



ESL Podcast 830 – Donating to a Thrift Store

GLOSSARY

thrift store – a store that sells used (not new) items, such as books, clothing, dishes, and furniture

* Yolanda bought a great dining table for just \$40 at the thrift store.

donation – something that is given to a nonprofit organization so that it can be used for some particular purpose, such as offering an educational program or helping the poor

* A little girl knocked on our door and asked if we would make a donation to help the library buy more books.

curtains – large pieces of fabric used to cover a window that can be opened or closed to let in more or less sunlight and to provide privacy

* We hung some really heavy curtains to keep the room warmer at night and lower our electricity bill.

to sit around – to be somewhere without any particular purpose and without doing anything, just taking up space

* Please don't leave the dirty dishes sitting around all day. At least put them in the dishwasher.

closet – a large cupboard built into the wall of a room with a door, used for storing clothing and other items

* Welcome to our home! May I hang your jacket in the front hall closet?

to let (something) go – to agree to be separated from something, possibly while giving something away or letting someone else take it; to no longer need to have something

* These textbooks were really useful when I was a student, but I haven't opened them in 10 years. It's time to let them go.

to toss – to get rid of something; to throw something away; to place something in the trash

* Once a month, Heather checks the expiration date on everything in the fridge and tosses food that isn't okay to eat.

sentimental value – the feeling of wanting to keep an object because of the memories one has of it, not because it is useful or worth a lot of money to other people

* These photographs have a lot of sentimental value, so Katy keeps them organized in special photo albums.



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attic – a large open area above the living areas in a home and below the roof, usually unfinished (without finished walls) and used for storage

* They're going to remodel their home and change the attic into a guest bedroom.

to put aside – to separate something from a group of similar items to designate it for some particular purpose

* The kids ate two cookies each and then put aside the rest for later.

spring cleaning – a period of time spent cleaning and organizing one's home once each year, traditionally in the springtime

* Liliana started her spring cleaning by dusting and disinfecting the light fixtures and light switches.

a good cause – a worthy purpose, such as helping the homeless or protecting endangered animals, often the focus of one or more nonprofit organizations

* Our organization is nonprofit, so we can't pay you very much money, but you'll have the satisfaction of knowing that you're working for a good cause.

tax deduction – an amount of money that one is allowed to subtract from the total amount of money that is taxed, so that one ends up paying less money

* In 2012, people whose medical expenses are more than 10% of their income can use those expenses as a tax deduction.

win-win – a situation that benefits both of the people involved; mutually beneficial

* Justine finally bought a car and Wayne found someone to buy his old Chevy, so it was a win-win.

to have a lot of life in (something) – to still be useful; to not be completely worn out

* Peeta has had those hiking boots for a few years, but they still have a lot of life in them.

to put (one's) foot down – to insist; to make a firm decision and not allow one to be persuaded otherwise

* It used to be easy to break the rules, but the new director has put her foot down and now there are no exceptions.

pack rat – a person who keeps everything and doesn't like to throw away or give away anything, even if it is no longer useful

* David used to be a pack rat, but then he got a job that required moving every two years, so he got rid of a lot of things.



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COMPREHENSION QUESTIONS

1. Why does Scott want to get rid of a lot of things?
 - a) Because they're moving to a smaller apartment.
 - b) Because he wants to make money by selling them.
 - c) Because they don't use them, but someone else could.

 2. Where are the bags of children's clothes?
 - a) In the top part of the house.
 - b) In the garage and storage shed.
 - c) In the nursery.
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WHAT ELSE DOES IT MEAN?

to sit around

The phrase "to sit around," in this podcast, means to be somewhere without any particular purpose and without doing anything, just taking up space: "Why are all these papers sitting around your office? If they were filed away, you'd be able to find them when you need them." The phrase "to be sitting pretty" means to be in a good and comfortable position: "Harvey has more experience and education than any of the other applicants, so he is sitting pretty for the interviews." The phrase "to sit on (one's) hands" means to not do anything or not take action when one should: "How long are the politicians going to sit on their hands? They need to find solutions to improve the economy now!"

to put aside

In this podcast, the phrase "to put aside" means to separate something from a group of similar items and to designate it for some particular purpose: "Let's put aside these magazines to read later when we have more free time." The phrase "to put aside (one's) differences" means to try to work with someone by agreeing to stop worrying about disagreements: "Sana and I haven't gotten along in the past, but it's time for us to put aside our differences and figure out how to make this project a success." The phrase "aside from" means except for or excluding: "Aside from having high blood pressure, Saida is very healthy." Finally, in theater, an "aside" is something said by an actor directly to the audience as if the other characters cannot hear it: "Throughout the play, the main character makes funny asides."



