



ESL Podcast 176 – Time Off from Work

GLOSSARY

bachelor party - a party held for a man before his wedding day

* All of Eric's friends have been invited to his surprise bachelor party.

Vegas - short for Las Vegas; a city in the state of Nevada where gambling is legal

* Some people go to Vegas to get married, but I go there to win money!

last weekend of the month - the last Friday, Saturday and Sunday before a month ends

* I like to visit my family every last weekend of the month.

time off from work - time spent away from work; usually a vacation or leave

* I'm taking some time off from work to visit my wife's family.

to miss out - to be left out of an experience or event; used when someone misses a chance to do something they think they may enjoy

* The whole shop is having a sale. You should buy something or you'll miss out!

vacation leave - a period of time away from a job for a vacation or holiday

* I am saving my vacation leave for a summer trip to Europe next year.

company policy - a set of rules that a company follows

* It's company policy to wear a tie to work.

to sign off - to approve something

* If the city government signs off on this project, we can start building.

maternity leave - a period of time away from a job so that a worker can take care of a new baby

* Betty is on maternity leave for the moment, but she will return in two weeks.

leave of absence - a longer period of time away from a job

* After his sister's car accident, he took a leave of absence to take care of her children.



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to call in sick - to say you are sick and will not be going to work

* I called in sick to work this morning when I woke up with a fever.

to accumulate - to get more and more, usually over a period of time

* I have too many books! I don't know how I accumulated so many.

sick leave - time away from work for a person who is sick

* I have enough accumulated sick leave to call in sick for six weeks.

to leave (someone) hanging - short for "to leave hanging in the air"; to break a promise, an expectation, or an agreement

* Erica said she would help me with my report, but she didn't show up and left me hanging.

straight out - honest or blunt; directly

* I will tell you straight out that I don't like the way you spoke to my wife.

wild weekend - a fun weekend that involves parties and drinking

* I had such a wild weekend when I went to Ibiza.

the guys - a group of men

* I'm just going to see a movie with the guys tonight. Would you like to come?



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COMPREHENSION QUESTIONS

1. Why is the speaker's friend, Rob, planning a bachelor party?
 - a) because he wants to get time off work
 - b) because Jack is getting married
 - c) because he wants to go to Vegas
 2. What kind of leave does the speaker want to take?
 - a) vacation leave
 - b) sick leave
 - c) maternity leave
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WHAT ELSE DOES IT MEAN?

to sign off

The phrase "to sign off" in this podcast means to approve. It is usually used when your boss approves something that you have done or would like to do: "My boss liked my idea and signed off on it." "To sign off" can also be used when you are communicating with someone and you are going to end the communication. On the radio, you may hear the "DJ" – the person who speaks in between playing songs – say : "This is Gordo, signing off," because he is going to stop talking and end the radio show. If you are speaking to someone on an instant messenger service on your computer, you may notice that they "sign off" when they leave.

to leave (someone) hanging

The phrase "to leave (someone) hanging" in this podcast means to break an agreement or promise. The person who is expecting something but does not get it is the person who is "left hanging." The person who does not fulfill the expectation is the one who "leaves (someone) hanging." This can also mean to leave things uncertain, undecided, or in suspense. For instance, "You need to finish your book. Please don't leave me hanging!" It is considered impolite to "leave (someone) hanging."



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CULTURE NOTE

In U.S. companies, workers are given a certain amount of vacation leave each year. The usual amount of leave for one year for an employee in an American company is about two weeks. This is far less time than the amount of leave that workers in many European and Asian companies get (around four weeks or more). In most companies, the longer you stay with the company or the more important your job, the more vacation leave you have. So, while the typical worker may have two weeks, their manager may have four weeks a year.

Different companies have different leave policies or rules. Many companies will allow workers to earn their time for vacation leave. For example, if a worker works one month, he or she can earn eight hours of leave. This sort of leave can accumulate for a certain amount of time, so that a person may have small vacations in one year or a large vacation after a longer period of work. However, there is usually a limit on how much vacation you can accumulate.

Most companies have maternity leave for a woman to have a baby and to take care of it for the first few weeks. Some companies also now have “paternity leave” for fathers so they can stay home for a short time when a new baby is born. However, most companies do not have paternity leave.

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



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COMPLETE TRANSCRIPT

Welcome to English as a Second Language Podcast Number 176, "Time Off From Work."

This is English as a Second Language Podcast Episode 176. I'm your host, Dr. Jeff McQuillan, coming to you from the Center for Educational Development in beautiful Los Angeles, California. Remember to visit our website at www.eslpod.com to get the Learning Guide for this podcast, which includes the complete transcript, definitions, sample sentences, additional cultural information - everything you want in the Learning Guide. Today's podcast is called, "Time Off from Work." Let's get started.

