



ESL Podcast 200 – Meeting a Deadline

GLOSSARY

You wanted to see me? – short for “Did you want to see me?”; I’m here as you wanted or requested

* You wanted to see me? I’ve been out to lunch for the past hour.

to pull out (all) the stops – to give something the most effort that you can; to try as hard as you can

* The university research team pulled out all the stops to make the discovery before any other university.

deadline – the latest time or date that something should be completed

* The deadline to submit your application is Friday at 5:00 p.m.

milestone – an important time, action, or event that marks a change in the development of something

* Most people believe that the 10-year wedding anniversary is a milestone in a marriage.

scope – the boundaries or the outside limit of something

* The wide scope of power he has in this company allows him to make decisions at all levels of management.

turned out to be – a phrase used when someone expect one thing but gets something else; to wonder about something that is mysterious or unclear and then to find out what it is

* We thought that there was a dangerous animal trapped under the car, but it turned out to be a cat.

to anticipate – to expect; to predict; to think something is likely to happen

* All of the employees in the company anticipated getting a large cash bonus at the end of the year.

to allocate – to give for a specific purpose

* How can we finish building this park if the city government won’t allocate enough money for the project?



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resource – anything valuable or useful that someone can use to do something

* This is a big job but I'm sure we have enough resources in this organization to get it done right.

to push back – to delay; to reschedule for a later time

* She's too busy right now to take time off from work, so we decided to push back our vacation from August to September.

the time to ask (something) was... – a phrase used to mean that it is too late to ask for something now; you should have asked for it earlier

* The time to ask for a day off this week was last week when I was making up the schedule.

to miss – to be too late

* She got to the station 10 minutes too late and missed her train to Boston.

to breathe down (someone's) neck – to watch someone very closely, usually making the person being watched uncomfortable

* Stop breathing down my neck! I'll finish cooking dinner faster if you stop bothering me.

to stall – to delay to give yourself more time

* He didn't have enough money to pay his rent and tried to stall the landlord by telling her that he had already sent a check in the mail.

you have my word – I give you my promise

* You have my word that I will be there at 10 a.m. to help you with the presentation.

to take the heat – to take the blame for something

* Even though all four of the kids were responsible for breaking the window, Lionel took the heat.

to count on (someone) – to rely on someone; to be able to be certain that someone will do what they say they will do

* He knew that he could count on Sarah to be on time for the meeting.

to let (someone) down – to disappoint someone

* I'll give you another chance, but don't let me down this time.



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COMPREHENSION QUESTIONS

1. What is the reason Pam gives for missing the deadline?
 - a) The project is more work than she originally thought.
 - b) The managers have been breathing down her neck.
 - c) She didn't know that the deadline was last Monday.

 2. Ed is Pam's
 - a) co-worker.
 - b) boss.
 - c) boyfriend.
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WHAT ELSE DOES IT MEAN?

to push back

The phrase “to push back,” in this podcast, means to change a scheduled event to a later date: “Since Dave will be out of town on the 4th, we’ll need to push back the date of the party.” There is a slightly different phrase, “to push ahead,” that means to continue even though the situation is difficult: “We’re all tired but let’s push ahead and try to finish this letter before we quit work for the day.” Or, “A lot of people don’t want us to say anything negative about the new policy, but we have to push ahead if we want our opinions to be heard.” Another phrase, “to push around,” means to force someone to do something they don’t want to, by threatening them with harm: “An older boy at school is trying to push my little brother around.” Or, “The new boss is trying to push everybody around by making decisions without asking anyone else.”

to count on

In this podcast, the phrase “to count on” means to depend on someone to do something: “I’ve known him for 10 years and I know that you can count on him to do a good job.” Another slightly different phrase, “to count down,” means to begin at a higher number and to count to the lowest number: “These are the last seconds of this year, 2007. Let’s count down: 10-9-8-7-6-5-4-3-2-1.” Or, “Your new store opens soon. Are you counting down the days?”



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CULTURE NOTE

In a U.S. business setting, employees are expected to meet deadlines by having good “time management skills.” Time management is a term used to mean being able to use your time well. It means to be able to schedule and plan your time so that you will work “efficiently,” or to complete good work in the least amount of time possible. People who “procrastinate,” or wait until the last minute to do something, sometimes have trouble working in a business environment.

