



ESL Podcast 202 – At the Gas Station

GLOSSARY

gas prices – the amount of money you pay to buy one gallon of gasoline, the fuel put into cars to make them run

* A lot of people are choosing not to go on vacation this summer because gas prices are too high.

through the roof – very high; higher than people thought possible

* I read that during World War II, many people couldn't buy meat because prices were through the roof.

gas station – a place that sells gasoline, the fuel that makes cars run

* This gas station sells gasoline, and also drinks and snacks.

to fill up – to put something in a space until the space is full

* Could you hand me those empty bottles so I can fill them up with water?

tank – a container or an object, usually made of metal, that holds large amounts of liquids or gas

* Those large round containers over there are the city's water tanks.

full-service – a part of a gas station where a gas station employee puts gasoline into your car and takes your money for payment

* I like to use the full-service option when it's raining so I won't get wet.

self-service – getting gasoline and making payment at a gas station on your own, without the help of a gas station employee

* It costs less to buy gas using self-service than full-service at most gas stations.

pump – the machine at a gas station where you buy gas

* Can you help me with this? I don't think this pump is working.

out of order – not working; broken

* We were in the bathroom so long because three out of the four sinks were out of order.

pay inside – being required to go into the gas station building or store to pay for the gas you buy

* She was sure she was going to be late for work if she had to pay inside for gas.



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pay at the pump – to pay for gasoline by using a bank card or credit card at the pump, or the machine that gives gas

* Some of the independent gas stations don't have the option to pay at the pump.

to swipe – to slide; to move your credit card through a machine quickly to make a payment

* After the clerk told me the total amount for my purchases, I swiped my credit card through the machine.

cap – a removable top to a container to keep things from spilling or falling out

* After pouring a glass of orange juice, he didn't put the cap back on correctly and juice spilled everywhere.

grade – a score given to something to show its level or quality

* My father only eats at restaurants that get a grade of A from the state health department.

unleaded gas – a type of gasoline; the most common type of gasoline sold at gas stations in the U.S.

* I told him to be sure to buy unleaded gas because any other type may hurt the car's engine.

nozzle – the smallest part of the end of a hose, tube, or pipe

* Be careful! I think you just broke the nozzle off the garden hose.

to top off – to add to something that is already full

* She planned to top off the five-course meal with three different kinds of cake.

receipt – a piece of paper that shows the items someone bought and the price

* She told me that I couldn't return the shoes I bought last week without the original receipt.

squeegee – something used to clean windows; a T-shaped object with a strip of sponge on one side to clean and a piece of rubber on the other side to wipe the water off windows

* After cleaning them with some soap and a squeegee, the windows looked brand new.



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COMPREHENSION QUESTIONS

1. How did the person in the story pay for the gas he bought?
 - a) He went inside and gave money to the cashier.
 - b) A gas station employee took his credit card at the full-service pump.
 - c) He swiped his credit card at a self-service pump.

 2. After filling his tank with gas,
 - a) the man bought some snacks.
 - b) the man cleaned his windows with the squeegee.
 - c) the man pushed the button for the grade of unleaded gas.
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WHAT ELSE DOES IT MEAN?

to swipe

The verb “to swipe,” in this podcast, means to slide: “Each employee has an ID card that he or she has to swipe to get into this building.” Another meaning of this verb is to try to hit something with one long motion, or by moving an arm: “The cat swiped at the ball and made it roll under the sofa.” A similar term, “sideswipe,” is used to describe when one car hits another on its side: “Coming home in the rain, another car sideswiped mine, and now, the passenger door doesn’t open properly.” Used in an informal way, “to swipe” can also mean to steal: “The boy was caught trying to swipe all of the candy from the jar when the owner wasn’t looking.”

cap

In this podcast, the word “cap” means a cover or a top to a container: “If I don’t find the cap, I’m going to have to throw out this jar of peanut butter.” “Cap” can also be used as another word for hat: “Baseball caps are worn even by people who don’t play baseball.” The word can also be used to mean a restriction or a limit on something: “She knew she had to put a cap on her spending if she wanted to save enough money for a new car.” In this way, it can also be used as a verb, “to cap”: “The football players went on strike last year because the management wanted to cap their salaries.” Finally, “to cap off” can also be used to mean to add something special at the end of something: “To cap off her long list of victories, the lawyer won a very difficult case just before she retired.”



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CULTURE NOTE

In most cities in the U.S., people depend on their cars, rather than public transportation, for their everyday life. Public transportation is run by the government and usually includes buses, subways, and trains. With the exception of a few big cities such as New York, Boston, and San Francisco, many people think that public transportation is not convenient enough to use everyday, to go work or school, or to travel around town. However, too many cars on the road cause poor air quality, or “air pollution,” which affects people’s health. Having fewer cars on the road also means fewer “traffic jams,” where cars move very slowly or are stopped on the road.

