



## ESL Podcast 174 – A Potluck

---

### GLOSSARY

**block party** – a neighborhood party, often with food, games, and music

\* Nearly all of the neighbors came to the block party this year.

**cocktail party** – a party where people wear formal clothes and drinks and snacks are served

\* This year, the company cocktail party will be at a downtown hotel.

**guest list** – a list of all the people invited to a party or event

\* There are 30 people on our guest list, but only 20 are coming.

**to attend** – to go to an event, such as a party or a concert

\* Will you be attending the opening of the new museum?

**invitations** – letters or cards given to people to ask them to come to a party or event

\* Don't forget to put the address of the party on the invitations.

**potluck** – a type of party where each person brings a different food item, drink, or serving item (like plates or cups) for everyone to share

\* I'm a terrible cook so I always bring drinks to a potluck.

**RSVP** – to tell the person having a party or event that you can attend, you will come to the event

\* The last day to RSVP for the wedding reception is this Friday.

**main dish** – the biggest part of the meal; usually there is a salad or soup to start, then the main dish, then dessert

\* For a main dish, I'd like the steak and potatoes.

**chips and dip** – small snacks usually at parties; chips are things like potato chips and corn chips; dip is the thick sauce that you put the chips into before you eat it

\* I ate so much of the chips and dip at the party that I wasn't hungry for dinner that night.



## ESL Podcast 174 – A Potluck

---

**dessert** – a sweet dish served at the end of a meal

\* Would you like ice cream or chocolate cake for dessert?

**BYOB** – stands for “Bring Your Own Beverage;” each person brings their own drinks to a party or event

\* Since the party is a BYOB, we’re bringing some beer and wine.

**soda** – a sweet drink, such as Coca-Cola and 7-Up

\* Could you please order me a sandwich and a soda?

**paper plates and cups** – plates and cups made out of paper that you can throw away after using them: usually used for informal meals or meals eaten outside

\* I’m glad we used paper plates and cups so we don’t have to wash dishes.

**plastic utensils** – these are knives, forks, and spoons you throw away after using them

\* I packed a picnic for us to eat in the park, but I forgot to bring the plastic utensils so we’ll have to eat with our hands.

**to have (something) under control** – to be sure you can manage a situation; to not worry because you know you can do something

\* We have the project under control and will definitely finish it on time.

**There’s a first time for everything!** – an expression, a joke meaning that this is the first time I have succeeded or completed something

\* I finished doing my taxes a month early. There’s a first time for everything!



## ESL Podcast 174 – A Potluck

---

### COMPREHENSION QUESTIONS

1. The party is a potluck, so
  - a) Susan will make all of the food for the party.
  - b) each person will bring something to share.
  - c) anyone who comes to the party will have a lot of luck.
  
2. Mike didn't ask Bree to help him plan the party because
  - a) the last time he asked her to help, Bree didn't do any work.
  - b) she may turn the block party into a more formal event.
  - c) Bree is in another town visiting her son.

---

### WHAT ELSE DOES IT MEAN?

#### **block**

The word “block” in “block party” in this podcast means the distance between two streets: “I walked six blocks to get to the train station.” The word “block” can also be used as a verb to mean to prevent or to stop a movement: “The government blocked our plans to build a park in this neighborhood.” Or, “The ship blocked the river so the boats couldn't get through.”

#### **dip**

In this podcast, the word “dip” in the phrase “chips and dip” means a thick sauce that you put other things into before eating: “For a snack, I like to have carrots with ranch dip.” “Dip,” as a verb, can mean to go down, usually before coming back up: “The company profits took a dip before rebounding last month.” Or, “The temperature dipped to 0 degrees last night.” As a noun, it can also mean a brief swim: “I'm going to take a dip before getting dressed for dinner.” Or, “It's too cold to take a dip in the ocean in the early morning.”



## ESL Podcast 174 – A Potluck

---

### CULTURE NOTE

A block party is a large celebration held in a neighborhood where everyone is invited and comes together to share food, drinks, music, and entertainment. A block is the distance between two streets. Block parties get their name because everyone who lives on a certain “block,” or part of the street, is invited to the party.

Block parties are usually held to celebrate something, like a holiday or a certain season. Summer is a popular time to have block parties because the weather is nice and block parties are usually held outside on the street. Block parties can also be held when someone new comes to a neighborhood so the new neighbors can meet everyone all at the same time.

Block parties became popular in the United States in the 1970’s. They are still popular today, and they are held in many neighborhoods, both in the cities and in the suburbs, the neighborhoods outside of the cities. Common activities at block parties include barbecues (cooking meat on a grill), games for children and adults, listening to music, and social drinking.

---

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



## ESL Podcast 174 – A Potluck

---

### COMPLETE TRANSCRIPT

You're listening to English as a Second Language Podcast Number 174, "A Potluck."

