



ESL Podcast 171 – Buying a Used Car

GLOSSARY

used car – an automobile that is not new, usually one being sold to another person

* She's worried about buying a used car from someone she doesn't know.

reliable – dependable; someone or something that you can have confidence in or rely upon

* I need someone reliable for this important job.

just the thing – useful or well-suited

* My sister made me some soup when I was sick, which was just the thing to make me feel better.

low miles – a car that has not been driven very much; a car that has been driven very few miles

* I don't drive this car very often so it has low miles.

good condition – something without any serious problems

* We were surprised to find the house in good condition after the bad storm.

fell off the back of a truck – used to describe something that has been stolen or taken illegally and then is sold to someone else

* The price on that watch is great, but suspect that it fell off the back of a truck.

interior – the inside of something, such as a car, house, or airplane

* It's a nice house, but the interior needs a lot of work.

power windows/doors – windows that you can open and close in a car by pushing a button instead of rolling it up and down with your hand; doors that can be locked by pressing a button that locks all of the doors in the car

* The power windows and doors are standard features on this car.

gas mileage – the number of miles you can drive for each gallon of gasoline in your car; usually described as "miles per gallon"

* With these high gas prices, cars with poor gas mileage cost drivers a lot of money.



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a steal – to pay a very low price for something
* I got this sofa on sale. It was a steal!

a lemon – something that has serious problems, often problems you don't discover until after you have bought it
* He promised me that it wasn't a lemon and said that if it doesn't work, I can return it.

to steer (someone) wrong – to give someone bad advice about something
* My best friend really steered me wrong when he told me that his sister was interested in me.

it won't hurt to – to do something that you aren't very interested in, but that does not require very much time or effort
* We're not really interested in their product, but it won't hurt to meet with the sales team to hear what they have to say.

test drive – to drive a car before you buy it to see if you like it
* This is a very expensive car. I want to test drive it a few times before making a decision.

You won't be sorry. – you will be happy with your decision; used when you are trying to convince someone that the decision you want them to make is a good one
* I want you to meet Danielle. You won't be sorry. She's beautiful and smart.

We'll see about that. – I have my doubts, so I will wait to see what happens in the future; also can mean that you do not like what someone is doing and are going to try to change or influence what happens next
* He called and said that he was too tired to come to work today. We'll see about that!



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COMPREHENSION QUESTIONS

1. Why is Samantha not sure about buying a used car from Terry's brother?
 - a) She and Terry's brother used to be boyfriend and girlfriend.
 - b) Terry tells her that his brother is not reliable.
 - c) She thinks that Terry's brother tried to sell her a stolen radio.

 2. Samantha decides to:
 - a) test drive the used car.
 - b) buy it from Terry now before someone else buys it.
 - c) buy a new car instead.
-

WHAT ELSE DOES IT MEAN?

just the thing

The phrase "just the thing" in this podcast means something useful or well-suited: "I know just the thing to make this party special." The phrase "the thing" also has several other meanings. We use it to refer to something that is difficult to name or when we can't remember what it is called: "Where is the thing we use to open the wine bottle?" (It's called a "cork screw.") The phrase "the thing" is also used to mean something that is fashionable or very popular: "This year, the thing to do for fun is sky diving."

good condition

In this podcast, the phrase "good condition" means that something is in good shape: "Even after wearing and washing these pants for a year, they are still in good condition." We can also use this phrase to describe a person's physical condition: "He is now in good condition, six months after the accident." Or, "She has been exercising a lot and is in good condition for the race." Another, even more common, phrase we use to describe a person's physical fitness is "shape." "He is still in great shape at the age of 70" means that he is very healthy and in good physical condition.



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CULTURE NOTE

Many U.S. cities do not have good public transportation systems. They do not have the subways, buses, and trains that are often found in other countries. This means that owning a car is essential or very important to most Americans. More than 90% of all American families own at least one car. Even those who do not make very much money usually have a car.

Since cars are very popular among people of all levels of income, you will often see cars in very poor condition. Those with lower incomes will often buy older cars, sometimes 10 or 15 years old. Each state regulates or controls car ownership and sets the rules for what your car must have so that you can drive it. Most states require, for example, that you test your car every few years to see that it is not polluting. This is called a “smog check.” “Smog” is another word for pollution (actually, a combination of “smoke” and “fog”), and “to check” means to investigate or look at. In order to renew your car’s permission to drive, you need to have your car checked.

However, these checks do not include the other parts of a car, such as the doors or windows or paint. The police will sometimes give a ticket or a fine to someone who has something missing from their car (such as headlights), but this does not happen very often. For this reason you will often see cars that need to be repaired but that are being driven. Of course, there are also many rich Americans who drive the newest cars available.