[start of story]

My buddy from college, Jack, was getting married and our friend Rob was planning a bachelor party for him in Vegas. It was going to be the last weekend of the month and I wanted to go. The trouble was, I was scheduled to work that weekend. I needed to get the time off from work or I was going to miss out on all the fun.

I have some vacation leave, but company policy requires that my boss sign off on any leave we take. I've heard of companies doing that for longer periods of leave - like maternity leave or a leave of absence - but our company does that even for vacation leave. I thought about just calling in sick that weekend - I do have a lot of accumulated sick leave - but I didn't think my boss would appreciate me leaving him hanging.

In the end I just asked him straight out and to my surprise he said, "okay." Now, I just need to get ready for a wild weekend with the guys. I can't wait.

[end of story]

This podcast is called, "Time Off From Work." Time off from work is when you don't have to work. Someone says, "I want some time off" or, "I want some time off from work" - means they want to take a vacation or have a break from work or from whatever it is that you normally do. Some of you sleep all day, so you would take time off from being lazy. No, I'm just kidding.



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My buddy from college, the story begins, was getting married and our friend was planning a bachelor party for him in Vegas. Well "my buddy," is an informal term for my friend. Sometimes we even say, "my bud." Usually when we're joking we'll say, "my bud Jerry," "my friend Jerry," "my buddy Jerry."

Well, my buddy's name is Jack and he was getting married and our friend Rob wanted to have a bachelor party for him. The word "bachelor" means the person who is getting married. The man who is getting married is called the bachelor, or an unmarried man, anyone who is not married who is a man can be called a bachelor. A woman is called a "bachelorette;" that word is not as common as the word bachelor. So, you can say, "Oh yes, I'm a bachelor" - means, "I'm not married."

Well, a bachelor party in this case is a party for a bachelor, who is going to get married. And, traditionally there is a party, usually with just the men, the male friends of the bachelor, who will be called when he gets married, "the groom," is the man who is getting married. The woman is called the "bride."

Well, in this bachelor party, usually it's a few days before the actual wedding. The idea is that it is the last chance for a man to have fun before he gets married. So, if you are going to get married you must have a bachelor party because once you get married, well it's all over. The bachelor party, then, is going to be in Vegas. And, Vegas stands for "Las Vegas" which is spelled "Las" although we usually pronounce it "Los" like an "o." So, Las Vegas, is in Nevada. And, it is famous, you may know, as the gambling center of the United States where people can gamble. They can play cards and other games and win money, usually lose money, at least I do. Well, Vegas is also famous because it is kind of a place to have a good time, to enjoy yourself. And, it's located in the state of Nevada. It's about five or six hours here from Los Angeles, driving. And, it's usually very warm most of the year. So, Las Vegas is a fun place to visit, especially for adults.

Well, the bachelor party is going to be in Vegas, or Las Vegas. It was going to be the last weekend of the month. The last weekend of the month would be the last Friday, Saturday, and Sunday of a month, the fourth week in most months, and I wanted to go. The trouble was, I was scheduled to work that weekend. Notice that expression: "The trouble was," and then we begin a sentence. You could say, "the trouble was THAT I had to work this weekend." They mean the same thing, but sometimes we use that expression "the trouble was," or "the problem is," or sometimes just "the thing is, I have to work that weekend." It's a way of



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getting the attention of the other person. Usually we use that when we are going to say something that is a problem, that presents a problem to us, that we can't do something because of something else. So, that expression "the trouble was," I was scheduled, or I was supposed to, the plan was, I was to work that weekend. So, of course I needed to get time off from work. I needed a break, a vacation, from work. If I didn't, I was going to miss out on all the fun. "To miss out on" means that you will not be part of, you will not be able to participate in. We use that verb in a couple of different ways. Someone says, "Well, be sure not to be late for the dinner. Otherwise you will miss out on all the good food. You will miss out on the fun." You can even say, "Don't miss out," don't miss out on the good things that will happen. Well, here, I am worried that I'm going to miss out on all of the fun.

Well, I have some vacation leave. The word "leave," here means the same as a break, time that you don't have to work. There are different kinds of leave. One kind is vacation leave, when you are able to take time off of work to go on a vacation. Another kind of leave is a maternity leave. Maternity is when a woman is going to have a baby and she can get, in most companies, maternity leave. So, they give her maybe six weeks, two months, up to usually six months time, depends on how much the woman wants and how much they will give her. And, they will pay her salary, they will pay her for working but she has this time off to have her baby. There is also now, it's less common, something called paternity leave. And "paternity" means the father gets time off from work to help with the new baby. So, you can get maternity leave and, in many places, you can also get paternity leave. The words maternity and paternity come from Latin words. "Mater-" means mother in Latin, that is where we get "maternity" from; and "pater-" in Latin means "father" and that is where we get "paternity leave" or "paternity," rather.

