



---

**ESL Podcast 312 – Different Work Styles**

---

**GLOSSARY**

**autonomy** – independence; ability and opportunity to work alone, without other people; the freedom to make one's own decisions

\* Many teenagers fight with their parents because they want more autonomy.

**self-directed** – under one's own control; able to make one's own decisions about what one will or won't do, and in what order; without control by other people

\* Megan is a self-directed learner and learned about biology on her own before she took a class in school.

**close** – tight; very involved in another person's activities, work, or life

\* Do you have a close relationship with your grandparents?

**supervision** – monitoring; being in control of and responsible for another person's work

\* Without supervision, Ed would spend the whole workday playing games on his computer.

**to slack off** – to not do what one is supposed to do; to not work hard; to play or be lazy when one should be working

\* Olga slacked off all semester, and now she has to study a lot if she wants to pass the final exam.

**apprehensive** – nervous and worried about something that will happen in the future

\* Sheila is apprehensive about going to Europe on vacation because she has never left the U.S. before.

**collaborative** – cooperative; with two or more people working well together

\* The presentation was a collaborative effort of the entire team.

**creative** – imaginative; with new and interesting ideas; not thinking like everyone else does

\* Melissa is a very creative artist who has new designs that are unlike anything else we've ever seen.

**adverse to risk** – uncomfortable doing something new because it might fail; afraid to take a chance

\* People who are adverse to risk can keep their money in the bank instead of investing it in the stock market.



---

## ESL Podcast 312 – Different Work Styles

---

**to challenge the status quo** – to do things that are unexpected; to not do what people expect one to do; to question why things are done a certain way and suggest new ways to do things

\* Ingot didn't like the way that things were done at work, so she decided to challenge the status quo and try her new system.

**resourceful** – using whatever one has to solve a problem or get work done

\* Henry is so resourceful that when his car broke, he was able to fix it by using a knife and some tape.

**follow-through** – the ability and willingness to do what one has said one would do; the ability and willingness to fulfill one's promises; the ability and willingness to continue working on something until it is finished

\* Franka has many good ideas, but her follow-through is terrible, so nothing ever happens.

**to fall through the cracks** – to be forgotten because one is concentrating on other things

\* Hansel is working two jobs and taking care of his children, so some less important things, like cleaning the house, are falling through the cracks.

**to exercise authority over (someone)** – to tell someone what he or she should or shouldn't do; to be the boss of someone

\* Benny tries to exercise authority over his younger sister, but she usually doesn't let him.

**to take charge** – to be in control of something; to lead something; to be responsible for something

\* Ever since Eddie took charge of the company, the workers have been much happier.

**to back off** – to become less controlling; to take less of a leadership role; to not be as involved in something; to give other people an opportunity to do something

\* I often help my children with their homework, but I need to learn to back off and let them do it themselves.

**you can't teach an old dog new tricks** – a phrase used to mean that it is difficult to teach an older person to do something differently, or that it is difficult to get an adult to change his or her habits

\* Violet has been asking her husband to put down the toilet seat for almost 15 years, but I guess you can't teach an old dog new tricks.



---

## ESL Podcast 312 – Different Work Styles

---

### COMPREHENSION QUESTIONS

1. How is this job different than his last job?
  - a) He has to work with other people.
  - b) He has to work alone.
  - c) He has to slack off.
  
2. Why do he and Delilah work well together?
  - a) Because they both like to exercise.
  - b) Because they respect each other.
  - c) Because they both like dog tricks.

---

### WHAT ELSE DOES IT MEAN?

#### **slack**

The phrase “to slack off,” in this podcast, means to play or be lazy when one should be working: “Oren doesn’t like working with Helen because she always slacks off and makes other people do all the work.” The word “slack” refers to something that is loose, or not tight: “The fishing line was still slack, so we knew that we hadn’t caught a fish yet.” Or, “The telephone cable is too slack and it’s almost touching the ground.” The word “slacks” means pants: “Should I wear these black slacks, or my gray ones?” The phrase “to cut (someone) some slack” means to not be so critical of someone: “Fiona always talks about the mistakes I make when playing piano. I’m doing the best I can, and I wish she would cut me some slack!”

#### **crack**

In this podcast, the phrase “to fall through the cracks” means to be forgotten because one is concentrating on other things: “I know you’re busy with work and school, but make sure that the bills you need to pay don’t fall through the cracks.” A “crack” is the space between two parts of something that has broken apart: “The house is old, and there are cracks in the ceiling.” The phrase “at the crack of dawn” means very early in the morning: “Xavier wakes up at the crack of dawn every morning to feed the chickens.” Finally, the phrase “to crack (somebody) up” means to make someone laugh very loudly or for a long time: “Renee told a very funny joke that cracked us up.”



