



ESL Podcast 658 – Judging a Contest

GLOSSARY

contest – a competition where people or submissions are judged and the one that is best is the winner

* You sing so well. Have you ever entered a singing contest?

entry – submission; something that one prepares and then officially gives to someone to participate in a contest or competition

* All contest entries are due by Friday at 5:00 p.m.

impartial – objective; fair; without a preference for a particular person or thing

* Sometimes teachers cover the students' names when they grade essays and tests so that they can be impartial.

panel of judges – a group of people who evaluate how good something is and then compare their evaluations to create one evaluation for the entire group

* If the judges all have similar information and experience, there shouldn't be too much disagreement when the panel of judges meets and makes its decision.

criterion – one factor used when evaluating the quality of something

* Your course grade will be based on three criteria: your attendance, your grade on the written essays, and your performance on the oral exam.

to score – to assign a number or letter to something to evaluate the quality of it and compare it to other things

* Why did you score the ice skater's performance so low?

scale – a range of values that can be assigned to evaluate the quality of something

* Please evaluate the workshop on a 5-point scale: 1 means you thought it was horrible and 5 means you thought it was fantastic.

to average out – to add a group of numbers and then divide that result by the number of items in the group

* Hei ate 5 candies, Seunjin ate 14, and Poi ate 2, which averages out to 7 candies per person.

clear winner – a person who has obviously won a contest or competition, being much better than the next person; a person who has won something with a much higher score than other people

* Vicky was the clear winner of the race. All the other runners were several minutes behind her.



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scorer – a person or entry that has been assigned a certain value or rating in a competition or contest

* Shamus is very intelligent, but he has always been a low scorer on standardized tests.

to vote on – for many people to each say which thing they prefer, and for the thing with the most supporters to win

* How many people voted on the ballot measure?

majority rules – a phrase used to mean that the person/thing receiving the most votes wins, or that the person/thing receiving more than 50% of the votes wins

* I wanted to have Thai food, but my wife and daughter wanted pizza, so we went to a pizza restaurant. Majority rules.

to disqualify – to determine that someone or something cannot participate in a contest or competition because it does not meet all the requirements

* Several swimmers were disqualified from the race for using steroids.

guideline – recommendations, rules, or instructions about how something should be done

* Read the guidelines in the owners manually carefully before you try to change the oil in your car.

to cull – to reduce the size of a group of things by taking away the weakest, poorest, or least appropriate things

* We received hundreds of applications for the job, but we culled them to eliminate the ones that had typos.

eligible – meeting the minimum requirements to have, do, or participate in something

* If a family of four in Wisconsin makes less than \$28,665, the children are eligible for free school lunches.

to have (one's) work cut out for (one) – to have a lot of work that one needs to do; to need to do a large project or a lot of work

* This garage hasn't been cleaned out in more than 10 years! We really have our work cut out for us.

you've got that right – a phrase use to show that one fully agrees with what another person has said

* - New homes are really expensive!
- You've got that right.



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COMPREHENSION QUESTIONS

1. Who would be part of an impartial panel of judges?
 - a) Powerful attorneys with experience in the courtroom.
 - b) Judges who are very well educated and experienced.
 - c) People who are objective and unbiased.

2. What did Adelia do with the entries that didn't meet the requirements?
 - a) She sent them back to the contest participants.
 - b) She separated them from the other entries.
 - c) She revised them as needed to make the eligible.

WHAT ELSE DOES IT MEAN?

contest

The word “contest,” in this podcast, means a competition where people or submissions are judged and the one that is best is the winner: “Are you participating in the website design contest?” A “popularity contest” is a situation where people vote for someone because they like him or her, but not necessarily because he or she is most qualified for the position: “Elections for student government in junior high school are really just a popularity contest.” As a verb, “to contest” means to disagree and argue against something: “They’ve decided to go to court to contest their landlord’s decision.” The phrase “to plead no contest” means that one will not try to defend oneself against an accusation in court: “When Joao got a parking ticket, he decided to plead no contest and just pay the fine.”

scale

In this podcast, the word “scale” means a range of values that can be assigned to evaluate the quality of something: “Reya and her girlfriends play a game where they decide how handsome men are on a ten-point scale.” A “scale” also refers to the size of something: “The scale of the problem is much more serious than we originally thought.” A “kitchen/bathroom scale” is a device used to determine how much something weighs: “I need a kitchen scale to weigh out 200 grams of sugar for this recipe.” Finally, when talking about a map, the “scale” is the ratio between the actual size of something and how big it is on the map: “This map has a 1:1200 scale.”