Well, in my company we have a policy that requires that my boss sign off on any leave we take. The expression "company policy" is one that you will hear a lot of in American businesses. Someone will say, "Well, you can't do that. Why? Well, it's company policy. You can't take your shirt off at work." I hope not. That is company policy. Well, the company policy in my company requires that my boss sign off on any leave. "To sign off on (something)," two words, means to approve, to say yes. Usually this is something that a boss or someone who is in charge will do. It could be something like a vacation request, as it is in this case. They could sign off on buying something new for the company - they approve it. Someone may even use this expression to say, "Are you going to sign off on this?" "No, I'm



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not going to sign off on that." And, that can also mean, "I don't agree with it. It's not something that I believe in." But here it means to give permission. My boss has to give permission if I'm going to take any leave, any break, from work. I've heard of companies that require the boss sign off on something, like a leave, for longer periods of time. We gave two examples of a longer leave: a maternity leave, as I said before, is usually six weeks, often three months, or even six months. Vacation time is going to be much shorter. United States vacation time tends to be two to three weeks in most companies. That's how much vacation leave you get each year.

Longer leaves are sometimes called, "a leave of absence." And, that's when you take time off from work, but you normally don't get paid. So, you take time off from work and you don't get paid. Now, in maternity leave you often don't get paid either. I've said that companies will pay you, but sometimes they do and sometimes they don't. A leave of absence usually is when you take time for some personal reason, or some other reason that you don't want to quit your job but you need time off for something else. And so, you can take a leave of absence, perhaps to take care of your father or mother who is sick. Those would be possible reasons for a leave of absence. You want to make sure that you can watch all of the World Cup soccer games, so you take a month leave of absence.

In our company, however, we have to get approval even for something like vacation leave. I thought about just calling in sick that weekend. "To call in sick" means that you call your boss and you say, "Oh, I'm really sick. I can't go to work." And, sometimes of course people call in sick when they're not sick. You would never do that, but some people do that. So, calling in sick means that you are calling in and saying, "I can't work today. I'm too ill, I'm too sick. There is a football game on. No, I'm too sick." Well, I say here that I have a lot of accumulated sick leave. We've talked about vacation leave, maternity leave, paternity leave, leave of absence. Another kind of leave is sick leave, and sick leave you can guess is time...the number of days you get where you can still get paid and you can call in sick. Again, it depends on the company; sometimes it's five days a year, sometimes it's ten days a year. Here at the Center for Educational Development, I think it's like 25 minutes, that's it. Well, in most companies you get more than 25 minutes to be sick, so you can accumulate your sick leave. To "accumulate" means something similar to save up, to save all of your sick leave. You can accumulate anything that is physical. You can accumulate paper, you could accumulate clothing, you can accumulate computers. The idea is that have a lot of them, you keep having more and more



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and more. Well, accumulated sick leave is when you don't use your sick leave, maybe from last year you didn't use any sick leave, and you had five days last year, and you have five days this year. Well, some companies will allow you to accumulate your sick leave, so now you can have ten days in one year because you didn't use your sick leave last year. That's accumulated sick leave.

Well, I could have called in sick with my accumulated sick leave, but I didn't think my boss would appreciate me leaving him hanging. "To leave someone hanging," means that you abandon someone; you leave someone without any help. So, the person is expecting you to help them and you decide not to help them, not to go into work, for example. That would be to leave someone hanging. They're not getting any help from you.

Well, I say that in the end, after all of this thinking about it, I decided just to ask him straight out. To ask someone "straight out," two words, straight out, means to ask them directly, to just ask them without any other sort of excuses or any other plans, to be direct with someone. "I'm going to ask you straight out. Did you talk to my girlfriend last night?" I'm asking you directly. And, you better say "no." Well, my boss says, "Yes." He says okay. I can take my vacation leave. Now, I just need to get ready for a wild weekend with the guys.

A "wild" weekend would be a weekend, a Friday Saturday and Sunday that you would spend going to parties, in this case gambling in Las Vegas; that's a wild weekend. The "guys" here means my men, my male friends, the men who are friends with me. The word "guys" can sometimes mean both men and women, boys and girls. You can say, "OK, you guys," especially with the word "you." "You guys" means informally, men and women. But, if you say "the guys" or "the girls," - "I'm going out with the guys tonight." - that means my male friends. No women, in that case. And, in a bachelor party, traditionally there are no women. Well, almost no women.

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]

The script for today's podcast was written by Dr. Lucy Tse of the Center for Educational Development. Thank you, Lucy.

Remember to visit our website as eslpod.com. You can get a free copy of the dialogue and story part of our script by going to the website and clicking on the name of the podcast. From Los Angeles, California, I'm Jeff McQuillan. Thanks for listening. We'll see you next time on ESL Podcast.

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