



ESL Podcast 843 – Passing Through Airport Security

GLOSSARY

security – the process of checking travelers and their bags for dangerous objects

* Why did you wear so much metal jewelry if you knew you'd have to go through security?

hassle – a pain; something that is unpleasant and inconvenient

* Shopping around for the best price on a new computer can be a hassle, but it's worth it if you can save a few hundred dollars.

to be strip-searched – to be asked to take off some or all of one's clothes while someone with authority looks for drugs, weapons, or other objects that one might be hiding

* What percentage of criminals are strip-searched by the police when they are arrested?

screening – the process of looking over something, usually while searching for something that should not be included

* The doctors are screening young children for exposure to lead.

bin – a large bucket or container that is open on the top, especially with a square or rectangular shape

* Please put the dirty towels in this bin.

scanner – a machine or device that searches for something, especially by using a video camera

* The scanner beeps each time the cashier passes a product's UPC code over it.

liquid – something that is wet and spreads out to fill a container; not a solid or a gas

* If we don't get these containers of ice cream in a freezer soon, all we'll have are containers of liquid.

aerosol – a liquid that is "dispensed" (delivered) in a very fine spray by pressing a button on the top of a pressurized container

* Do you prefer aerosol hairspray or hairspray in a pump bottle?

gel – a thick, wet liquid

* Do you use gel or mousse on your hair?



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zip-top bag – a clear plastic bag that has a piece on top that moves in one direction to close the bag and in another direction to open the bag

* Please put the leftover soup in a zip-top bag and then put it in the freezer so we can eat it another day.

body scan – an image of a person's entire body taken by a machine that can "see" through one's clothing, used to look for hidden objects

* The body scan showed that the woman was holding a small bottle between her arm and her side.

to bombard – to attack; to do something repeatedly for a long time

* The reporters were bombarding the company's director with tough questions.

ray – x-ray; a signal that cannot be seen, heard, or felt, but that can be used to view an object or manipulate or change it in some way

* Make sure your sunscreen protects against UVA and UVB rays.

metal detector – a large machine that beeps if a piece of metal passes through it

* After the high school shooting last year, the school installed metal detectors in all the entrances to try to prevent anyone else from bringing a gun to school.

hijacker – a person who uses or "threatens" (warns that something will happen) violence to take control of a vehicle and frighten other people in order to try to get what he or she wants

* Nobody on the train was prepared for a hijacker.

terrorist – a person who uses violence to frighten other people in order to try to get what he or she wants

* The terrorists are blowing up apartment buildings without warning.

TSA – Transportation Security Administration; the part of the U.S government that protects the country's transportation systems so that people and "goods" (products) can move throughout the country

* Is the TSA doing enough to protect buses and trains?

a lamb to the slaughter – a phrase used to describe someone who is calmly and obediently doing something that will end in trouble, pain, or death, because he or she does not realize what is happening

* Those new interns don't have any idea how hard they're going to have to work this year. They're like lambs to the slaughter.



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COMPREHENSION QUESTIONS

1. What is a zip-top bag made out of?
 - a) Metal.
 - b) Plastic.
 - c) Paper.

2. Why is Natalie worried about the body scan?
 - a) Because she thinks it's an invasion of her privacy.
 - b) Because she thinks it will hurt.
 - c) Because she thinks it's dangerous.

WHAT ELSE DOES IT MEAN?

scanner

The word “scanner,” in this podcast, means a machine or device that searches for something, especially by using a video camera: “Put your finger on this scanner, and it will determine whether you are authorized to enter the room.” When talking about computers, a “scanner” is a piece of equipment that can create a digital or electronic version of the image or text on a piece of paper: “Please print out the contract, sign it, and then use a scanner to send an image of it back to me.” Finally, the verb “to scan” means to read something very quickly, looking for only the most important parts, but not reading every word: “Good students learn how to scan textbooks and quickly find the most important information.”

ray

In this podcast, the word “ray” means an x-ray, but more generally it means a signal that cannot be seen, heard, or felt, but that can be used to view an object or manipulate or change it in some way: “When Shawna was pregnant, she was worried that rays from the ultrasound would harm her baby.” The phrase “a ray of sunshine” describes someone or something that brings some happiness to someone in a difficult situation: “You’re just the ray of sunshine I needed!” Finally, the phrase “a ray of hope/light” describes someone or something who brings hope or positive feelings into a difficult situation: “Sales have been falling for the past year, but there is a ray of hope in our Austin office.”



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CULTURE NOTE

Trusted Traveler Program

People who travel “frequently” (often) spend a lot of time waiting in lines at security and “customs” (the place where bags are checked to make sure travelers are not bringing items not allowed into a country). Fortunately for them, “U.S Customs and Border Protection” has several “Trusted” (can be believed and relied on) Traveler Programs that help frequent travelers move through those lines more quickly.