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CULTURE NOTE

Publishers Clearing House is a “direct marketing company” (a company that sells other companies’ products and services to individuals) that sells “discounted” (offered at a lower-than-usual price) magazine subscriptions to American “households” (groups of people living together in one home). Founded in 1953, it mails “offers” (opportunities to buy something) to households and, more recently, it also uses the Internet.

In 1967, Publishers Clearing House began organizing “sweepstakes,” which are contests where the winner is “selected randomly” (with all people having an equal likelihood of being chosen) from a large group of entries. The direct marketing offers informed people that they could enter the sweepstakes by “completing” (filling out) and returning a form in the envelope. Most people thought they also had to pay for a magazine subscription in order to be eligible, so the sweepstakes helped Publishers Clearing House increase sales.

In the United States, it is illegal to require someone to buy a product or service in order to participate in a sweepstakes. Publishers Clearing House got into trouble for “misleading” (not being clear, leading someone to the wrong idea or conclusion) and in 1994 it had to agree to change the ways it “promotes” (advertises; raises awareness about) its sweepstakes. Today, its materials contain statements like, “Buying Won’t Help You Win,” and “You Have Not Yet Won.”

The “top” (largest) prize is \$10 million, but the “odds” (likelihood; chance) of winning are currently 1 in 1.75 million. For the people who do win the sweepstakes, the Publishers Clearing House “Prize Patrol” (a group of people who award prizes) comes to their home and lets them know they have won. This is “captured” (filmed; recorded) by video cameras and shown on TV to promote Publishers Clearing House.

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



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COMPLETE TRANSCRIPT

Welcome to English as a Second Language Podcast number 658: Judging a Contest.

This is English as a Second Language Podcast episode 658. 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 that will help you improve your English – and make your teeth just a little bit whiter!

This episode is a dialogue between Omar and Adelia about judging a “contest,” or a competition. Let's get started.

[start of dialogue]

Adelia: When I created this writing contest, I had no idea that we would get so many entries.

Omar: Good thing you have an impartial panel of judges to help you select the winner.

Adelia: Yes, good thing. I'm really grateful to all of you for giving up your time to help.

Omar: What criteria are we using to score each of the entries?

Adelia: We're using a 10-point scale. Each of us will read an entry and give it a score. When we're all done, we'll average out those scores. Hopefully, there'll be a clear winner.

Omar: And if not?

Adelia: If there isn't, then we'll take the top scorers and vote on which is best. Majority rules.

Omar: Okay, but are there reasons for disqualifying an entry? For instance, what if somebody didn't follow the entry guidelines?



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Adelia: I've already culled the entries for the ones that don't meet the requirements. These are all eligible.

Omar: Okay, let's get started. We've got our work cut out for us.

Adelia: You've got that right.

[end of dialogue]

Adelia begins by saying to Omar, "When I created this writing contest, I had no idea that we would get so many entries." A "contest," as you probably know, is a competition where you have different people trying to become the winner – to get the top place. This word can be used in a number of different ways, some of which are found your Learning Guide for this episode. An "entry" (entry) is something that you prepare and then give to someone to be part of a contest; it's part of the competition. It can also be called a "submission," when you give something – "submit" something to someone.

Adelia says that she had no idea, meaning she didn't know; she was surprised that they got so many entries. This is, of course, people writing something for this writing contest. Omar said, "Good thing you have an impartial panel of judges to help you select the winner." "Good thing" is short for "it is a good thing (that you have an impartial panel of judges)." "To be impartial" (impartial) means to be fair, to be objective, not to favor this person over that person. The opposite of "impartial" is "partial." "I am partial to her and not to him." You want a "judge," someone making the decision about who is best, to be impartial, to be fair. A "panel of judges" is a group of people who decide how good something is, and then decide who is the best person.

