



**ESL Podcast 168 – The Home Improvement Store**

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**GLOSSARY**

**to need work** – has to be improved or made better

\* This house is big, but it is old and really needs work.

**to put off** – to delay, to wait

\* I've been putting off washing the car and I think it's time to do it.

**garage** – where you park or keep a car.

\* Please move the boxes out of the garage so I can park the car in it.

**home improvement store** – a store for buying things to fix or improve a home

\* The home improvement store is very crowded on Saturday morning.

**supplies** – necessary materials; things that you use to do something

\* I'm ready to go on the road trip as soon as I buy our food supplies.

**huge** – large, very big

\* Last year's tomatoes were big but this year's are huge!

**paint department** – a place in a store where paint is sold

\* The clerk in the paint department recommended a lighter color paint.

**garden center** – a place in a store where plants, trees, and flowers are sold

\* Go over to the garden center and get me some more plant food.

**lumber department** – a place in a store where wood is sold

\* Most of the lumber in the United States comes from the Pacific Northwest.

**no one in sight** – no one around, no one there

\* I was so late for my class that by the time I got to the classroom, there was no one in sight.

**plumbing** – the pipes that bring water to and from a house or building

\* For us to get hot water in this building, we'll need to replace the plumbing.



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**aisle** – the space you walk in between two other sections; a path between seats in an airplane, theater, or church

\* I walked up and down the aisle at the grocery store but I couldn't find the bread I normally buy.

**swatches** – a small color sample, usually for paint or fabric

\* The paint swatch I brought home matched my furniture perfectly.

**to take/call a number** – used at places where there are many people waiting for help. You are given a small piece of paper with a number, and you wait until your number is announced or "called."

\* I took a number in the meat department and my number was called after a few minutes.

**in the meantime** – meanwhile; the time when you are waiting for something

\* I'm waiting for my mother to come home. In the meantime, I'll watch some TV.

**brush** – something you use to put paint on a house or picture

\* We need some new brushes to paint the house.

**rags** – small pieces of cloth that are used to clean

\* Get me a rag so I can clean up the coffee I spilled on the table.

**checkout line** – the line you wait in at a store to purchase something, such as at a grocery store

\* The checkout lines at these big food stores are always so long.

**after all that** – used when someone takes a long time to say or do something, but very little is actually said or done; after waiting for a long time with no real results

\* You've been talking for 10 minutes. After all that, I thought you would have something important to say.

**to be exhausted** – to be very tired

\* I'm exhausted after working two weeks without a day off.



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**COMPREHENSION QUESTIONS**

1. What does the man need to paint his house?
    - a) garden supplies
    - b) a paint swatch
    - c) brushes and rags
  
  2. The man plans to paint the garage:
    - a) today.
    - b) next weekend.
    - c) when his wife tells him to, again.
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**WHAT ELSE DOES IT MEAN?**

**brush**

The word “brush,” used as a noun, can also mean the thing that you comb your hair with: “This new brush makes my hair look shiny.” “To brush” is also a verb with several different meanings. To brush your hair means to use a brush to straighten or fix your hair. (Note: The verb “to comb” is used more commonly with men, and “to brush” is used for both men and women.) To brush also means to touch lightly: “He brushed by me as he was walking out the door.” The use of brush here means that he touched me, but that it wasn't very hard.

**put off**

To “put off” can mean to delay, as it does in this podcast: “I put off going to the dentist.” There is another expression, “to be put off,” which means something very different. If you say, “I am really put off by him,” you mean that something that he does makes you dislike him. “She puts me off” means that the way she acts or the things she says makes me not like her.



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**CULTURE NOTE**

The “American dream” is to own your own house. Because of this, many people choose to live many miles from where they work in order to find a house that they can afford, sometimes living outside of the main city where they work. Houses are often less expensive if they are several miles from the main area of the city.

There is a tradition of home improvement in the U.S., where people spend a lot of time and money fixing their houses and keeping them in good condition. When there is a “boom” in real estate (that is, when the prices of houses are rising quickly), people often attempt to make improvements on their home to make them more valuable to sell.

Whether you are going to sell your house or plan to stay in it, there are several large stores that will sell you all of the materials or supplies you will need. Two of the most popular stores currently in the United States are called “Home Depot” and “Lowe's.” These are “warehouse” stores that are very large. They are sometimes called “big box” stores, because they are large, often square or rectangular buildings that look like big boxes or containers.