In the past 30 years, the government, private organizations, and businesses have been trying to get people to drive their cars less. Many of these are “incentive” programs that reward people for using other types of transportation. For example, many large cities have “carpool lanes,” or a lane on a road or freeway just for people in cars with at least two or three people. During “rush hour,” or the time of day when the roads are the busiest, people who drive in carpool lanes are less likely to be caught in traffic jams.

Some companies are encouraging their employees to carpool by giving them different types of incentives. For instance, employees who carpool may get a special parking “permit,” or pass, that allows them to park in the most convenient parking spaces at work.

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



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COMPLETE TRANSCRIPT

Welcome to English as a Second Language Podcast number 202, “At the Gas Station.”

This is English as a Second Language Podcast episode 202. I'm your host, Dr. Jeff McQuillan, coming to you from the Center for Educational Development in the beautiful City of Los Angeles, California.

Today's podcast is going to be about going to a gas station to get some gas. Let's go!

[Start of story]

It's been a long time since I've seen my friends Steve and Liz, and I thought this would be a good weekend to drive up to Santa Barbara to see them. Gas prices have been through the roof, but I decided to take the short road trip anyway. Before getting on the road, I went to the gas station to fill up my tank.

I drove past the full-service pump and parked at the first self-service one. I got out of the car and saw that there was an “out of order” sign telling customers to pay inside. I wanted to pay at the pump so I got back into the car and pulled up to the next one. Luckily for me, this one was working.

I swiped my credit card and took the gas cap off. I pushed the button for the grade of unleaded gas I wanted and put the nozzle into my tank. There was a sign on the pump that read, “Do not top off.” After the tank was full, I replaced the nozzle and pressed the button for a receipt. Right when I was about to leave, I noticed that my windows were dirty, so I got the squeegee and some paper towels and cleaned them. Now, I was ready for my drive up north.

[End of story]

Our story today is entitled, “At the Gas Station.” A gas station is a place where you go to buy gasoline. Notice that we use the word gas, “gas,” to mean gasoline, but sometimes it is also used to mean natural gas, the kind of gas that you would use for a stove or an oven in the kitchen, but here it means gasoline.



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We begin the story by me saying that, “It’s been a long time since I’ve seen my friends Steve and Liz, and I thought” that this weekend would be a good one “to drive up to Santa Barbara to see them.” Santa Barbara is located about an hour north of Los Angeles. It’s a city like Los Angeles that is on the Pacific Ocean. It’s a small city compared to Los Angeles, but it’s very popular for people to go on the weekend because it’s nice, it’s small and it’s close to Los Angeles. So, if you want to go somewhere for a short holiday, for a couple of days, it’s very close and convenient. I also mention in the story that I am going “to drive up to Santa Barbara.” We usually say drive up when we are going somewhere north, and drive down when we are going somewhere south. So, here I’m driving up to Santa Barbara. That tells you that it is north of where I am.

I continue the story by saying that, “Gas prices have been through the roof.” The gas price is the amount of money you pay for gasoline. Right now, in the United States, it’s about 50 dollars a gallon, or least it seems like 50 dollars a gallon. When we say the prices for something have been through the roof, “roof,” we mean that they’ve been very high, very expensive. The roof is the covering on your house. It’s the top of a house or a building. So, through the roof would be very expensive, very high.

Even though the “Gas prices have been through the roof, I decided to take the short road trip anyway.” A road, “road,” trip is when you take a trip or a vacation by car, when you drive somewhere. “Before getting on the road,” that is before I started driving, “Before getting on the road, I went to the gas station to fill up my tank.” Your tank, “tank,” is the part of your automobile, your car, where the gas is stored, where you put the gas. To fill up means to make full, and we use that two word verb, fill up, when we are talking about a car and gasoline. Someone may go into to the gas station and say, “Fill ‘er up,” meaning fill my car up with gas.

Well, I go to the gas station to fill up my tank. First, I drive “past the full-service pump.” To drive past means to drive beyond something, to continue driving, not stopping. And here, I’m not stopping at the full-service pump. The pump, “pump,” is what we call the machine that you drive up to in a gas station where you get your gas. The verb, to pump, means to take something out of - usually to draw something out of the ground or out of another big tank. Gas stations have very large tanks underneath the ground, and you have to pump the gas, or get the gas out of the tank into your car’s gas tank. So, we can use that verb, to pump, also for water. When you go and get water out of the ground, you pump it out, you...you make it go up.



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Well, here I'm pumping out gas, and the machine that does this is also called a pump, as a noun. The full-service pump is the pump where someone from the gas station who works for the gas station will put the gas into your car. In most gas stations in the United States the majority of the pumps are not full-service, meaning no one will help you put the gas into the car. You have to do it yourself. If you drive up to a full-service pump, an employee from the gas station will pump it for you. However, you pay more for gas at a full-service pump than you do at a self-service pump. A self-service pump is one where you get out of your car and you pump your own gas. That is, you put your own gas into your tank.

