



ESL Podcast 692 – Recommending Someone for a Job

GLOSSARY

to put in a good word for (someone) – to say something good about another person; to recommend someone for an opportunity or position

* The committee is going to review my artwork tomorrow. Could you please put in a good word for me?

to stop by – to go somewhere for a short period of time, usually informally

* If you have time tomorrow afternoon, please stop by for a cup of coffee.

interview – a formal meeting where one person asks another person many questions to learn about his or her experience and knowledge and determine whether that person should be offered a certain position or opportunity

* During the interview, they'll probably ask you to identify your greatest strength and your greatest weakness.

sharp – precisely; exactly; at a specific time

* Blake promised to be there at 8:30 sharp, but he overslept and didn't arrive until almost 10:00.

to stick (one's) neck out – to take a risk; to give one's opinion or to do something even though it may have negative consequences and other people may not like it

* If I stick out my neck for you by saying that, you're going to have to do something nice for me, too.

to recommend – to say that someone should do (or not do) something based on one's opinion, knowledge, or experience

* If you want to eat some great pizza, I recommend the new restaurant on 42nd Street and Taylor Avenue.

to let (someone) down – to disappoint someone; to not meet someone's expectations, hopes, or standards

* Darla was supposed to finish the report by Tuesday afternoon, but she let us down when she didn't meet the deadline.

to put (one's) reputation on the line – to put one's reputation at risk; to do or say something that might change the way other people think about oneself

* I put my reputation on the line when I recommended that other people invest in your business. If your business fails, they'll never respect me again.



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a good fit – a match; something that is comfortable and convenient

* Cory has always liked big cities, so living in New York will be a good fit for him.

to afford to – to be able to do something because it does not present any problem

* They wanted to wait for Harvey, but ultimately they decided they couldn't afford to wait anymore and they left without him.

choosy – picky; having very high standards for selecting something; accepting only the very best; willing to take or have only things that meet all of one's high standards

* Lilian is so choosy! All these sweaters look fine to me, but she's still searching for the perfect one.

to suit (one's) talents – to make good use of one's strengths and interests; to be appropriate for and matching what one is qualified to do

* Sheila has always been good with numbers, so becoming an accountant or an engineer would probably suit her talents.

to mooch off (someone) – to take things for free from another person; to ask another person to provide money, food, shelter, clothing, or other things without offering to pay for them

* Wouldn't you be embarrassed to be mooching off your parents as a 33-year-old?

nursing home – a facility where elderly people live when they have medical problems and can no longer take care of themselves because they need a nurse or doctor to be present

* Gretl took care of her father-in-law for years, but they recently had to move him to a nursing home where he could receive specialized medical care.

insane asylum – a facility or medical institution that houses and treats people with severe mental or psychological problems

* In the old days, people with disabilities were sometimes placed in insane asylums.



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COMPREHENSION QUESTIONS

1. Why doesn't Judy think the job is a good fit?
 - a) Because she doesn't really want to work at the store.
 - b) Because she doesn't think it pays enough.
 - c) Because she doesn't want to work with Harry.

2. Why does Harry want Judy to find a job?
 - a) Because he thinks she's wasting her talents.
 - b) Because he's tired of paying for everything.
 - c) Because he thinks she'd be a great store employee.

WHAT ELSE DOES IT MEAN?

to stop by

The phrasal verb “to stop by,” in this podcast, means to go somewhere for a short period of time, usually informally: “Professor Samuels, may I stop by your office tomorrow to ask you some questions about the homework?” The phrase “to stop in” has the same meaning: “Could you please stop in the post office and buy some stamps on your way home?” The phrase “to stop over” means to have a layover, or to need to spend some time in an airport before getting on another airplane: “We have to stop over in Houston before we can fly on to Portland.” The phrase “to stop up” means to block something so that other things cannot move through it: “If you put all that food down the sink, you'll stop up the plumbing.”

sharp

In this podcast, the word “sharp” means precisely, exactly, or at a specific time: “Breakfast is at 7:30 sharp. If you're late, they won't serve you.” The word “sharp” also describes something with a very fine point or edge that can cut other things: “This knife is really sharp, so it cuts fruits and vegetables easily, but be careful not to cut your finger.” The word “sharp” can also describe something that bends or turns quickly: “To find our house, make a sharp turn after you pass the stoplight.” Finally, someone who has a “sharp tongue” criticizes people very strongly, or says bad things about other people: “We don't like spending time with Grandma Erma because she has a sharp tongue.”