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CULTURE NOTE

Thrift Stores, Secondhand Stores, and Consignment Stores

“Thrift stores,” “secondhand stores,” and “consignment stores” are popular in the United States, especially in an “economic downturn” (a period of time when the economy is getting worse) when people do not have very much money to spend on new “goods” (products) in “retail stores” (stores that sell new goods).

In general, a “thrift store” is “run” (operated) by a nonprofit organization. People “donate” (give for free) their used goods to the thrift store. Employees “sort” (separate; categorize), clean, organize, and “price” (put prices on) useable items and display them in a store. Some thrift stores are “staffed by” (with employees) individuals who are “physically disabled” (having problems with their body) or “mentally impaired” (having problems with the mind), but who have been trained to perform specific jobs. The “proceeds” (money received from sales) are used to pay for the costs of the store, such as rent, electricity, and garbage services, and the “remainder” (what is left) is used for some charitable purpose. Some popular thrift stores use their profits to run job-creation programs, feed the homeless, help poor families, or “fund” (provide money for) “mission trips” (groups of people who go far away to tell people about their religion).

Most “secondhand stores” are for-profit businesses. The owners and their employees buy used goods at garage sales and other places. Then they “repair” (fix) and clean the items to sell them in their store. Prices in a secondhand store might be a little higher than in a thrift store, but the items are generally a little bit nicer.

Finally, a “consignment store” helps people make money by selling their used goods. For example, an individual can sell used items “on consignment,” so that he or she receives some percentage of the sale amount, “say” (perhaps) 40%, and the owner “retains” (keeps) the rest.

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



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COMPLETE TRANSCRIPT

Welcome to English as a Second Language Podcast number 830: Donating to a Thrift Store.

This is English as a Second Language Podcast episode 830. I'm your host, Dr. Jeff McQuillan, coming to you from the Center for Educational Development in beautiful Los Angeles, California – home of Hollywood, home of the Los Angeles Dodgers – my favorite baseball team.

This episode – like all of our episodes – has a Learning Guide. Go to eslpod.com for more information.

We're going to hear a dialogue between Scott and Nancy about giving things to something called a "thrift store" – a store that sells used things. Let's get started!

[start of dialogue]

Scott: That's the last bag. Help me put these into the truck. I want to get these to the thrift store before they stop taking donations for the day.

Nancy: Hold on! That bag has curtains in it.

Scott: I know they do. Those old curtains have been sitting around in the closet for 10 years. It's time to let them go.

Nancy: But what about this bag? These are the children's old baby clothes. You can't just toss these! They have such sentimental value.

Scott: You've kept a lot of the children's old clothes already, but we still have bags and bags of them in the attic.

Nancy: Yes, but they're so cute.

Scott: It's time to put aside sentiment and do some spring cleaning. After all, we're donating them to a good cause. Families visiting the thrift store can buy them for their own children. We get a tax deduction and our items get a new life. It's a win-win for everybody.

Nancy: I don't know about that. What?! You're not getting rid of those chairs, are you? They still have a lot of life in them.



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Scott: Our garage is so full of old furniture that we don't use. I'm putting my foot down. These have to go.

Nancy: But not those...

Scott: Yes, those and those and those. This is my punishment for marrying a pack rat!

[end of dialogue]

Scott begins by saying, "That's the last bag. Help me put these into the truck." A truck is a large vehicle like a car. Scott says, "I want to get these to the thrift store before they stop taking donations for the day." A "thrift (thrift) store" is a store that sells old things – by old I mean used. You might have a book or a pair of shoes or some dishes from your kitchen that you don't want anymore. Well, you can give them to this store – this thrift store – and they will sell them. Most of the thrift stores are owned by organizations – what we would call "charitable organizations." "Charitable" (charitable) means they're not trying to make money – these organizations, these charitable organizations – they're trying to help other people. And so, they get money by selling these old things that people give them to sell. And that's the next word we have here in the sentence – "donations." A "donation" (donation) is something you give to an organization so that it can be used to help that organization. In this case, the donations are the things that you give to the thrift store so they can sell it and get money.

Nancy says, "Hold on! Wait! That bag has curtains in it." "Curtains" (curtains) are large pieces of cloth or fabric that we use to cover a window so that no one can see inside of your house, or if you like to sleep until 10 o'clock in the morning, you want curtains to prevent the light from coming in. I don't sleep until 10 o'clock. I get up pretty early actually – usually around 6, 6:30 – not that early but pretty early. Scott says, "I know they do" - I know this bag contains curtains. "Those old curtains have been sitting around in the closet for 10 years." When we say something has been "sitting around" – that two-word phrasal verb means to be somewhere but not actually doing anything important. It's just taking up space. "We were sitting around in the living room, waiting for the baseball game to begin." We were sitting around. We weren't doing anything very important. You can have a book that's been sitting around your office for a year and you have not read it yet. It just sits there. It doesn't do anything important or you haven't done anything important with it.

