



ESL Podcast 606 – Reading a Bus Schedule

GLOSSARY

bus schedule – written information about where buses go and stop, how often, and at what times

* According to this bus schedule, there isn't any bus service on Sundays.

route number – the number assigned to all buses that follow a certain path

* Route numbers 14, 28, and 59 pass by the university.

stop – a place where a bus stops for a short period of time to let passengers get on and off

* Start gathering your things. We'll get off at the next stop.

column – information printed vertically (not horizontally) in a table; words or numbers that are printed above and below each other (not side by side)

* This table of sales data has one column for sales in each of the past five years.

to work backwards – to solve a problem or answer a question by starting with the end result and using logic to find what must have been true at the beginning

* If we know we have \$360 in the cash register and we've made \$200 in sales so far today, then we can work backwards to figure out that we started the day with \$160 in the cash register.

starting point – where someone or something begins; the initial location or situation

* Yes, I'd be happy to give you directions to our store, but first I need to know where your starting point is. Will you be coming from the north or south?

directly – moving in a line that is as straight as possible between points A and B, without going to any other places

* Their kids are supposed to come home directly from school, but sometimes they stop at the candy store first.

transfer – a piece of paper that is given to a passenger by a bus driver and allows that passenger to get on another bus without paying for a certain period of time, usually a few hours

* If you ride the subway, be sure to get a transfer so that you can take a bus to your final destination without needing to pay again.



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to take (something) into account – to consider something; to include something as a factor in one’s decision

* When deciding whether you can afford to stay home with the kids, take into account all the added expenses of working outside the home, like transportation, professional clothing, dry cleaning, and lunches at restaurants.

peak – when something is busiest or most heavily used

* Many doctors’ offices experience peak call volume on Monday mornings, so they recommend that their patients call at other times if possible.

commuter – a person who is traveling between his or her home and workplace

* Ryan hates wasting time as a commuter, so he is looking for an apartment downtown so he can walk to and from the office.

bus pass – a small card or other piece of paper that allows one to ride the bus a certain number or an unlimited number of times during a certain period of time, often one month

* Since we ride the bus at least twice each day, it’s cheaper for us to buy a monthly bus pass than to pay for individual tickets.

exact change – coins and/or bills that add up to the price or cost of something, so that one does not need to receive any money in return

* Riding the bus costs \$1.90 and requires exact change, so if you only have two \$1 bills, there’s no way to get the extra \$0.10 back.

fare – the cost of riding a bus or some other form of transportation

* The city is going to increase bus fares to cover the rising cost of gas.

to board – to get on a bus, train, boat, or plane

* The flight is scheduled to leave at 3:45, so we should start boarding around 3:20.



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COMPREHENSION QUESTIONS

1. What would you find on a list of route numbers?
 - a) Information about how long it takes to go certain places.
 - b) Information about what the bus looks like.
 - c) Information about which buses go where.

2. What does Curt mean by saying, “mornings are peak times”?
 - a) More people ride the bus in the morning than at other times of day.
 - b) It costs more to ride the bus in the morning.
 - c) Buses come more frequently in the morning.

WHAT ELSE DOES IT MEAN?

peak

The word “peak,” in this podcast, means when something is busiest or most heavily used: “February is a peak month for florists, because many people buy flowers to celebrate Valentine’s Day.” Or, “Very hot weather causes a peak in energy demand because many businesses use powerful air conditioners.” As a noun, a “peak” is the top of a mountain: “Have you ever climbed to the peak of Mount Washington?” When something is “at its peak,” it is at its best, strongest, or highest: “When was the Roman Empire at its peak?” Finally, if someone “looks peaked,” he or she appears sick, tired, and very pale (without much color on their face): “Charlene was sick with the flu last week, and although she feels better now, she still looks peaked.”

board

In this podcast, the verb “to board” means to get on a bus, train, boat, or plane: “I’ve never seen such a long line of people waiting to board the train!” The verb “to board” can also mean to pay to live in a room in someone’s home: “If you need to make some extra money, consider having students board with you during the school year.” The phrase “to board (something) up” means to cover the windows and doors of a building with long pieces of wood so that no one can get in: “We were really surprised to see that they had boarded up the restaurant. Why did it go out of business?” Finally, a “board game” is a type of game played on a printed piece of heavy paper or cardboard: “Monopoly and Scrabble are Hal’s favorite board games.”



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CULTURE NOTE

People who ride buses, trains, and subways in the United States should be aware of the expected “etiquette” (polite ways of behaving).

Some of the rules of etiquette are written on the walls of the stops and vehicles. For example, many signs “remind” (help someone remember) people to “surrender” (give to someone else) their seat to “the elderly” (old people), “disabled” (handicapped; with physical problems) individuals, and pregnant women. Certain seats near the doors are usually “reserved for” (set aside for; intended for) these people, but if those seats are full, then people sitting anywhere in the bus should surrender their seat as needed.