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



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COMPLETE TRANSCRIPT

Welcome to English as a Second Language Podcast Number 171, “Buying a Used Car.”

This is English as a Second Language Podcast Number 171. I'm your host, Dr. Jeff McQuillan, coming to you from the Center for Educational Development in beautiful Los Angeles, California.

Today's podcast is about buying a used or an older car. Let's get started.

<start of story>
(phone rings...)

Samantha: Hello.

Terry: Hey, Samantha. It's Terry.

Samantha: Oh, hi Terry. How's it going?

Terry: Not bad. Hey, the reason I'm calling is that I heard from Veronica that you're looking for a used car.

Samantha: Yeah, I'm hoping to find something reliable but cheap.

Terry: Well, I have just the thing for you. My brother has a 2001 Ford he's trying to sell. It has low miles, it's in good condition, and he's in a hurry to sell it.

Samantha: Your brother, huh? That's not the same brother who tried to sell me a stereo system that fell off the back of a truck, is it?

Terry: No, no, no. That's a different brother. Listen, this is a really nice car. It has a leather interior, power windows and doors, gets great gas mileage, and the tires are practically new. And, it's a steal at \$7,000.

Samantha: How do I know it's not a lemon? I don't want to end up with a piece of junk.



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Terry: Come on. Would I steer you wrong?

Samantha: Well, it won't hurt to go see it and to give it a test drive.

Terry: Trust me. You won't be sorry.

Samantha: We'll see about that.
<end of story>

We listened to a dialogue between Samantha and Terry about buying a used car. "Used" is the opposite of new. And here, a used car would be a car someone else bought first and is now selling again. Samantha says, "Hello" and Terry says, "Hey Samantha. It's Terry" - identifies himself. Samantha says, "Oh, hi Terry. How's it going?" - how are you doing? Terry says, "Not bad. Hey, the reason I'm calling is that I heard from Veronica that you're looking for a used car." He begins by saying, "the reason I'm calling is..." So of course, to tell Samantha why he is calling at that time; he had heard from Veronica, a friend, that Samantha is looking for a used car. And Samantha says, "Yeah, I'm hoping to find something reliable but cheap." To be "reliable" means that you can rely on it, that you can depend on it. Reliable and dependable mean the same, basically. It means it's something that you don't have to worry about, it's not going to break down on you. She's also looking for a car that is "cheap." And, of course cheap means not expensive, not very much money.

Terry says to Samantha, "Well, I have just the thing for you." This is sort of a... kind of a common expression, but it's also sort of a joke. "I have just the thing for you" would be something that a salesperson, for example, might say to someone - a salesperson that you might not trust, that you might think is dishonest. It's an old expression and so when people use it now, they use it sometimes to make a joke. "I have just the thing for you." Literally, this expression means...or actually, this expression means I have the perfect thing for you. When someone says I have just the thing for you, I have the perfect one, the one that is right for you.

Well Terry says that his brother has a 2001 Ford. And, notice we say "a 2001 Ford," meaning a car made in 2001. Ford, of course, is a famous American car. And, he has a Ford or a 2001 Ford he's trying to sell. Terry says the car "has low miles, it's in good condition, and he's in a hurry to sell it." When we say a car has "low miles," we mean that it has not been driven very much; it may only have 10,000 or 20,000 or 30,000 miles on it, meaning it's been only driven that



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amount. Which means, it should be “in good condition,” which is the second thing that Terry says, that the car is “in good condition.” When we say something’s in good condition, we mean that everything is working, that there are no problems with it, that it’s not going to break. His brother is “in a hurry to sell it.” And, of course, to be “in a hurry” means that you want something to happen right away.

Well, Samantha says, “Your brother, huh?” Notice the use of the word, “huh?” It’s indicating here that she is not so sure, that she doesn’t necessarily trust his brother. And we use that sometimes when we are trying to tell the other person that you’re not sure, you don’t trust what they are saying or you don’t trust this particular person. So, if someone says, “Hey, I want you to meet my friend. He’s tall and he’s handsome, and I think you will fall in love with him.” And a girl says, “Your friend, huh?” - meaning she’s not really sure, she doubts that this person is as good as he says. Well, Samantha says, “Your brother, huh? That’s not the same brother who tried to sell me a stereo system that fell off the back of a truck, is it?” - meaning, is this the same brother who tried to sell me something, get me to buy something earlier; in this case, it was a stereo system. And a stereo system would be a radio with speakers, CD player, and so forth. This stereo system, Samantha says, “fell off the back of a truck.” When we say something “fell off the back of a truck,” this is an informal expression to mean that it was stolen, that someone stole it and is now trying to sell it again or sell it to make money. It’s sort of a humorous expression, sort of a joke, to say, “It fell off the back of a truck.” The idea is that a truck would be driving down the road and one of the boxes might come out of the truck and someone would find the box in the street and go, “Oh, look, a brand new stereo!” Well, of course, that doesn’t happen. And that’s what Samantha is suggesting: that maybe this car, like the stereo, is stolen, that someone had stolen the car and is now trying to sell it.

