



## ESL Podcast 198 – Starting a Band

---

### GLOSSARY

**band** – a group of people who play musical instruments

\* The band played all night and got a lot of people onto the dance floor.

**musician** – someone who plays a musical instrument and makes music

\* To be a good musician, you have to take the time to practice.

**as it turns out** – a phrase used to describe something that happened that no one expected or thought would happen

\* As it turns out, the person who stole her ring was her best friend!

**guitarist** – someone who plays a guitar, a musical instrument with strings

\* The band that played last night was terrible because the guitarist kept forgetting parts of the songs.

**songwriter** – someone who writes songs

\* We tried to tell him that he is a much better songwriter than he is a singer.

**gigs** – jobs (slang)

\* Do you think we would get more gigs if we had our own website?

**lead singer** – the singer you see in front of the group on stage; the most important singer in a group

\* I couldn't hear the lead singer because the microphone wasn't working.

**drummer** – someone who plays the drums, a round musical instrument that you hit with sticks or with your hands

\* The band had to replace the drummer because he never came to the practices.

**bass player** – someone who plays the bass, an instrument that looks like a regular guitar and that plays very low notes

\* She's important to the band because she is both the lead singer and the bass player.

**back-up singer** – someone who sings in the background or behind the lead singer

\* When they perform, the back-up singers stand next to the guitarist on the left side of the stage.



## ESL Podcast 198 – Starting a Band

---

**to audition** – to interview for a job as a singer, musician, actor, or dancer, usually to become part of a group

\* She auditioned five times before they told her she had the part.

**instrument** – a thing for making music, played by a musician

\* She plays two musical instruments and plans to learn to play another one this year.

**sound equipment** – machines and tools that help musicians make good musical sounds

\* Good sound equipment can help make a band sound professional.

**rehearsal** – a practice

\* There were nine dancers already at the dance rehearsal when he arrived.

**demo** – short for “demonstration,” a sample recording of a song

\* The group recorded a demo and hoped to get a important agent to listen to it.

**headliners** – the main performers of a show

\* There were two opening acts before the headliners came on stage.



## ESL Podcast 198 – Starting a Band

---

### COMPREHENSION QUESTIONS

1. How many members are in Michael's band?
    - a) Two
    - b) Three
    - c) Four
  
  2. Michael plays the guitar, and he also
    - a) plays the bass
    - b) sings
    - c) writes songs
- 

### WHAT ELSE DOES IT MEAN?

#### **band**

The word “band,” in this podcast, means a group of musicians or people who play instruments and makes music: “The band was good, but they were nervous to play in front of a large crowd.” The word has many other meanings. It can be used more generally to mean any group of people: “People who saw the robbery say that it was a band of thieves and not a single robber that took the money.” Band is also a strip, or a small, but long piece of material: “When Leon hurt his arm, there were no bandages in the house so he used a band of cloth to stop the bleeding.” It can also be used as a verb to mean to form a group: “The workers need to band together if they want to be taken seriously when asking for more money.”

#### **instrument**

In this podcast, the word “instrument” describes the things or objects that musicians use and play on to make music: “The musical instruments played by professional musicians are usually handmade and very expensive.” We use the term “musical instruments” to talk more formally about these objects and “instruments” for short in speaking of them informally. The word can also be used to mean tools that people use to do a job: “It’s important for the doctor’s instruments to be clean.” Or, “Scientists use a lot of different instruments to try to predict the weather.”



## ESL Podcast 198 – Starting a Band

---

### CULTURE NOTE

There are many “up-and-coming” bands, or bands not well-known yet, in most cities in the U.S. Whether these bands can succeed depends on how well they can get themselves known to the public. Many bands start by performing local shows in their hometowns. Through “word of mouth,” or people telling other people, they hope to get more attention and more fans. A lot of bands try to “promote,” or get publicity or attention, by making t-shirts and bumper stickers with the band’s name, and fliers to advertise their gigs.

Recently, with the use of the Internet, bands can set up websites to tell people about themselves and their music. MySpace is a very popular website where people can set up their own page. It has helped some small or unknown bands find an audience. Band members can post pictures, links to other website, and samples of their music, such as mp3’s of their songs and sometimes even entire albums. This way, other people can get to know them even if they don’t live in the same city and cannot go to one of their performances.