Adelia says, "Yes, good thing (meaning yes, it is a good thing). I'm really grateful to all of you for giving up your time to help." She's thanking the panel of judges. Omar says, "What criteria are we using to score each of the entries?" "Criteria" is the plural of "criterion" (criterion). "Criterion" is a factor; it is one quality or characteristic that you use to judge the quality of something. "Criteria" (ending in "ia") is the plural and it refers to the qualities or characteristics that you use to judge something. So for example, your professor at the university might have different criteria for getting an A, a high score in his or her class. It might include coming to class every week, writing a paper, doing well on the exam, and so forth. "Score," here, is used as a verb, "to score," which in this context means to assign a number or letter to something to evaluate the quality of it. If you watch the Olympics you know that they give scores for the performances. In



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gymnastics, for example, you could get a 8.5 or a 9.6. These are scores; the judges are scoring each of the contestants – each of the athletes.

Adelia says, “We’re using a 10-point scale.” A “scale” is a range of numbers – of values that can be assigned to evaluate the quality of something. So for example, your teacher might judge you on a five-point scale. Five is excellent; four is, hmm, very good; three is not great; two is poor; and one is very poor. That would be a scale. This is a 10-point scale, 10 being the highest and 1 being the lowest, or 0. Adelia says, “Each of us will read an entry (read one of the essays, whatever was written), and give it a score. When we’re all done, we’ll average out each of these scores.” “To average out” means to add a group of numbers and then divide by the number of items in the group. So, if I give someone an 8 and you give them a 9 and the third judge gives them a 10, you can add those up and get 27, you divide that by 3 because there are 3 judges, and that gives you the average score of 9. That’s how you average out the scores. You could hear – just say “to average the scores,” but we tend to prepositions and other words to verbs in order to make it more difficult for other people to learn English! “Hopefully,” Adelia says, “there’ll be a clear winner.” A “clear” winner is someone who obviously won, it wasn’t even close; this person got the highest score and it was much higher than anyone else. That would be a clear winner.

Adelia hopes they’ll have a clear winner, but Omar says, “And if not?” meaning if there isn’t a clear winner. Adelia says, “If there isn’t, then we’ll take the top scorers (the people who got the highest scores) and vote on which is best.” “To vote on” means everyone says who they think should be the winner, and the person with the most votes wins. Adelia says, “Majority rules.” “Majority rules” means that anyone who gets 50 percent plus 1 wins the contest. Omar says, “Okay, but are there reasons for disqualifying an entry?” “To disqualify” is to determine that this person cannot participate in the contest because they perhaps did something wrong; they didn’t follow the rules. There’s some reason why they didn’t meet the requirements we might say, they would be disqualified. If you use certain drugs in...I don’t know...bowling – because you know those bowlers are all taking drugs, right? – then you may be disqualified if you’re taking, like, steroids or something. That’s to disqualify.

Omar says, “For instance, what if somebody didn’t follow the entry guidelines?” The “guidelines” are the rules, the instructions. Adelia says, “I’ve already culled the entries,” meaning I’ve already looked through them and got rid of the weak ones or the ones that don’t qualify. “I’ve already culled (culled) the entries for the ones that don’t meet the requirements (that are disqualified). These (the ones that she has) are all eligible.” “To be eligible” means that you have met the



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minimum requirements; you followed the rules; you are able to participate in something. There's an old expression, "an eligible bachelor." A "bachelor" is an unmarried man. "To be eligible" means that he is available to be someone you could marry; someone who doesn't have any other romantic relationships for example.

Omar says, "Okay, let's get started. We've got our work cut out for us." This expression, "to have your work cut out for you," means that you have a lot of work; you have many things you have to do, it's a big project. Some girlfriends try to change their boyfriends, try to change the way they look, dress, act, and so forth. We could say they have their work cut out for them; that's a very long job! Adelia says, "You've got that right." The expression here, said with that particular pronunciation – that intonation, "you got that right" – is used to show you agree with someone completely. You fully agree with that person, and that's what Adelia is saying to Omar.

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

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[end of dialogue]

I'm not impartial, but if you asked me who would be the clear winner in a podcast scriptwriting contest I would say, without a doubt, Dr. Lucy Tse. Thank you Lucy.

I'm Jeff McQuillan. From Los Angeles, California I thank you for listening. Come back and listen to us again here on ESL Podcast.

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