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CULTURE NOTE

Acting as an Employment Reference

Many job applications ask the “applicant” (the person asking for a job) to submit a list of three “professional” (related to work, not personal life) “references,” or people whom they can speak with to learn additional information about the applicant. If the application reviewer is interested in learning more about a particular applicant after reviewing the application, he or she may contact one or more references.

Usually, the reviewer calls the reference or sends him or her an email message. First, the reviewer wants to “confirm” (make sure; verify) that the reference know the applicant and is familiar with his or her work. The reviewer may ask a few basic questions to confirm whether the information in the application is truthful. For example, the reviewer may ask the reference where the applicant studied to see whether the reference’s “response” (answer; reply) “matches” (is the same as) the information on the application.

Then, the reviewer typically asks questions about the applicant’s quality of work. The reviewer might ask whether the reference has been “pleased” (satisfied) with the applicant’s work in the past. Then the reviewer might ask the reference to comment on the applicants “strengths” (the things one does well) and “weaknesses” (the things one does not do well). References typically “comment on” (say something about; provide an opinion on) the applicant’s ability to work well with others as part of a team, or ability to work “independently” (without very much supervision).

The conversation usually ends with the reviewer asking whether the reference would recommend the applicant for the new job, as well as whether there is anything else the reviewer should know about the applicant.

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



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COMPLETE TRANSCRIPT

Welcome to English as a Second Language Podcast number 692:
Recommending Someone for a Job.

This is English as a Second Language Podcast episode 692. 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. Download the Learning Guide for this episode to help you improve your English faster than ever.

This episode is called "Recommending Someone for a Job." It's a dialogue between Harry and Judy. Let's get started.

[start of dialogue]

Harry: I've put in a good word for you with my boss. He said to stop by the store at 4:00 today and he'll interview you for the job.

Judy: Okay, I think I can make it around 4:00.

Harry: Not around 4:00. You need to be there at 4:00 sharp, got that? I'm sticking my neck out for you by recommending you for this job, so don't let me down.

Judy: All right, I'll be there. It's not like it's my idea to get a job at your store. I didn't ask you to put your reputation on the line. I don't think that job is a good fit for me.

Harry: You can't afford to be choosy. You need a job and you need it right now.

Judy: I'm not in a hurry. I want to find a job that really suits my talents.

Harry: I'm sick of you sleeping on my couch and mooching off me. By the time you find a job that suits your talents, I'll be in a nursing home – or an insane asylum!

[end of dialogue]

Our dialogue begins with Harry saying, "I've put in a good word for you with my boss." The expression "to put in a good word for (someone)" means to say



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something good about another person to a possible employer or someone who you are looking for a favor from or to get something from. More generally, it means to recommend someone for an opportunity or a position – “to put in a good word for someone.” “I will put in a good word for you with Dr. Lucy Tse, and maybe in our Café we’ll answer your question.” “I’ll put in a good word for you.” Harry says that his boss had to stop by the store at 4:00 today and he’ll interview you for the job. “To stop by” is a phrasal verb meaning to go somewhere for a short period of time. “Tomorrow, I will stop by your house and have a cup of coffee,” I won’t be there for hours and hours, just a short amount of time. Harry’s boss is going to stop by the store – we guess that Harry and Judy work in a store, or that at least Harry does – and the boss will “interview” Judy. He will have a formal meeting where he will ask questions to see if she is a good person for this job.

Judy says, “Okay, I think I can make it around 4:00.” When someone says “around 4:00” they mean approximately; maybe a few minutes before, maybe a few minutes after. Harry says, however, “Not around 4:00. You need to be here at 4:00 sharp, got that?” “Sharp” is here used to mean exactly, precisely, at a specific time. So when we’re talking about time, and you want to give someone an exact time, you might say, “I want you to leave at 8:45 sharp.” That means exactly at 8:45, not before, not after. Another way of saying this would be “on the dot.” “I want you here by 8:00 on the dot.” That’s exactly at 8:00.

Harry says, “I’m sticking my neck out for you.” “To stick your neck out for (someone)” means to take a risk, to perhaps say something or do something that could hurt you but it could also help you or, in this case, help someone else. “I’m going to stick my neck out for my brother and say that he will be here at 8:00.” If he isn’t here at 8:00 I might be in trouble, but I am going to take a risk; I’m going to stick my neck out for him. In general, you can use the expression not for “him,” but for yourself; you can just say, “I’m going to stick my neck and say that the capital of Spain is Madrid.” You’re saying I might be wrong; I’m taking a risk. If I’m wrong, I’m sure several thousand Spaniards will email me, so I’m sticking my neck out. Actually, I’m pretty sure Madrid is the capital of Spain!