This is English as a Second Language Podcast Episode 174. I'm your host Dr. Jeff McQuillan coming to you from the Center for Educational Development in beautiful Los Angeles, California. Be sure to look at the Learning Guide for today's podcast. It has a complete transcript of our podcast, definitions, additional vocabulary, additional sample sentences, culture notes, and more. So, go to our website at [www.eslpod.com](http://www.eslpod.com) for more information.

Today's podcast is about a potluck dinner. Let's eat!

[start of story]

Mike: Thanks a lot for agreeing to help me plan the block party.

Susan: Oh, I'm happy to help. I'm surprised you didn't ask Bree. She's so good at planning parties.

Mike: I thought about it, but I was afraid she would turn it into a cocktail party or something.

Susan: Yeah, I see what you mean. Well, I made a guest list to see how many people may be attending. We can put the invitations in their mailboxes this weekend. It will be a potluck, so I'm asking people to RSVP and to let me know what they plan to bring.

Mike: What kind of things do we need?

Susan: Well, I'm asking people to bring a main dish, chips and dip, or dessert. It won't be a BYOB like last year, so Lynette and Edie are bringing some soda. I can supply the paper plates and cups, and the plastic utensils.

Mike: That's great. It sounds like you have everything under control.

Susan: I really can't believe it. There's a first time for everything.

[end of story]



## ESL Podcast 174 – A Potluck

---

Today's podcast is about a potluck. A “potluck,” all one word, is a party or a dinner where everyone brings something different. So, instead of one person cooking all the food, each person that goes to the party brings, we would say, brings a dish, that is brings some food for other people in the party to eat. So, that's a potluck dinner or a potluck party.

Well, this is a block party that we heard about in today's dialogue. A “block party,” two words, is a party where people who live in the same area, on the same block have a picnic or a dinner. We would say they have a get together, a get together. A “get together” is a noun which means a meeting when people come together for a party informally. Well, a block party is for people who live in the same area. A block you may know is the space between two streets, and most blocks in the United States are square so there's a street on each side, and the houses of course are on each side of the street. Well, a block party is usually neighbors that get together usually - maybe 10, maybe 15 houses, families, will come together for a party. Sometimes the block party is even bigger for some neighborhoods.

Well, Mike starts the dialogue by saying to Susan, “Thanks a lot for agreeing to help me plan the block party.” And Susan says, “Oh, I’m happy to help.” I’m, it’s my pleasure, I, I like helping. She says, “I’m surprised you didn’t ask Bree. She’s so good at planning parties.” “I’m surprised you didn’t ask.” “I’m surprised that you didn’t ask” - means the same thing. In English, we sometimes don’t put a “that” in between the two parts or clauses of the sentence. So Susan says, “I’m surprised you didn’t ask Bree” - another neighbor. “She’s so good at planning parties.” Mike says, “I thought about it, but I was afraid she would turn it into a cocktail party or something.” The expression “to turn into” means to change something. So, in this case, Mike wants an informal party but he’s afraid that if he asked Bree to help him she would change it, she would turn the party into a cocktail party. A “cocktail,” all one word. A cocktail party is a party that is more formal. A cocktail, as a noun, is a drink, an alcoholic drink. So, someone who has a cocktail party is having a more formal type of party, and block parties are always informal. So, that’s why Mike didn’t want to ask Bree to help him.

Susan says, “Yeah I see what you mean,” I understand what you are saying. “I see what you mean.” “Well, I made a guest list to see how many people may be attending.” A “guest list,” two words, is, of course, a list of names of the people who will be guests at the party. Your guest is the person or people who are



## ESL Podcast 174 – A Potluck

---

coming to your house or to your party. Well, she, Susan made a guest list because she wanted to know how many people were going to be there or were going to be attending. “To attend” as a verb means to go somewhere, to be part of something, to join a meeting. Or, “to go to a dinner” is to attend the dinner. You can attend the sporting game. You can attend the World Cup soccer match. Those, anything that’s an event, anything that’s a meeting or organization, group of people. You can use this verb “to attend.”

Well, Susan goes on to say that, “We can put the invitations in their mailboxes this weekend.” And, an invitation is a piece of paper that says to the person “you are invited to our party.” “Invitation” comes from the verb “to invite,” to ask someone, to come to your event, or your party. Susan is suggesting that they put these invitations in the mailboxes, the place where you get your mail outside of your house or your apartment. She says, “It will be a potluck, so I’m asking people to RSVP and to let me know what they plan to bring.” Well, we already know a potluck is a dinner, a party where everyone brings something to eat but, of course, you don’t want everyone bringing the same thing. So, usually when you have a potluck dinner or a potluck party, you ask people what they are going to bring so you can tell them if we already have too many people bringing potato chips, or too many people bringing salad or pizza, or whatever it is.