---

**ESL Podcast 312 – Different Work Styles**

---

**CULTURE NOTE**

Americans have many different personalities, yet they need to learn to work together in an office environment. There are many different “terms” (special vocabulary words) used to talk about “work styles,” or the ways that people work. Some of these include “type A/B personalities,” “alpha males,” and “workaholics.”

Someone with a “type A personality” is a very “dedicated” (committed) worker who does not know how to relax. Type A personalities are “obsessed” (thinking about something all the time) with their work, are very worried about “sticking to their schedules” (doing things when they are supposed to be done), and are very competitive. In contrast, someone with a “type B personality” is more relaxed and friendly. Type B personalities are “easy-going” (things do not bother them very much) and they do not get “stressed out” (extremely worried and nervous) about their work. Obviously, these “characterizations” (ways of describing something) are “exaggerated” (made bigger than in real life), but most people can “identify with” (feel a connection to) either the type A or B personality.

“Alpha male” is a term used to describe a man who has a very powerful position at work, but is too “masculine,” or male. Alpha males are very “aggressive” (angry and always ready to fight with other people) and competitive. People generally do not like working with alpha males, but alpha males have powerful positions at work because they are very “effective” (good at getting things done) in the business world.

Finally, a “workaholic” is a person who is “addicted” (must have or do something to feel good) to his or her work. Workaholics often work 60, 70, or even more hours per week, even if it “hurts” (causes physical or emotional pain) for their families. When they are home, they are often thinking and worrying about their job.

---

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



## ESL Podcast 312 – Different Work Styles

---

### COMPLETE TRANSCRIPT

Welcome to English as a Second Language Podcast number 312: Different Work Styles.

This is English as a Second Language Podcast episode 312. I'm your host, Dr. Jeff McQuillan, coming to you from the Center for Educational Development in beautiful Los Angeles, California.

If you go to our website at [eslpod.com](http://eslpod.com), you can download a Learning Guide to this episode to improve your English even more. The Learning Guide contains all the vocabulary, definitions, sample sentences, additional definitions of words we use on the podcast, cultural notes, and a complete transcript of everything we say on this episode. We also have some other new, exciting parts of the website, so take a look at that if you haven't visited recently.

Our topic today is "Different Work Styles." We'll go over some vocabulary you can use to describe people's work habits and the sorts of things that they do at work in terms of the way (or the style or manner) in which they work. Let's get started.

[start of story]

Before I started my new job, I didn't know that I would be working so closely with another employee of the company. I was used to a lot of autonomy in my last job, and I have always been self-directed. I didn't need close supervision and the boss never had to worry about me slacking off. To tell the truth, I was a little apprehensive about working in a team after having had so much independence. To my surprise, though, I liked the collaborative environment and I think I actually do better work because of it.

Of the two of us, Delilah is the creative one. While I'm a little adverse to risk, Delilah is always challenging the status quo. She often has good ideas, and because I'm pretty resourceful, we often find a way to put those ideas to work. Delilah has great follow-through, too, and I never need to worry that things will fall through the cracks.

I think the key to our success in working together is that neither one of us tries to exercise authority over the other. We respect each other's abilities and we know when to take charge and when to back off. If you had told me a year ago that I would be working in a team environment and enjoying it, I would have told you



---

**ESL Podcast 312 – Different Work Styles**

---

that you were crazy. But I guess the old saying isn't true: You can teach an old dog new tricks.

[end of story]

Our story begins, "Before I started my new job, I didn't know that I would be working so closely with another employee of the company." To be "working closely" means that the two of you are doing many things together. "I was used to a lot of autonomy in my last job." "Autonomy" (autonomy) is the same as "independence," the ability or opportunity to work alone – without other people. "I like my autonomy," for example – I work alone or I do many things at my work alone.

In the story I say "I was used to a lot of autonomy (I was accustomed to a lot of autonomy) in my last job, and I have always been self-directed." Someone who is "self-directed" is someone who can make their own decisions about what they want to do or don't want to do; they can make their own decisions without control or advice from other people. I say that "I didn't need close supervision." "Close" here means tight, very involved with another person. For example, you could say, "Do you have a close relationship with your grandparents?" – do you know them very well, do you talk a lot, for example. "Supervision" is the same as "monitoring," looking after or looking at someone else's work to make sure they are doing it correctly. So, "close supervision" is when you have the boss who is always checking up on his or her employees.

I say that "I didn't need close supervision," and that "the boss never had to worry about me slacking off." To "slack (slack) off" (two words) is a phrasal verb that means not to do what you are supposed to do. You may be playing games; you may be spending your time on the Internet; you may be listening to ESL Podcast at work instead of working, that's to "slack off." Someone who likes to slack off – not to work when they are supposed to – is called a "slacker." The word "slack" has a couple of different meanings; take a look at our Learning Guide today for some additional explanations.