Scott says that the curtains that he wants to give to the thrift store have been sitting "around" in the closet for ten years. Notice that even though "around" is a



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preposition, it's part of the two-word phrasal verb – “sitting around” or “to sit around” – so you can put another preposition to say where something has been sitting around. It's a little unusual. Well, Scott says, “These curtains have been sitting around in the closet (closet).” A “closet” is something that is usually built-in to the house. It's like this little room where you can put things to store them – to keep them. You can have a closet for your clothes in a bedroom or you could have a closet in your house to put other things like vacuum cleaners and old boxes and I don't know – things you use to clean the house. I don't clean the house. My wife usually cleans the house. I know, I know, I should help. I have other things I do. I cut the grass. I do the lawn outside so, I help, don't worry.

Anyway, Scott says, “It's time to let them go” – let the curtains go. “To let something go” means to agree not to have it anymore or to let someone else take it because you no longer need it or you no longer should have it. “He's going to let the curtains go.” Nancy says, “What about this bag? These are the children's old baby clothes.” Some people keep their children's clothes even after the children don't need them anymore. I don't know why. Anyway, Nancy has done this and she says, “You can't just toss these.” “To toss” (toss) means to throw something away – to get rid of something, to put something in the trash. Nancy says, these baby clothes have “sentimental value.” “They have such sentimental value,” she says. “Sentimental (sentimental) value” is the feeling of wanting to keep an object because it has certain special memories for you. It's not worth anything. It's not like a gold ring that you can sell but it has some sort of emotional feelings attached to it. You have some emotional memories associated with it. The first love note that your now-husband or wife gave you – that might be something that has sentimental value. It's not valuable because the piece of paper is valuable but what is associated with that piece of paper – what you have memories about.

Scott says, “You've kept a lot of the children's old clothes already. But we still have bags and bags of them in the attic.” The “attic” (attic) is the very top of the house. Many Americans live in houses that have more than one storey and even those that are just one storey – one level – usually, the house will have an attic. It will have a storage area at the very top. That's what Scott is referring to. People sometimes use the attic as a place to store things, to keep boxes, for example. Nancy says, “Yes, but they're so cute.” She doesn't want to get rid of her children's old clothes. Scott says, however, “It's time to put aside sentiment and do some spring cleaning. “To put aside” (aside) is a two-word phrasal verb, meaning to separate something from a group because you want to use it for some particular purpose. For example, “My mother makes ten cookies for us to eat. But she puts aside two of those for my father who hasn't come home yet.” Usually, my father wouldn't get any cookies if my mother gave them because we



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would eat them before he came. So, my mother would have to “put them aside.” She would have to remove them, put them in another place so that we wouldn’t eat them.

Scott says, “It’s time to put aside sentiment.” We need to not worry about or not have these sentimental values about things and do some “spring cleaning.” “Spring cleaning” is a time, usually during the spring of the year between the winter and the summer, when people go and they clean their house – they organize things, they get rid of things they don’t need any more. Scott says, “After all, we’re donating them to a good cause” – for a good purpose. “Families visiting the thrift store can buy them for their own children. We get a tax deduction and our items get a new life.” When you give money to a charitable organization in the United States – like a thrift store – you can take what’s called a “tax deduction.” You can take the value of that donation and use it to reduce the amount of taxes you owe at the end of the year. Scott says, “It’s a win-win for everybody.” A “win-win” (win) is a situation that benefits both people involved in the transaction – in the exchange. You get something, I get something – it’s win-win. This is an expression that started to be used in the business world – I don’t know, 20, 25 years ago.

Nancy says, “I don’t know about that.” I’m not sure. Then she says, “What? You’re not getting rid of those chairs are you? They still have a lot of life in them.” Now she sees that Scott is trying to donate some chairs. She says, “These chairs still have a lot of life in them,” meaning they’re still useful, we could still use them. Scott says, “Our garage is full of old furniture that we don’t use. I’m putting my foot down. These have to go.” “To put your foot down” means that you are insisting – you are saying, “This is my decision. I am not going to change it.” My wife said, “We’re going to the movies tonight” and I say, “No. I’m going to put my foot down. We’re not going to the movies.” Well, we, of course, went to the movies.

Scott says, “These have to go.” Nancy says, “But not those.” Scott says, “Yes, those and those and those.” He’s pointing to all of the things they have to donate to the thrift store. Scott says, “This is my punishment for marrying a “pack rat.” A “pack (pack) rat (rat)” is a person who likes to keep everything – who doesn’t throw anything away. Old clothes, old papers, old books – all of these things they keep. They don’t give them away, they don’t donate them, they don’t throw them away. They keep them. That’s what we call a “pack rat.”

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

[start of dialogue]



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[end of dialogue]

We hope for a few minutes every day, you can put aside your cares and worries and listen to the wonderful scripts by our wonderful script writer, 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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