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



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**COMPLETE TRANSCRIPT**

Welcome to English as a Second Language Podcast Number 168, “The Home Improvement Store.”

This is English as a Second Language Podcast Episode 168. I'm your host, Dr. Jeff McQuillan coming to you from the Center for Educational Development in beautiful Los Angeles, California.

Before we start today's podcast, a reminder that we have an all new website. [www.eslpod.com](http://www.eslpod.com) has been completely redesigned and we now offer an exciting new service for those that want even more from ESL Podcast. You can sign up to get the complete transcript of our podcast, everything we say on the podcast, as well as lots of additional tips and information on English and the English expressions that we use in our podcasts each week. So, be sure to go to our website and take a look. You can also see a free sample of these new “Learning Guides” for each podcast so you can see exactly what exciting things we have to offer.

Today's podcast is called, “The Home Improvement Store.” A home improvement store is a place you go to buy things to fix your house. So, let's go!

<start of story>

When you own a house, there is always something that needs work. I've been putting off repainting the garage and I decided that I would do it this weekend.

I went to the home improvement store early in the morning to get the supplies I'd need. I walked into the huge store and began looking for the paint department. I walked through the garden center and the lumber department, but couldn't find the paint supplies. I tried to find a store employee to ask about it, but there was no one in sight. I walked down the plumbing aisles and finally found the paint department.

I looked at the paint swatches and found the color I wanted. I took a number to have my paint mixed. When my number was called, I gave the employee the swatch of the color I wanted and he told me he would call me again when it was ready. In the meantime, I got some brushes and rags. After about twenty minutes, the employee called my number and I picked up my paint. I took the



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paint and the other supplies and got into a checkout line.

After all that, I was exhausted. And I hadn't even started painting yet! Maybe I'll do that next weekend.

<end of story>

In this podcast, I go to the home improvement store. Again, that's a place where you can buy things to fix or change your house. I start the story by saying that when you own a house, there's always something that needs work. To “need work” means to need improving. We use this in lots of different context, for example, “This essay needs work.” It means it needs to be better; it needs to be improved. Or you can say, “Boy, his singing really needs work.” That's what people say about me. It means it can be a lot, lot better. It needs to be improved.

Well, a house always has something that needs work that you have to fix or change. I say that I've been putting off repainting the garage and I decided I would do it this weekend. To “put off” (two words) means to delay, to wait, to not do something now and decide to do it later. “I'm going to put off going to the dentist until I don't have any more teeth left. Then, I will go to the dentist” - not a good idea! Well, “to put off things” means to wait, to delay. Usually, we put off things that we don't like, that we don't want to do. “I'm putting off paying my taxes this year.” I don't want to pay my taxes. But, if I don't, the government will put me in jail, so I will pay them.

Well, in the story, I'm putting off repainting the garage. To “paint,” of course, means to put paint on a wall or--outside your house--to apply paint. The verb “to repaint,” means, of course, to paint again. So, for example, if you paint the outside of your house, a wooden house, and after a few years, the paint is going to start to come off. We would say it's going to start to “peel.” It means it starts to slowly come off the wood. Well, then, you have to put new paint on there. We have to repaint it. My garage needs to be repainted. This is true. If I took a picture of my garage, you would see it needs to be repainted. My wife has been asking me to do that, and I've been putting it off.

Well, I've finally decided to go to the home improvement store. And in the United States, there are several big home improvement stores that have lots of different things. Well, I went early in the morning to get the supplies I'd need. The “supplies” are all of the things that you need to do something, to perform something. Usually, these are tools or instruments or materials that you use to do



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something, to build something, for example. You can have art supplies, if you are painting someone's picture. You can get the supplies that you need; those are the paint and the paintbrush and so forth. Well, I went to a huge store. "Huge" - some people pronounce it "Uge," with the "H" almost not being pronounced...but, a "huge" store is, of course, a large store, a very large store.

I began by looking in the paint department. The different sections of a store are often called departments. A "department" is a section or a division of a store. We also have what are called "department stores." Those are stores that sell clothes and jewelry and shoes—all sorts of different things, beds, refrigerators. Those are called department stores because they have different departments, different sections. Well, in a home improvement store, they have different sections. We don't call it a department store, but it does have departments. And so I go to the paint department looking for - guess what? - paint. That's right.