The story continues, "To tell you the truth (to be honest with you), I was a little apprehensive about working in a team after having had so much independence." To be "apprehensive" means to be nervous or worried about something that will happen in the future. "I'm apprehensive about my trip to Alaska" – I'm not sure what will happen. Probably, I will get very cold; that's what happens if you go to Alaska, especially in the wintertime. Well, "I was a little apprehensive about working in a team," since before I had a lot of independence – I was working on my own; I had autonomy. "To my surprise, though, I liked the collaborative



---

## ESL Podcast 312 – Different Work Styles

---

environment.” “Collaborative” means “cooperative,” when two, or three, or a small group of people work together on a project; they’re working together on something.

“Of the two of us (or between the two of us), Delilah is the creative one.” When we say someone is “creative,” we mean they’re imaginative; they have new and interesting ideas, they don’t think like everyone else does. I am not really a creative person; Lucy Tse is the creative one here at ESL Podcast!

I say then that “While I’m a little adverse to risk” – “while,” here, is the same as “although.” Although “I’m a little adverse (adverse) to risk,” that expression means uncomfortable doing something because it’s new, because you might fail. Someone who is “adverse to risk” is afraid to try new things, is afraid to take a chance at something new.

Although “I’m a little adverse to risk, Delilah is always challenging the status quo.” The “status quo” is the situation right now, as things are currently or presently. To “challenge the status quo” is to do things differently from the way they are being done now, or to question why we are doing things this way. Delilah “often has good ideas, and because I’m pretty resourceful, we often find a way to put those ideas to work.” Someone who is “resourceful” is someone who uses many different things to solve a problem or to get their work done. “Delilah has great follow-through, too.” “Follow-through” is the ability and willingness to do what you said you were going to do. I said I was going to record 4,000 podcasts this month, if I have good follow-through I will record 4,000 podcasts. I’ll probably die trying to do it, but to “have follow-through” is to fulfill your promises – to do something until it is finished.

“I never need to worry (with Delilah) that things will fall through the cracks.” The expression “to fall through the cracks” (cracks) means to be forgotten because you are concentrating or working on something else. I’m working on project A, and I forget about project B; things fall through the cracks – they don’t get done. The word “crack” has a couple of different meanings; take a look at our Learning Guide for additional explanations.

I end the story by saying, “I think the key (or the important cause) of our success in working together is that neither one of us tries to exercise authority over the other.” To “exercise authority over someone” means to tell someone what he or she should do or shouldn’t do; it’s to be the boss of someone else. Delilah and I “respect each other’s abilities and we know when to take charge and when to back off.” To “take charge” means to be in control of something, to lead something, to be responsible for something. To “back off” is another phrasal



---

## ESL Podcast 312 – Different Work Styles

---

verb (or two-word verb), it means to be less controlling – to not be as involved in something, that’s to “back off.” Sometimes people will use that expression if you have someone who is bothering you, or who keeps asking you questions about something that you don’t want to talk about. You may say to them, “Back off.” It would be something you would say only to your friend or family or your enemy, perhaps – if you have any enemies.

I say at the end, “If you had told me a year ago that I would be working in a team environment and enjoying it, I would have told you that you were crazy. But I guess the old saying is not true: You can teach an old dog new tricks.” There’s a traditional expression: “You can’t teach an old dog new tricks.” Many people teach their dogs to sit when they say “sit,” or to roll over, or to go and get a ball that you throw for them. To “teach an old dog new tricks” would mean to teach someone who is already very used to doing something in one way to do it another way. So the expression is “you can’t teach an old dog (like me) new tricks.” In the story I say that this isn’t true, that you can teach an old dog new tricks. Actually you can’t, but it’s the story that says that so I’ll say it!

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

[start of story]

Before I started my new job, I didn’t know that I would be working so closely with another employee of the company. I was used to a lot of autonomy in my last job, and I have always been self-directed. I didn’t need close supervision and the boss never had to worry about me slacking off. To tell the truth, I was a little apprehensive about working in a team after having had so much independence. To my surprise, though, I liked the collaborative environment and I think I actually do better work because of it.

Of the two of us, Delilah is the creative one. While I’m a little adverse to risk, Delilah is always challenging the status quo. She often has good ideas, and because I’m pretty resourceful, we often find a way to put those ideas to work. Delilah has great follow-through, too, and I never need to worry that things will fall through the cracks.

I think the key to our success in working together is that neither one of us tries to exercise authority over the other. We respect each other’s abilities and we know when to take charge and when to back off. If you had told me a year ago that I would be working in a team environment and enjoying it, I would have told you that you were crazy. But I guess the old saying isn’t true: You can teach an old dog new tricks.





**ESL Podcast 312 – Different Work Styles**

---

[end of story]

The script for this episode was written by Dr. Lucy Tse.

From Los Angeles, California, I'm Jeff McQuillan, your old dog, hoping that you'll come back for some new tricks next time on ESL Podcast.

English as a Second Language Podcast is written and produced by Dr. Lucy Tse, hosted by Dr. Jeff McQuillan. This podcast is copyright 2007.