The band itself or anyone who is a fan can create a “fan site,” or a website for people who like or admire a person or a group. Fan sites are often places where people can go to find out the latest news about a group, such as their “touring schedule,” or a schedule of when and where they will play. Sometimes the group members will post messages for their fans, and it is also a good place for fans to meet each other.

---

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



## ESL Podcast 198 – Starting a Band

---

### COMPLETE TRANSCRIPT

You're listening to English as a Second Language Podcast number 198, "Starting a Band."

This is English as a Second Language Podcast episode 198. 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 starting a band, a musical band. Let's get started.

[Start of story]

At work one afternoon, my friend Michael asked me if I wanted to help him start a band. I was really surprised because I didn't even know Michael was a musician. As it turns out, not only was Michael a good guitarist, he was also a good songwriter. He wanted to get together a band and maybe start playing some gigs.

I was interested, but I wasn't sure if my voice was good enough to be the lead singer. After hearing me sing, Michael said that he thought I was. With me in the band, we still needed a drummer and a bass player. My sister wanted to be a back-up singer for the band, but we didn't think we needed one yet.

We auditioned a lot of people and found our other two band members. They had their own instruments and even had the sound equipment we'd need. We start rehearsal next week. Hopefully, we'll be able to get a demo made soon and get hired as an opening act for another band. And, who knows? You may be seeing us as headliners in your city before too long.

[End of story]

This podcast is about someone trying to start a music group, a group to play music. What we would simply call a band, especially if it's popular music. The story begins by me saying that, "At work one afternoon, my friend Michael asked me if I wanted to help him start a band. I was really surprised," however, "because I didn't even know Michael was a musician." I didn't even know means the same as I didn't know, but "even" adds some emphasis - that I completely



## ESL Podcast 198 – Starting a Band

---

didn't know, that I had no knowledge that he was a musician. A musician, "musician," is someone who plays music.

"As it turns out, not only was Michael a good guitarist, he was also a good songwriter." The expression, as it turns out, is one that we use before telling someone something that is surprising, that you would not expect from the previous things that they have told you. So, you might say, for example, "I thought that the movie was going to be really good. As it turns out, it was the worst movie I had seen." So, that expression means that I went to the movie and I found out that it was a terrible movie. I won't tell you which movie I'm talking about. It starts with the word, "The."

Getting back to the story, "As it turns out, not only was Michael a good guitarist, he was also a good songwriter." A guitarist, "guitarist," is someone who plays a guitar - the musical instrument called a guitar that has strings on it. We call the things that you play on the guitar the guitar strings. Well, he is a guitarist and he's "also a good songwriter." Songwriter, "songwriter" is all one word. Songwriter would be someone who writes songs. "He wanted to get together a band," my friend Michael did, "and maybe start playing some gigs." A gig, "gig," is when you have a performance, usually in front of other people. And so, you say, "I have a gig at the bar tonight" means I'm going to be playing in my band at the bar tonight. We normally use that word, gig, for a musician or a band that's going to be playing somewhere, though sometimes we use it in other circumstances to mean a job.

"I was interested," in this band, "but I wasn't sure if my voice," and you know how good my voice is, "if my voice was good enough to be the lead singer." The lead, "lead," singer is the main singer, the most important singer in the band. So, for the band, Rolling Stones, the lead singer would be Mick Jagger, and for...well, the Beatles didn't have a lead singer...I guess either Paul McCartney or John Lennon were the lead singers, plural. Bruce Springsteen and the E Street Band, let's see, who was the lead singer?

Anyway, "After hearing me sing, Michael said that he thought I was" good enough to be the lead singer. "With me in the band, we still needed a drummer and a bass player." A drummer, "drummer," is someone who plays the drums, "drums." It's the person who has the - we would call them drumsticks - those pieces of wood that you hit against a drum. The drummer is usually in the back on the stage when you have a band performance.