Other signs remind people to “refrain from” (not do; avoid) eating, drinking, smoking, listening to loud music, talking loudly, or using a cell phone if it “disturbs” (annoys or troubles) other passengers. Animals are generally not allowed on buses, trains, and subways unless they are “service dogs” (dogs that help blind people).

One of the “unwritten” (not stated in writing, but generally understood) rules of etiquette is to leave empty seats between people whenever possible. For example, on a bus where seats are in “pairs” (groups of two), riders will generally sit alone in each row. As the bus continues to fill and there aren’t enough seats for everyone to sit alone, riders begin to sit next to “strangers” (unknown people), but this is almost never their first choice.

Another “unwritten” rule of etiquette on “public transportation” (transportation shared by many people) is to keep one’s “personal belongings” (the things one brings on a ride) near one’s body. It is important to keep jackets, bags, and packages out of the “aisle” (the area where people walk). It would also be “rude” (not polite; inappropriate) to place personal belongings on an empty seat in a full bus.

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



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COMPLETE TRANSCRIPT

Welcome to English as a Second Language Podcast number 606: Reading a Bus Schedule.

This is English as a Second Language Podcast episode 606. I'm your host, Dr. Jeff McQuillan, coming to you from the Center for Educational Development in beautiful Los Angeles, California.

Our website is eslpod.com. Go there to download a Learning Guide for this episode, an 8- to 10-page guide including a complete transcript of everything we say.

This episode is called "Reading a Bus Schedule." It's a dialogue between Louisa and Curt about how you read the "schedule," the information about places and times, for a bus. Let's get started.

[start of dialogue]

This was my first visit to McQuillanville. I wanted to avoid driving, so I decided to take the bus around the city. However, I was having some trouble figuring out the bus schedule.

Louisa: Excuse me, could you help me read this bus schedule?

Curt: I can try. Where do you want to go?

Louisa: I want to go downtown, but I'm not sure which bus to take.

Curt: Let me see that bus schedule. Here's a listing of the route numbers on the back of this schedule. Look for a bus that goes downtown.

Louisa: Oh, I see. That's great. Tomorrow, I want to arrive at the Podcast Museum at 10 a.m. when it opens. Which bus will I have to take?

Curt: Let me look at this bus schedule. That's simple. All you have to do is find the stop closest to the museum, then look down the column to find the arrival time of 10 a.m. or before, and work backwards to see what time that bus passes the stop at your starting point. Got it?



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Louisa: I think so, but I don't think there's a bus that goes directly from here to downtown.

Curt: In that case, it says on the schedule that you'll need to get a transfer from the driver of the first bus so you can ride for free on the second bus. Just take the additional time into account. Mornings are peak times, and according to this schedule, the buses run more frequently to accommodate commuters, so it shouldn't take you a lot longer. It also says here that you'll need to have a bus pass or exact change for the fare when you board.

Louisa: Thanks a lot for all the help. Do you know how much the fare is?

Curt: I have no idea. I've never ridden the bus before in McQuillanville.

Louisa: Then how do you know so much about riding the bus?

Curt: I can read.

[end of dialogue]

Louisa says that this is her first visit to McQuillanville. McQuillanville, of course, is one of the more beautiful places in the world; you should really visit! She says that she wanted to avoid driving during her visit, so she decided to take the bus, or ride the bus, around the city. She's going to use the bus to get from one place to another. "However," she says, "I was having some trouble (some difficulty) figuring out (or understanding) the bus schedule," which is the written information about where buses go, where they stop, how often they go, at what times, and so forth. Louisa asks someone on the street, someone she sees, she says, "Excuse me, could you help me read this bus schedule?" Curt says, the other person she's talking with, "I can try. Where do you want to go?" Louisa responds, "I want to go downtown," to the center, main part of the city, where most of the businesses are located in a typical city. "But," she says, "I'm not sure which bus to take."

Curt says, "Let me see that bus schedule. Here's a listing (here's a list) of the route numbers on the back of this schedule." A "route" is the streets that the bus drives. In your city, you will have buses that always go down Main Street, and then go down First Street, and then cross over to Lincoln Avenue, and so forth, and they go back and forth along those same streets. Each one of those routes is given, in U.S. cities, a number. The numbers depend on the city you are in; there isn't any consistent pattern across the United States. Every city has its



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own bus system. So, the “route number” is the number of the bus that tells you where that bus goes, and those are listed – those are printed on the back of the bus schedule. Curt says, “Look for a bus that goes downtown.” This is somewhat obvious advice, but Louisa is in the brightest, smartest person in the world it seems.

Louisa says, “Oh, I see. That’s great. Tomorrow, I want to arrive at the Podcast Museum at 10 a.m. (10 o’clock in the morning) when it opens.” The Podcast Museum is located in McQuillanville; it’s a museum with all the greatest podcasts represented. I think we are in the Podcast Museum! Louisa wants to go and see the museum, and she wants to be there at 10 o’clock a.m., or 10 o’clock in the morning. “Which bus will I have to take?”