Terry says, “No, no, no. That’s a different brother” - meaning, he has a dishonest brother who steals things, but this is a different brother. Then he says, “Listen, this is a really nice car.” And, of course, “listen,” is a way of getting someone’s attention, particularly in an informal setting. You say, “listen,” means pay attention to what I’m going to say. “This is a really nice car.” he says. “It has a leather interior.” “Interior” is the inside of a car. And when someone says they have a leather interior in their car, it means that the seats, for example, are made out of leather, that they have leather coverings on them. The other type of interior you could have would be a “cloth interior,” where the seat is not made out of leather, it’s made out of something else.



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The car also has power windows and doors. To say something has “power windows” means that they are automatic, they’re electric. You don’t have to put the window up by hand or lock each door by hand. You can just press a button and they all lock. Most cars have power windows and doors nowadays, although my car a few years ago did not. But that’s another story. Well, this car also gets great gas mileage. “Mileage” is how many miles you get per gallon. And to have good or great gas mileage means that the car runs many miles on one gallon of gas. For each gallon of gas, you get 30 miles, or 35 miles, or 40 miles. That would be great gas mileage. Most cars get about 20, 25. If you drive a big car, a big truck, you may only get 10 or 15 miles per gallon. That would be very poor gas mileage. Well, this car has great gas mileage and the tires are practically new. When we say the tires are “practically new,” we mean they’re almost new; they’re not exactly new, but they’re not very old, either. That’s the use of the word “practically” - it means “almost” here.

Terry says that “it’s a steal at \$7,000.” “It’s a steal” means that it’s a very, very good price, it’s one of the lowest prices you will find. Someone says, “Oh, that’s a steal.” That means it’s almost like you are stealing it, you are taking it from someone, it’s such a low price. Terry says that it’s a steal and Samantha says, “How do I know it’s not a lemon?” “A lemon” is a car that doesn’t work; a lemon is a car that has lots of serious problems. A “lemon,” of course, is a fruit, right, that you can eat, but here, when we say, “that car is a lemon,” we mean it’s a car that has lots of problems, that you should not buy it. Samantha says, “She doesn’t want to end up with a piece of junk.” Of course, “junk” is like garbage, something you would throw away. Terry says, “Come on. Would I steer you wrong?” That expression, “Come on” means the same as “don’t joke with me” or “take me seriously.” We might also say something like, “Be serious, come on” - means the other person is saying something that is not reasonable, that isn’t fair. Terry says, “Come on. Would I steer you wrong?” “To steer someone wrong” means to influence them in a way that they would make a bad decision or they would make a wrong decision. To “steer,” literally, means to direct, usually a car or some sort of moving vehicle, like a plane or a train or a bus: “to steer” it means to direct it. So that when you get into the car, if you’re the driver, in front of you is the “steering wheel” – and it’s a round wheel that you use to steer, to move the car left or right, or to keep the car going straight. Well, that’s the verb, “to steer,” here that we’re using. But the expression “to steer” someone wrong means to direct them or to influence them in a way that would end up being a bad situation for them.



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Samantha says, “Well, it won't hurt to go see it and to give it a test drive.” The expression, “it won't hurt (to do something)” means that she's not excited about doing it, but there's no problem in her doing it, she's not committing herself. She's saying it would be okay for me to do that. She wants to go and give it a “test drive.” A test drive is when you are thinking about buying a car, you go and you drive it first for maybe 10 minutes, or 20 minutes, or 30 minutes to see if you like it before you buy it. That's a test drive. Terry says, “Trust me. You won't be sorry.” When someone says, “You won't be sorry” means that they are trying to get you to do something and they're telling you that if you agree to do something, you will be happy. You won't be sorry, you won't be sad. Samantha says, “We'll see about that,” meaning, she doesn't quite believe him; she's going to wait and see. “We'll see about that” - she has doubts about whether this is a good car, in this case.

Well, now let's listen to the dialogue, this time at a native rate of speech.

<start of story>
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The script today was written by Dr. Lucy Tse. Remember to visit our website at eslpod.com. You can now get a Learning Guide, an 8-10 page Learning Guide you can download, with a complete transcript of everything we say on this podcast, as well as with additional help for your English.

From Los Angeles, California, I am Jeff McQuillan. Thanks for listening. We'll see you next time on ESLPodcast.

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