Many people believe that one of the best ways to manage your time well is “to prioritize,” or to decide what is more important and what is less important, since it is not possible to do everything at the same time. The most important job would be considered a “top priority,” and the least important jobs would be “low priority.” Some people keep a “to-do list” that shows the jobs that need to be done, in order of priority.

Another suggestion for good time management is to be “proactive,” or to take action to make something happen rather than waiting to respond when it does happen. Being proactive usually means doing something before it becomes a problem or a “crisis,” or a very difficult or dangerous situation. Being proactive can save time and resources.

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



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COMPLETE TRANSCRIPT

Welcome to English as a Second Language Podcast number 200, “Meeting a Deadline.”

You're listening to English as a Second Language Podcast episode number 200. I'm your host, Dr. Jeff McQuillan, coming to you from the Center for Educational Development in beautiful Los Angeles, California.

As always, we remind you to visit our website at www.eslpod.com. There you can find the complete transcript for this podcast in our Learning Guide. It also contains the definitions, the words, additional cultural notes and other information about this episode of ESL Podcast.

Today's podcast is called, “Meeting a Deadline.” Let's go!

[Start of story]

Pam: You wanted to see me?

Ed: Yes, I did. Have a seat. I want to talk to you about the Pulsen project.

Pam: I know I'm a little late in getting that report to you, but I've been pulling out the stops to get it done.

Ed: But it's still not done, is it? You know that the deadline for the next milestone of the project was this past Monday.

Pam: Yes, I know, but the scope of the project turned out to be a lot bigger than I had anticipated. And, they just didn't allocate enough resources for something this size. Is there any way we can push back the deadline by a week?

Ed: The time to ask that was last week, not after you've missed the deadline. I have the management breathing down my neck about this report. I've tried to stall them for the past two days and they're not happy.

Pam: I promise to have it on your desk by tomorrow morning. You have my word.



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Ed: All right. I'll give you until 9:00 a.m. tomorrow. I'm tired of taking the heat, though, and I don't plan to do it any longer.

Pam: You can count on me.

Ed: Don't let me down.

Pam: I won't.

[End of story]

The title of this podcast is, "Meeting a Deadline." To meet, "meet," a deadline means that you do what you are supposed to do before the time that it is due. A deadline, "deadline," all one word, is the day or date that you have to get something done. It's the time that you must complete whatever you are told to complete.

Our dialogue begins with Pam saying to her boss Ed, "You wanted to see me?" This is the same as saying, "Did you want to see me?" but we use this expression, "You wanted to see me?" as a question when we are pretty sure that the person wants to see us, or that we know that they wanted to see us and we're just confirming, we're just checking, that that is true. You could also say, "Did you want to see me?" if you weren't, perhaps, as certain, though these two expressions can also mean the same thing and be used in the same way.

Ed says, "Yes, I did." I did want to see you. He tells Pam to, "Have a seat," or to take a seat, meaning to sit down. He wants to talk to Pam "about the Pulsen project," and Pam says, "I know I'm a little late in getting that report to you." What she means here is that she is late in delivering the report, or handing the report - the information - to her boss. She's running late, we might say. To run late is the same as to be late, in this case means that you are not getting things done when you should get them done.

Pam says that she's, "been pulling out the stops to get it done." The expression, to pull out the stops, "stops," or to pull out all the stops, means that you are doing everything possible that you can to get something done. This expression comes from the organ, as in a church. An organ is a musical instrument that has long pipes that play different notes. To pull out the stops means to use all of the pipes



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of the organ, and it's an expression here which generally means to do everything possible.

Ed says, "But it's still not done, is it?" He's telling Pam that she still has not finished the report, even though she has done everything possible, she says. Ed says, "You know that the deadline for the next milestone of the project was this past Monday." Well, deadline, we already know, is when something has to be finished. A milestone, "milestone," all one word, is when you have a large project and there are several different parts to the project. Each part of the project has its own timeline - when you are supposed to get something done for this part, for part B, for part C, and so forth. Each of these parts would have its own milestone. A milestone is when you have completed an important or significant part of the project. So, a big project that takes three months may have a milestone for part A and then another milestone for part B and a third for part C. Ed says that the milestone deadline for the project, for this part of the project, "was this past Monday," meaning it was the Monday that we just passed, the previous Monday.