## ESL Podcast 198 – Starting a Band

---

The other person that you find in a band, especially a rock band, would be a bass player. A bass, “bass,” player. Notice the pronunciation here. This word is pronounced like a long “a” - bass. If you pronounce it bass - same spelling - that means something completely different - that would be a fish. But, this is not a fish, this is a bass player, and the bass is a musical instrument. Here it refers to a bass guitar, and that's the guitar that plays the very low notes - boom boom boom boom, boom boom boom boom. That's the person who often has the background music, if you will, in a song.

Well, “My sister wanted to be a back-up singer for the band.” A back-up, “back-up,” singer is not the lead singer, not the main singer. Usually, this is someone who stands at the side or in back and sings music along with the song, but you can't hear them necessarily as a separate singer because there's usually more than one back-up singer.

Well, “We auditioned a lot of people and found our other two band members.” To audition, “audition,” means that you have people come to you and they play their musical instrument, and you say, “Okay, thank you. We'll call you later if we want you.” That is to audition. You go in front of the leader of the band, or the person who's deciding who will be in the band, and you play for them, and if they like you then you will be part of the band. And, if not, then you will have to go back and study in school, I guess. Well, “We auditioned a lot of people,” and the two people we found “had their own instruments.” Instruments, “instruments,” are musical instruments - things that you play, like a guitar, or a saxophone, or the drums, or the recorder - these are all instruments. The new band members also had sound equipment that we needed. Sound equipment here would be speakers and amplifiers. An amplifier is a machine that makes the music louder, makes the sound come out louder.

I said that “We start rehearsal next week.” Rehearsal, “rehearsal,” is the same as practice. We use that word, rehearsal, when we are practicing for a musical performance or a play - anything where you're giving a performance in front of other people - a speech, perhaps. The verb is to rehearse, “rehearse,” and this is a noun, the rehearsal.

“Hopefully, we'll be able to get a demo made soon and get hired as an opening act for another band.” A demo, “demo,” is short for a demonstration tape. And, that is a tape - or now, I guess it would be a CD - that you record a song and you



## ESL Podcast 198 – Starting a Band

---

send it to record companies or other people who might be interested in hearing you, and if they like it, then you will get some work. You'll get some gigs. Well, we're hoping to "get hired as an opening act." The opening act, "act," is the first band when you go to a concert, a performance. It's the first band, usually not the best one. If you go to see a famous rock group - the Rolling Stones - are they still alive? Yes? Okay. The Rolling Stones, they're not going to start the concert. They're going to have another band that plays for maybe a half hour or 45 minutes, and then they come on. The main band is called the headliner. The headliner, "headliner," all one word, and they are the main group, the one that you paid your money to see. The word comes from headline. Headline is, in a newspaper for example, it's the title of the story, usually in big letters. Well, that's what we use, that term, headliner, to mean the people that are the most important band in a concert.

Now, I know you wanted to hear me sing, but maybe next time! Now let's listen to the story, this time at a native rate of speech.

[Start of story]

At work one afternoon, my friend Michael asked me if I wanted to help him start a band. I was really surprised because I didn't even know Michael was a musician. As it turns out, not only was Michael a good guitarist, he was also a good songwriter. He wanted to get together a band and maybe start playing some gigs.

I was interested, but I wasn't sure if my voice was good enough to be the lead singer. After hearing me sing, Michael said that he thought I was. With me in the band, we still needed a drummer and a bass player. My sister wanted to be a back-up singer for the band, but we didn't think we needed one yet.

We auditioned a lot of people and found our other two band members. They had their own instruments and even had the sound equipment we'd need. We start rehearsal next week. Hopefully, we'll be able to get a demo made soon and get hired as an opening act for another band. And, who knows? You may be seeing us as headliners in your city before too long.

[End of story]





English as a Second Language Podcast  
www.eslpod.com

## ESL Podcast 198 – Starting a Band

---

The script for today's podcast was written by the very musical Dr. Lucy Tse. Remember to visit our website at [eslpod.com](http://eslpod.com) to get the complete Learning Guide, an eight to ten page guide to this podcast that includes all of the vocabulary words and definitions, additional new information that we don't talk about in the podcast and a complete transcript. Our website is [eslpod.com](http://eslpod.com).

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