Curt says, “Let me look at this bus schedule.” Again, this is something that Louisa could do if she were a little more intelligent. Curt says, “That’s simple. All you have to do (the only thing you have to do) is find the stop closest to the museum, then look down the column to find the arrival time of 10 a.m. or before.” Let’s stop there and go back. A “stop” is a place where the bus stops for a short period of time to allow passengers to get off the bus and get on the bus. In some cities the buses will stop at any corner where there is a person standing wanting to take the bus. But in most cities you have to go to a place that has a sign that says “bus stop,” and that is the only place you get on or, we would say, catch the bus.

So, Louisa has to look at a bus schedule. The bus stops, usually the streets where the bus stops, are listed on the schedule. She has to look down the column. A “column” is information that is printed vertically, up and down, not horizontally, side to side. A column is part of a table; the up and down parts of the table are called columns; the horizontal parts are called rows (rows). So, Louisa has to look at the column for the bus that she is interested in to find the arrival time, the time the bus will get there. She wants to get there before 10 a.m. Then, Curt says, she has to “work backwards,” meaning solve her problem or answer her question by starting from the result and using logic to get back to the beginning. So in this case, she has to see what time the bus goes past the stop where she is going to get on, her starting point. A “starting point” is where someone or something begins.

Curt then asks Louisa if she understands. He says, “Got it?” Louisa says, “I think so, but I don’t think there’s a bus that goes directly from here (from where she is standing) to downtown.” Curt says, “In that case (in that situation), it says on the schedule (it is printed on the schedule) that you’ll need to get a transfer



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from the driver of the first bus so you can ride for free on the second bus.” Louisa wants a bus that goes directly from where she is to downtown. “Directly” means going in as straight a line as possible between one point and the other without going to other places. If you are working and you say you are going to go directly to your house, you mean you’re not going to stop anywhere else. You’re going to leave your workplace and drive to your house in the fastest, most direct way possible.

Curt says that Louisa is going to have to get a “transfer,” which is a piece of paper that is given to a passenger by the bus driver. It allows the passenger to get on another bus without having to pay again, usually for a certain number of hours. For two or three hours they can use this transfer to ride another bus without having to pay extra. This allows people to take two or three buses without having to pay two or three times.

Curt says, “Just take the additional time into account.” “To take (something) into account” (account) means to consider something, to include something as part of your thinking when you are making a decision. In this case, Louisa has to take into account the extra or additional time it will take to get on one bus, get off, and then transfer, or get on, another bus. He says, “Mornings are peak times.” “Peak (peak) means when something is busiest, when it is most heavily used. In many doctors’ offices, Monday morning is a peak time; everyone who was sick over the weekend comes to the doctor’s office on Monday morning. That’s a peak time, a busy time.

Curt says, “according to this schedule, the buses run more frequently (in the mornings they run more often) to accommodate (to help) commuters.” A “commuter” (commuter) is someone who travels usually a long distance between their house and where they work. That’s a commuter. When I used work at the university I was a commuter; I would have to drive 45 minutes to an hour from my house to the university, and then, of course, to get back to my house it was another 45 minutes to an hour. That’s what a commuter does. Curt says it shouldn’t take you a lot longer in the morning because there are more buses in the morning.

Curt says the schedule says that you’ll need to have a bus pass or exact change for the fare when you board. A “bus pass” is a small card, typically, that you buy. It allows you to ride the bus either a certain number of times – 10 times, 20 times – or often it’s for an entire month or an entire week. You can use it as much as you want during that time. “Exact change” means the coins or paper money that equals the price or the cost of something so that the person is not going to get



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any money back. So, if you're buying something for \$1.50 and you give someone \$2.00 that is not exact change. Exact change would be one dollar and fifty cents. The bus drivers in the U.S. don't give you change; you have to have the exact amount of money. If you pay more money you will not get that extra money back. The "fare" (fare) is the cost of taking some form of transportation such as a bus or an airplane. We call the price you pay for your airplane ticket your airfare, that's the same idea. He says you'll need exact change for the fare when you board. To "board" (board) as a verb means to get on the bus or get on the train; we also use it for a boat or a plane. "The plane is now boarding," people are getting onto it. Both the word "board" and "peak" that we mentioned earlier have different meanings in English; take a look at our Learning Guide for some additional explanations.

Louisa says, "Thanks a lot for all the help. Do you know how much the fare is?" She wants to know the price of getting on the bus. Curt says, "I have no idea. I've never ridden the bus before in McQuillanville." Notice "ridden" is the past participle of "to ride." Louisa says, "Then how do you know so much about riding the bus?" Curt answers, "I can read." He knows about the bus because he can read and he read the bus schedule – something that we hope Louisa will be able to do some day!

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

[start of dialogue]

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[end of dialogue]

My starting point for every podcast is the wonderful scripts that are written by our own Dr. Lucy Tse. Thank you, Lucy!

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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