Pam says, "Yes, I know, but the scope of the project turned out to be a lot bigger than I had anticipated." The scope, "scope," means the range, or the amount, or the size of the project. "Turned out to be a lot bigger." When we say something turned out to be, we mean that the result was something that was different than what you may have expected. Well, "the scope" of this "project turned out to be a lot bigger" - the size of it was bigger than I expected. The word that Pam uses in the dialogue is anticipated, "anticipated." To anticipate, as a verb, means to expect, to think about something and how it will happen, what will happen in the future. This is to anticipate. And, she said that she expected was a smaller project.

She also complains, because Pam is really complaining to the boss - giving him excuses, reasons why she didn't finish the project. She says that they "didn't allocate enough resources for something this size." To allocate, "allocate," is a verb that you will often hear in a business setting, and it means to give. We often use this verb, to allocate, with the term resources. A resource, "resource," is anything that you can use to get something done. And, in a business project resources would include people who could help with the project. It might also include information you need to do a project. It might include the amount of time that you have to finish the project. It could be money that you need to complete the project. All of these things are resources. In general, a resource is



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something that you use to complete another task, to finish something else. And, the term here that you will hear often is allocate resources, meaning that you need to give people what they need to finish the project.

Pam asks Ed if there is, “any way,” that is if it is possible to “push back the deadline by a week?” To push, “push,” back a deadline means to move the deadline another week in the future. Ed says, “The time to ask that was last week,” meaning you should have asked that last week, not now – “not after you’ve missed the deadline.” To miss, “miss,” a deadline is the opposite of to meet or to make a deadline, when you don’t finish what you are supposed to do by the day you are supposed to do it.

Ed says, “I have the management breathing down my neck.” When we say someone is breathing down your neck, we mean that they are bothering you. They are waiting for something to get done and they are asking you about it all the time - “Is it finished yet? Are you done yet? Why haven’t you completed it?” So, Ed is saying that his boss - and remember Ed is Pam’s boss - his boss has been talking to him and asking him about the project, putting pressure on him to complete it, trying to hurry it up.

Ed says that he’s “tried to stall them,” but “they’re not happy.” To stall, “stall,” someone means to delay them, to make them wait longer because usually you aren’t finished doing what you’re supposed to do. So, if you take your car into the mechanic to get it fixed and the mechanic says, “It will be done by five o’clock this afternoon.” You go at five o’clock and the car isn’t done and the mechanic may say, “Oh well, I need to get some more things. Why don’t you come back tomorrow?” He’s trying to stall you, to prevent you, or to delay you, from getting your car back.

Pam says that she promises to have the report on Ed’s “desk by tomorrow morning.” When we say we’re going to have something on someone’s desk we mean you’re going to give it to them, you’re going to deliver it to them. Pam says, “You have my word.” The expression, to have someone’s word, means that the person is promising to do something. They are committing to do something. “You have my word.” I am promising to do it. Ed says okay, “I’ll give you until nine o’clock tomorrow. I’m tired of taking the heat, though, and I don’t plan to do it any longer.” To take the heat, “heat,” means to be the person who is being criticized or the person who is being blamed for something that is going wrong. Ed is saying that the management - his bosses - have been bothering



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him, and he's the one who has to take the heat, who has to accept the responsibility.

Pam says, "You can count on me." To count, "count," on someone means to depend on them. And, Ed says, "Don't let me down." To let someone down means to disappoint them. So, to count on someone means to depend or rely or trust someone to do something, and to let someone down means not to do that thing, not to do what you promised to do.

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

[Start of story]

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Ed: Yes, I did. Have a seat. I want to talk to you about the Pulsen project.

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Ed: The time to ask that was last week, not after you've missed the deadline. I have the management breathing down my neck about this report. I've tried to stall them for the past two days and they're not happy.

Pam: I promise to have it on your desk by tomorrow morning. You have my word.

Ed: All right. I'll give you until 9:00 a.m. tomorrow. I'm tired of taking the heat, though, and I don't plan to do it any longer.

Pam: You can count on me.



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Ed: Don't let me down.

Pam: I won't.

[End of story]

The script for today's podcast was written by the very reliable Dr. Lucy Tse. From Los Angeles, California, I'm Jeff McQuillan. Thank you for listening. As always, we'll see you next time on ESL Podcast.

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