For example, the “Global Entry” program lets travelers use “automated” (using machines, not humans) “kiosks” (small machines that are attached to the ground, usually inside a building) to avoid standing in long lines at customs. Travelers must be “pre-approved” (approved before their trip). This involves an “extensive” (thorough; involving a lot of time and details) “background check” (a review of one’s history, especially criminal history) and an interview.

The NEXUS program provides special documents to people who frequently cross the border between the United States and Canada. The SENTRI program gives special documents to people who frequently cross the border between the United States and Mexico. Like the Global Entry program, both programs require pre-approval of the travelers, but the effort involved allows the traveler to “expedite” (speed up) the process of crossing the border.

However, participating in these Trusted Traveler Programs is not a guarantee of faster entry. Customs officers and immigration officials can choose to ask program participants questions about their trip and search their bags just as they would for any other passenger. In addition, special travel documents can be “revoked” (taken back) at any time if the traveler “violates” (does not follow) the “terms and conditions” (rules) of the program.

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



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COMPLETE TRANSCRIPT

Welcome to English as a Second Language Podcast number 843: Passing Through Airport Security.

This is English as a Second Language Podcast episode 843. I'm your host, Dr. Jeff McQuillan, coming to you from the Center for Educational Development in beautiful Los Angeles, California.

Eslpod.com is our website. Go there to download a Learning Guide for this episode and become a member of ESL Podcast.

This episode is a dialog between Roland and Natalie about going to the airport and having to pass through or go through security. Let's get started.

[start of dialog]

Roland: Why are you so nervous about flying?

Natalie: I'm not nervous about being in the air. It's going through security. I hear it's a hassle and I don't want to end up being strip-searched.

Roland: You won't be strip-searched. All you need to do is to follow a few simple rules. When you get to security screening, put your carry-on bag and all metal objects in a bin so that it can go through the scanner.

Natalie: But I heard I couldn't bring any liquids with me.

Roland: You're only allowed three ounces of liquids, aerosols, or gels. Those should go inside a zip-top bag and be placed in a bin.

Natalie: Do I have to take off my shoes and get one of those body scans?

Roland: You don't have to take off your shoes, but you do have to get a body scan.

Natalie: I knew it! They're going to bombard me with harmful rays. And you wonder why I'm nervous about flying!

Roland: You won't be bombarded with any harmful rays. You walk through the metal detector and stand in front of the scanner. It's not dangerous.



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Natalie: Oh, why do they have to treat every passenger like a potential hijacker or terrorist? Do I look like a terrorist? I feel like walking through security with my hands up saying, “I am not a terrorist. I am not a terrorist.”

Roland: I wouldn’t do that if I were you. That’s a sure way to get the TSA’s attention. Just stay calm and follow the instructions.

Natalie: Just like a lamb to the slaughter?

[end of dialog]

Our dialog begins with Roland saying to Natalie, “Why are you so nervous about flying?” Why are you so anxious about going into an airplane? Natalie says, “I’m not nervous about being in the air.” I’m not worried about actually flying, she says. “It’s going through security.” “Security” (security) at an airport, or at some sort of public venue – that is, some sort of place where lots of different people go in and out of – is the process of checking people to make sure they don’t have anything dangerous. Especially in the last 10 years or so, in the United States, there has been a lot more airport security, where they check each person coming into the airport, each person who is flying, each passenger, for any sort of dangerous materials they may have. Obviously, this is in response to the attacks of 9/11.

Natalie says, “I hear it’s a hassle and I don’t want to end up being strip-searched.” Natalie has heard that it’s a “hassle” (hassle) to go through security at the airport. A “hassle” is a pain, something that is inconvenient, something that is unpleasant. “To be strip-searched” means they take all of your or most of your clothing off, and this is typically done when they are looking for drugs or something else that you might try to sneak on the airplane, to get onto the airplane without permission. Most security at airports in the United States, do not do strip-searches, at least not for the average passenger. “To strip” (strip) means to take your clothes off. The word is also used for women who take their clothes off slowly, for reasons of sexual entertainment, shall we say.

Roland says, “You won’t be strip-searched. All you need to do is to follow a few simple rules. When you get to security screening, put your carry-on bag and all metal objects in a bin.” So, Roland is saying it’s not that difficult. And he’s right. It really isn’t that difficult to go through security at an American airport if you understand a few simple things. Roland talks about “security screening” (screening). “Screening” is the process of looking something over very carefully, in this case, searching for things that should not be there. So, when you go into an American airport, there’ll be a long line of people waiting to go through the



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screening area. That's the place where the government officials or the airport security people look at you and make sure that you don't have anything you're not supposed to have.

Roland says, "When you get to security screening, put your carry-on bag and all metal objects in a bin." Your "carry-on bag" is the piece of luggage or baggage that you are taking with you in your hand. That's why it's called "carry-on," because you can carry it onto the plane. Metal objects would be keys, coins, anything made of metal. All of those have to go into a little bucket, a small container which is called a "bin" (bin). Actually, it's not that little. A bin is typically a large bucket but the bins at the airport are not huge. They're enough to put a small bag in, a few shoes, a computer, that sort of thing. When you go through an American airport now, they have to put those objects into a "scanner" (scanner). A "scanner" is the machine that looks for anything that should not be there. Basically, it's a kind of video camera that is looking at all of your stuff and seeing that there isn't any hidden objects, there aren't any hidden objects, there aren't any things that shouldn't be there.