I then walked through the garden center. The "garden center" is a place where you can buy plants and trees and bushes, things that you would put in a garden. A garden is usually what you have in the back of a house. Many houses in the United States have gardens in the back. Well, I walked through the garden center, and again, garden center is the same as garden department, and I also walked through the lumber department. The "lumber department" is where you buy wood if you're going to build something. Another word for wood is lumber. A person who works in cutting down trees used to be called a "lumberjack." But, lumber is just a general term for wood, wood that you use to build something. Well, I walked through the garden center and the lumber department, but I could not find the paint supplies. I tried to find a store employee [accent on last syllable] - or "employee" [accent on second syllable], either pronunciation is correct - to ask, but there was no one in sight. There was no one "in sight" (two words). When we say there was "no one in sight" we mean there is no one that I can see, there is no one in that area. This is actually pretty common in these home improvement stores; they're so big that when you go into them, it's very difficult to find an employee to help you. This is what we mean by no one in sight. There's no one you can see. "I went to the beach. It was raining, and there was no one in sight," means I couldn't see anyone; no one was there.

Well, I walked down the plumbing aisles and finally found the paint department. "Plumbing" refers to the pipes that bring water in and out of your house. They bring other things out of your house, too, but water is one thing they bring in. So, if you want to have water in your house, you have to have a "plumber," a person



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who will put the plumbing or the pipes in your house. And, of course, “pipes” are round, long things, usually made of metal or plastic that you can put water through. Well, that’s the plumbing department, but I used the word “aisles” here. An aisle is where you walk in between two different—usually in a store—two different shelves. A “shelf” - singular, “shelves” - plural, are where you put things that people can buy. And so, the aisle is a small path where you walk in between these two shelves that have all of the things that you are looking for, that you are going to buy.

Well, finally I find the paint department and I take a look at the paint swatches. A “swatch” is a little sample of, usually, either a color of paint or it could also be a swatch of cloth, of the material that you make clothes out of. A swatch is a small sample of something, usually, so you can see what the color is. If it’s a cloth, if it’s something that you make clothes out of, you can feel it as well as see the color. So, a paint swatch is, usually, it’s a little card, a little piece of paper, that has maybe 1 inch or maybe 2 inches, a square of 1 inch or 2 inches, that has the color, so you can see the color. You can take a paint swatch and you can hold it next to the wall that you are going to paint and you can see what the color would be.

Well, I looked at the paint swatches and I took a number to have my paint mixed. When you go to the home improvement stores and you want to buy some paint, and you want a particular color, usually, they have to make that color for you; they have to mix the paint. I say, “I take a number” and that means that they have, in many stores, little paper numbers or pieces of paper that have numbers on them, and you take one, and then you wait until they say your number. We would say, until they “call your number,” and then you can go up and they will help you. So, it’s a way of the store being able to help people in order. That is, the first people who gets there will get help first and the last people who get there will be helped last.

Well, I took a number and when my number was called - when they said my number, “Number 17!” - and then I go, “Oh, that’s me!” and I go up and I give them the little piece of paper that says “17” on it. Well, I gave the employee the swatch of the color I wanted and he told me he would call me again when it was ready. So, in the meantime, I got some brushes and rags. “In the meantime” (“meantime” – all one word) means while I was waiting, while something else was happening. “In the meantime” is when you are waiting for something else and so you decide to do something different while you are waiting. Well, while I was





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waiting, in the meantime, I got some brushes - and, of course, a “brush” is what you use to put the paint on the wall or on the house or on the garage. A “rag” is a small towel, a small piece of cloth that you use to clean things or to wipe up something that's dirty. After about twenty minutes then, the employee called my number, said, “This is ready.” I picked up my paint and I went to the checkout line. The “checkout line” is the place where you pay for something in a big store. Of course, there are always lots of people waiting, so we call it a checkout line.

Well, I end my story by saying, “After all of that, I was exhausted.” “After all of that” or you can say, “after all that” with no “of” (they both mean the same). That expression, “after all of that,” means after I have finished doing all of those things or after all of those things were completed, I was exhausted. To be “exhausted” means to be very, very tired. And because I'm very tired, I decide that I will actually start painting next week. Of course, what I am doing is putting it off again.

Now let's listen to the story this time at a native rate of speech.

<start of story>

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<end of story>



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The script for our podcast was written by Dr. Lucy Tse. That's all we have time for today. Remember, if you have suggestions or ideas about ESL Podcast, be sure to e-mail us at [eslpod@eslpod.com](mailto:eslpod@eslpod.com). From Los Angeles, California, I'm Jeff McQuillan. Thanks for listening. We'll see you next time on ESL Podcast.

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