So, Harry is sticking his neck out for Judy. How is he doing that? By recommending her for the job. “To recommend,” of course, means to say something that someone should do or not do based on or coming from your own opinions, knowledge, or experiences. Harry is sticking his neck out for Judy by recommending her for the job. “So,” he says, “don’t let me down.” “To let (someone) down,” or “to let down (someone),” is another phrasal verb meaning to disappoint someone, not to meet someone’s expectations.



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Judy says, “All right, I’ll be there. It’s not like it’s my idea to get a job at your store.” Notice that she introduces this sentence by saying “It’s not like.” That means that what you are saying is the opposite of what you think is true or you know to be true. “It’s not like it’s my idea to get a job at your store” means it is not Judy’s idea to get a job at Harry’s store. She says, “I didn’t ask you to put your reputation on the line.” “To put your reputation on the line” means to put your reputation at risk, to do something or say something that might change the way people think about you. “Reputation” is what other people think about you, their opinions of you. Judy says that she didn’t ask Harry to put his reputation on the line by recommending her. She says, in fact, “I don’t think that job is a good fit for me.” “To be a good fit” (fit) means to be a good match, when something is comfortable or convenient, when two people or a person and a situation seem to be matched for each other. “I like big cities, so living in Los Angeles is a good fit for me,” meaning I will be comfortable or happy because I like big cities, and Los Angeles is a big city.

Harry says to Judy, “You can’t afford to be choosy.” “To afford (afford) to do (something)” means to be able to do something because it does not present any problems for you. It could also mean to have enough money to do something: “I can’t afford to go to Las Vegas this weekend; I don’t have any money to lose.” “To afford to” can also mean something without money, and that’s the case in this example. Harry says to Judy, “You can’t afford to be choosy (choosy).” “To be choosy” means to be willing to take or have only the things that meet your very high standards or high expectations. Another word for this is “picky” (picky). Someone who is “choosy” doesn’t take the first thing they see, they wait until they get the best thing – the “best fit,” you could say, for their situation. Some men and women don’t get married as early as they used to nowadays; some people say that’s because they’re being too choosy – too picky, waiting for the perfect man or the perfect woman rather than someone they could grow to love. That’s some people’s opinion; not mine necessarily.

Harry says that Judy can’t afford to be choosy. “You need a job and you need it right now.” Judy says, “I’m not in a hurry. I want to find a job that really suits my talents.” “To suit (suit) your talents” means to make good use of your strengths and interests, to be something that matches your qualifications, what you are able to do.

Harry says, “I’m sick of you sleeping on my couch and mooching off me.” Now we understand why Harry wants Judy to get a job. Judy is staying at Harry’s apartment, and he says she is mooching off him. “To mooch (mooch) off (someone)” is an informal expression meaning to take things for free from another person, especially money, food, clothing, and not offering to pay them



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anything. Judy is mooching off Harry by staying at his apartment and not paying any money.

He says, “By the time you find a job that suits your talents, I’ll be in a nursing home – or an insane asylum!” Harry is saying that Judy is taking a long time to find a job, and if she waits until she finds the perfect job, one that suits her talents, Harry will be in a nursing home. A “nursing home” is a place where typically old people go because they have medical problems and they need a lot of extra care and help from doctors and nurses. It’s not a hospital; it’s a place where people live for a long time when they need extra help, especially medical help. An “insane asylum” is also called a “mental institution.” It’s a place where people who have mental problems or psychological problems go; it’s where crazy people go, to put it another way. There are lots of informal ways of talking about an insane asylum. Harry is suggesting that he will go crazy if he waits for Judy to find a job that suits her talents. So, he is pressuring her; he is trying to make her get a job so she can go somewhere else to live. I don’t blame Harry!

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

[start of dialogue]

Harry: I’ve put in a good word for you with my boss. He said to stop by the store at 4:00 today and he’ll interview you for the job.

Judy: Okay, I think I can make it around 4:00.

Harry: Not around 4:00. You need to be there at 4:00 sharp, got that? I’m sticking my neck out for you by recommending you for this job, so don’t let me down.

Judy: All right, I’ll be there. It’s not like it’s my idea to get a job at your store. I didn’t ask you to put your reputation on the line. I don’t think that job is a good fit for me.

Harry: You can’t afford to be choosy. You need a job and you need it right now.

Judy: I’m not in a hurry. I want to find a job that really suits my talents.

Harry: I’m sick of you sleeping on my couch and mooching off me. By the time you find a job that suits your talents, I’ll be in a nursing home – or an insane asylum!



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[end of dialogue]

Our scriptwriter never lets us down; that's because it's the one, the only, Dr. Lucy Tse.

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

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