out.” To “drop out” is a two-word verb meaning to decide not to do something. We often use that word in talking about high school students that don’t complete their education. They “drop out” of school – they leave school.

Well, one of the players “Ike dropped out, so they need a replacement.” A “replacement” is a substitute; it’s a person who takes the place of someone or something else. Bryan says, “Oh, no. I thought I could avoid being in the play by volunteering to help with the costumes!” He doesn’t want to be in the play, that’s why he’s working with the costumes.

Remi says, “Sorry, but I don’t think you can get out of it this time.” To “get out of” something is an idiom which means to have an excuse or a reason for not doing something; to find a good reason why you don’t have to do something

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

[start of dialogue]

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Bryan: Oh, no. I thought I could avoid being in the play by volunteering to help with the costumes!

Remi: Sorry, but I don’t think you can get out of it this time.

[end of dialogue]

The script for this podcast was written by 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.

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