Susan is going to ask people to RSVP. “RSVP” we use as verb. It actually is a, a French phrase. RSVP stands for, “Repondez, s’il vous plait.” I apologize, my French is, is terrible but when someone says I’m going to ask people to RSVP, they mean, you, they’re going to ask them to call or to e-mail and let them know if they are going to go or not. So, many invitations, especially more formal invitations but even for informal parties, it will often say at the bottom of the piece of paper of the invitation, “please RSVP to Susan,” and gives Susan’s telephone number, or I guess nowadays we would give an email address or maybe a, a, a Skype address, I’m not sure.

Well, Mike says, “What kind of things do we need?,” what do we need to ask people to bring to our party? And, Susan says that they need to bring a lot of beer. No, no she doesn’t say that. Susan says, “Well, I’m asking people to bring a main dish, chips and dip, or dessert.” A “main dish” is food that is for the main part, or main course of the meal. Different parts of the meal are called “courses.” So, a main dish would be the main thing that you are going to be eating at the potluck party. “Chips and dip” are potato chips, for example, and dip is what you put the potato chip into. You can also have corn chips and salsa - very popular in



## ESL Podcast 174 – A Potluck

---

the United States, especially in California, to have a tomato salsa, which is a tomato dip. And, people also have here guacamole, and “guacamole” is, like salsa, a Spanish food from Latin America and it is...uses avocados, the fruit, the green fruit avocado, and that is another type of dip. So, lots of possibilities, different types of potato chips and dip, and corn chips. Dessert is what you eat after the meal, usually something sweet.

Susan says that, “It won’t be a BYOB like last year.” It won’t be a BYOB. “BYOB” stands for “bring your own bottle,” and bottle usually means a bottle of alcohol or a bottle of wine. So, BYOB means that you have to bring what you want to drink. Usually, people have soda, and soda, also called soda pop, is things like Coca-Cola and Pepsi and 7-Up. Those are all types of soda. So, this is not a BYOB, and if it is a BYOB, it will say on the invitation, “BYOB” and everyone knows that means they have to bring their own alcohol, usually, but at least their own drinks. So, Susan says it won’t be that way.

“So Lynette and Edie are bringing some soda. I can supply the paper plates and cups,” Susan says. “To supply,” in this case means “I can bring,” I can bring those things for the rest of the group. Usually, we use that verb “to supply” when we’re talking about a lot of people, a large group of people. She says, “I can supply the paper plates.” “Plates,” you know, is what you eat off of. “Paper plates” are plates made of, let’s see, paper. “Cups” are, of course, what you drink out of, and there are paper cups you can buy. Very popular at parties, especially informal parties, for people to have paper plates and paper cups so that nobody has to wash the dishes later. They also have plastic utensils. “Utensils” are the knives, the forks, and the spoons. The things that you eat with are called utensils. Plastic utensils are knives, forks, and spoons that are made out of plastic, and so you can throw them away at the end of the party.

Mike says, “That’s great. It sounds like you have everything under control.” The expression “to have everything under control” means that you have everything taken care of. You have thought of everything and everything is going well. Someone says to you, “You have everything under control, don’t you?” And you say, “Of course, I do.” Susan says, “I really can’t believe it. There’s a first time for everything.” When she says “I really can’t believe it,” she means that she can’t believe that she has everything under control. Everything has been planned and taken care of. She then makes a joke about herself. “There’s a first time for everything,” meaning that even if it has not happened in the past, it could happen





**ESL Podcast 174 – A Potluck**

---

in the future. And that is what she has going on for her. She has everything for the first time under control.

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

[start of story]

Mike: Thanks a lot for agreeing to help me plan the block party.

Susan: Oh, I'm happy to help. I'm surprised you didn't ask Bree. She's so good at planning parties.

Mike: I thought about it, but I was afraid she would turn it into a cocktail party or something.

Susan: Yeah, I see what you mean. Well, I made a guest list to see how many people may be attending. We can put the invitations in their mailboxes this weekend. It will be a potluck, so I'm asking people to RSVP and to let me know what they plan to bring.

Mike: What kind of things do we need?

Susan: Well, I'm asking people to bring a main dish, chips and dip, or dessert. It won't be a BYOB like last year, so Lynette and Edie are bringing some soda. I can supply the paper plates and cups, and the plastic utensils.

Mike: That's great. It sounds like you have everything under control.

Susan: I really can't believe it. There's a first time for everything.

[end of story]

Thanks to Dr. Lucy Tse for today's script. Thank you for listening. As always we hope that you enjoy ESL Podcast and will come back and see us next time. From Los Angeles, I'm Jeff McQuillan. Thanks for listening. We hope to see you next time at ESL Podcast

English as a Second Language Podcast is written and produced by Dr. Lucy Tse. Hosted by Dr. Jeff McQuillan. This podcast is copyright 2006.