Natalie says, "I heard I couldn't bring any liquids with me." "Liquids" (liquids) are things that are wet, things like water, soda – those are all liquids. Roland says, "You're only allowed three ounces of liquids, aerosols, or gels." So, you can bring small amounts of liquid, three ounces or less. You can also bring three ounces of aerosols or gels. "Aerosols" (aerosols) is liquid that is dispensed or delivered by pressing a little button on the top of a container. So, "hairspray," for example, might be an aerosol that you would bring with you. I always bring hairspray on the airplane with me. "Gels" (gels) are thick, wet liquids. Again, you might find these for hair. There are certain kinds of things that women put on their hair, and men, that are called "gels." It's kind of a very thick liquid. But it's not water. It's thicker than that.

Roland says, "Those should go inside a zip-top" – or a zip-lock – "bag and placed in a bin." A "zip (zip) – top (top) bag" is a clear plastic bag that has a little, what looks like a zipper on the top of it, so you can open and close it easily. A "zip-top bag" – and I call them "zip-lock bags," because there's a company that makes these kinds of bags called "zip-lock" (lock) at the end – "zip-top" or "zip-lock" bag is used to put your small containers of liquids into, before they go through the scanner. It's required that you take them out of your carry-on bags and put them into these little plastic bags so that the security people can see them.

Natalie says, "Do I have to take off my shoes and get one of those body scans?" In many American airports, it used to be required and I think it might still be – these rules change a lot – that you have to take your shoes off before you go



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through the security scanner. Now it's always the case, I think, that you have to do that. A "body scan" is an image of a person's entire body. Some airports in the United States, recently, here in 2012, have started to put these machines that scan the entire body. A lot of people don't like this. Basically, it's like an X-ray, a picture of your entire body that the security people can see. Roland says, "You don't have to take off your shoes but you do have to get a body scan." I've gone through the airport many times. Usually, here in Los Angeles, you have to take your shoes off and you often will get a body scan, not always, but many times.

Natalie says, "I knew it. They're going to bombard me with harmful rays." "To bombard (bombard) someone" means to, usually to attack them. It's a word we would use, for example, during a war, where one side is dropping bombs on the other side – "to bombard." But here, Natalie means she's just going to get a lot of something, in this case, a lot of harmful "rays" (rays). "Ray" here is referring to "X-rays," what a doctor would give you to see, for example, if you had broken a bone. "And you wonder why I'm nervous about flying," Natalie says. She doesn't want to get all of these harmful X-rays. Roland corrects her by saying, "You won't be bombarded with any harmful rays. You walk through a metal detector and stand in front of the scanner. It's not dangerous." A "metal detector" is the usual way that you are screened at an airport or somewhere. A metal detector just determines whether you have any metal on your body, such as a gun, for example. A "body scanner" actually takes a photograph of your entire body. Most airports have metal detectors, not body scanners, although a lot of the larger U.S airports now have body scanners and metal detectors. But Roland says these are not dangerous.

Natalie says, "Oh, why do they have to treat every passenger" – every person flying – "like a potential hijacker or terrorist?" A "hijacker" (hijacker) is a person who takes control of a plane illegally, usually to take that plane to a different place or to get money, or in the case of 9/11, to attack different buildings. That's a hijacker. You can hijack a plane, but you could also hijack a bus or even a car. It's to take control of something by force. A "terrorist" is a person who is involved in using violence to threaten or to scare other people in order to get them to do what he or she wants them to do.

Natalie says, "Do I look like a terrorist? I feel like walking through security with my hands up saying, 'I am not a terrorist. I am not a terrorist.'" Roland says, "I wouldn't do that if I were you." He's saying that's not a good idea. You don't want to make any jokes when you go through security even if you think they're funny. He says, "That's a sure way" – a certain way – "to get the TSA's attention." The TSA, here in the United States, is the Transportation Security Administration. It's



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the part of the U.S government that is now responsible for safety at our airports. Roland says, “Just stay calm and follow the instructions.”

Natalie says, “Just like a lamb to the slaughter?” This phrase, a “lamb,” which is a kind of an animal, “to the slaughter,” which is when you kill an animal, is used to describe someone who is calmly and obediently doing something that will end up in trouble, pain, or possibly even death, because they don’t realize what they are doing. The most common way of saying this is a “lamb led (led) to the slaughter” – someone is leading the, someone is taking them and they are going quietly and without any sort of protest to something that may be very harmful for them. Natalie, of course, is exaggerating here. Airport security really isn’t that bad in the United States. It’s not that bad of an experience, considering the benefits of having a system like what we have.

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

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[end of dialog]

Improving your English is never a hassle if you listen to the wonderful scripts by 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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