Well, I went to the self-service one because I am cheap. I don't like to spend more money than I have to. "I got out of the car and saw that there was an 'out of order' sign." When we say something is out of order, "order," we mean that it's not working, that it's not functioning properly. In this case, it says that the customer has "to pay inside." So, what is out of order, what is not working, is the credit card machine that you can buy your gas from. The pump is working but the credit card machine is not. Each pump at the gas station has its own credit card machine that you can use so that you don't have to go inside the building in order to pay. But, if you see a sign that says, "pay inside," that means you have to take your credit card into the building and give it to them with. Well, that is not very convenient for people, so most gas stations have credit card machines on the pump itself. Well, this one wasn't working, and because, "I wanted to pay at the pump, I got back into" my car and I drove up, or I "pulled up to the next one." To pay at the pump means that you can use your credit card and you don't have to go inside the building.

Well, "Luckily for me," I say, the next pump had a credit card machine that "was working." So, "I swiped my credit card and took the gas cap off." To swipe, "swipe," is a verb, which we use when talking about putting your card, your credit card, into a credit card machine. Usually in a gas station, you take the card and you put it in and then you pull it out very quickly. That's swiping your card, when you take your card and put it through a credit card machine. We use that verb, to swipe.

Well, "I swiped my credit card and I took the gas cap off." The gas cap, "cap," is what is keeping the gas from coming out of your gas tank in your car. It's a round piece of plastic usually that you put on the top of your gas tank, just like you would put a top onto a bottle. If you have a bottle of ketchup or a bottle of soda



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pop, like Coca-Cola, the top of the bottle has a cap and that prevents the liquid inside from coming out. Well, a gas tank also needs a cap, and you take the cap off in order to put the gas into the tank. “I pushed the button for the grade of unleaded gas I wanted.” There are different grades of gasoline in an American gas station. Usually there are three grades. The cheapest grade - and remember, I'm very cheap - is the unleaded gas. Unleaded, “unleaded,” gas is a type of gasoline. We would say it is a grade, “grade,” of gasoline. We often use that word when we are talking about quality. It's the same word that we use in school to talk about the quality of a student's work. If you get a grade of A that means that it is a very high quality work. I never got very many grades of A in school.

I wanted the lower quality of gasoline - the unleaded gasoline – so “I pushed the button for” that particular grade, and I took the nozzle of the pump and put it “into my tank.” A nozzle, “nozzle,” is a noun, which means the part of the gas pump that you put into the opening of your tank so the gas will go in. The pump is a machine, a square box, usually about five or...four or five feet tall, and it has a hose on it, “hose,” which is a long, round tube through which the gas is pumped. And, at the end of the hose is a nozzle and that's what you put into your gas tank to get the gas in.

Well, “There was a sign on the pump that read, 'Do not top off.'” To top, “top,” off, “off,” two words, means to try to fill your gas tank until it is completely full. This is something that gas stations do not like because if you try to get it completely full, you may spill gasoline on your own car and on the ground, which, of course, could be dangerous, so they ask you “not to top off.” You can fill your tank up, but you can't try to get it completely full. “After the tank was full, I replaced the nozzle,” that is, I took the nozzle out of my gas tank and put it back into the pump, and I “pressed the button for a receipt.” In American gas stations, the credit card machine will ask you if you want a receipt after you stop pumping your gas, after you put the nozzle back into the pump, which tells the machine that you are done pumping gas. A receipt, “receipt,” is a little piece of paper that tells you how much gas you bought.

“Right when I was about to leave, I noticed that my windows were dirty” - the windows of my car - “so I got a squeegee and some paper towels” to clean it. A squeegee, “squeegee,” is something that you use to clean your car windows. It usually has on one side a type of sponge, “sponge.” A sponge is something that holds water; it's soft; you use it to clean. The squeegee usually has a sponge on



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one side, and on the other side, it has a blade, “blade,” which is a thin piece of plastic. And, if you put the plastic against the window, it will take the water off. So, you use the squeegee, which is usually on a stick, maybe a one or two foot stick, and you use the sponge to wash your window and then you flip it over and you use the blade of the squeegee to dry your windows. And, of course, you also can use some paper towels. Well, “Now, I was ready for my drive up north.”

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

[Start of story]

It's been a long time since I've seen my friends Steve and Liz, and I thought this would be a good weekend to drive up to Santa Barbara to see them. Gas prices have been through the roof, but I decided to take the short road trip anyway. Before getting on the road, I went to the gas station to fill up my tank.

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[End of story]

The script for today's podcast was written by the talented Dr. Lucy Tse. Remember to visit our website at eslpod.com. There you can find a complete Learning Guide to this podcast episode. It contains all of the vocabulary we just discussed, the definitions, additional explanations about these topics, culture notes and the complete transcript of this 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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