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**ESL Podcast 223 – A Mistake in the Hotel Bill**

**GLOSSARY**

**bill** – a list of costs that need to be paid

\* Why hasn't the waiter brought us our bill yet? We finished eating twenty minutes ago.

**stay** – the amount of time spent somewhere; a visit

\* I enjoyed my weekend stay with my good friends in San Diego.

**incidentals** – extra costs not included in the basic cost of the hotel room

\* If she had known how expensive the incidentals were, she wouldn't have ordered room service.

**pay-per-view movie** – a movie that can be seen on television at any time, either at home or in a hotel

\* Watching pay-per-view movies is better than going to a movie theater. They aren't very expensive, and you can see them whenever you want.

**spa services** – health or beauty treatments

\* Aunt Juanita owns a beauty salon that offers spa services, such as manicures and massages.

**to be positive** – to have no doubt; to be certain; to be confident that one is correct

\* Are you positive that this is the way to the museum? If not, I think we should stop and ask for directions.

**supervisor** – boss; manager; an employee who is responsible for the work of other employees

\* Peter has to work all weekend, because his supervisor said that the report must be finished by Monday morning.

**on duty** – working; at work

\* The security guards aren't allowed to make personal phone calls while they're on duty.

**to resolve** – to find a solution; to find an answer; to correct an error

\* The two brothers couldn't resolve their disagreement, so they asked their mother for advice.



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**in error** – mistakenly; incorrectly; wrongly

\* The man was in error when he said that his neighbor's daughter threw the ball that broke his window. It was someone else.

**to be switched** – to be exchanged with something else; to be mistaken for something else

\* Would you please switch seats with me? I am too short to see the stage from here.

**to check in** – to register; to sign in; to report one's arrival

\* When you arrive at the conference, be sure to check in to get a program.

**lobby** – an entrance area; the first room seen when entering a building

\* When you enter the lobby, turn right to get to the swimming pool.

**to have a plane to catch** – to need to go to the airport for a flight; to have an airplane ticket for a flight that is leaving soon

\* She has a plane to catch in three hours and she still hasn't packed. She needs to hurry!

**general manager** – an employee who has the main responsibility for a business or organization

\* The company needs to hire a general manager for its new office. Can you recommend anyone?



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**COMPREHENSION QUESTIONS**

1. Why is May in a hurry?
  - a) She has an appointment for spa services.
  - b) She needs to go to the airport.
  - c) She wants to check in to the hotel.
  
2. The hotel clerk:
  - a) Agrees with May that the bill is incorrect.
  - b) Believes that the bill is correct.
  - c) Is going to ask the general manager about the bill.

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**WHAT ELSE DOES IT MEAN?**

**stay**

The word “stay,” in this podcast, refers to the amount of time spent somewhere: “After a three-night stay in Moscow, we took the train to Saint Petersburg.” As a verb, “to stay” means to live somewhere as a guest or visitor: “Which hotel did you stay in while you were visiting Barcelona?” “To stay” can also mean to continue to be in one place: “Carmen has a fever so she is going to stay in bed all day.” Or, “We had planned to be at their house for only a few minutes but we decided to stay there for dinner.” The phrase “to stay out of something” means to not become involved in something: “Please try to stay out of trouble.” “Stay!” is a command that people often use with their pets, especially dogs, when they don’t want them to move.

**lobby**

In this podcast, the word “lobby” means an entrance area or the first room you see when entering a building: “The lobby of our office building has a lot of plants and some very nice furniture.” “Lobby” can also mean a group that tries to influence politicians about a law: “The tobacco lobby fights against laws that would create non-smoking areas in restaurants and bars.” A person who works for a lobby is called a “lobbyist”: “To be successful, a lobbyist needs to be a good speaker and be well informed about current events.” As a verb, “to lobby” means to try to influence a politician about a law: “Environmental groups are lobbying for the creation of more national parks.” Or, “The teachers’ association is lobbying against the proposal to close the high school.”



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**CULTURE NOTE**

In the United States, there are more than 45,000 hotels and more than 4.4 million hotel rooms. When people travel, they can choose to stay in many different types of hotels: big, small, modern, traditional, fancy, simple, expensive, or inexpensive.

A “hotel rating system” can help travelers find the type of hotel that they are looking for. A “rating” is a score that something gets according to its quality or its performance. Unfortunately, there is no nationally accepted rating system. However, many travel websites and travel organizations have created their own hotel rating systems to evaluate hotels. These rating systems give each hotel from one to five stars, depending on the quality of the hotel.

Most of these rating systems evaluate hotels based on their service, “decor” (decoration), comfort, “facilities” (buildings and rooms designed for a special purpose, such as meeting rooms), safety, and location. The highest rating – five stars – is used for the best hotels. The lowest rating, one star, is used for the worst hotels. These ratings are “published” (put into writing) on websites and in tourism information “brochures” (small books with pictures and information).

Most one- and two-star hotels are called “budget hotels” because they are designed for travelers who don’t have very much money. Budget hotels are inexpensive, but they offer only the most basic services. In contrast, most four- and five-star hotels are called “executive hotels,” because they are designed for “executives” (business leaders) who need to travel for their work. Executive hotels can be very expensive, but they offer many services and facilities for business professionals. Common facilities in executive hotels include swimming pools, exercise centers, beauty salons, conference rooms (for meetings), business centers with Internet access, and nice restaurants.

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



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**COMPLETE TRANSCRIPT**

Welcome to English as a Second Language Podcast number 223: A Mistake in the Hotel Bill.

This is English as a Second Language Podcast episode 223. I'm your host, Dr. Jeff McQuillan, coming to you from the Center for Educational Development in beautiful Los Angeles, California.

Visit our website at [eslpod.com](http://eslpod.com) and download the eight to ten page Learning Guide for this episode. You can find all of the vocabulary, definitions, additional definitions, culture notes and a complete transcript of this episode. Remember, if you have a question or comment about ESL Podcast, you can email us at [eslpod@eslpod.com](mailto:eslpod@eslpod.com).

This episode is called, "A Mistake in the Hotel Bill." Let's get started.

[Start of story]

Hotel clerk: Here's the bill for your four-night stay. Would you like the incidentals charged to your credit card?

May: Incidentals? I think there's some mistake. I didn't order any pay-per-view movies and I never ordered room service. And, I didn't have any spa services, either.

Hotel clerk: Are you sure? We show three movies and two room service orders.

May: I'm positive. Could I speak to a supervisor, please?

Hotel clerk: He's not on duty right now, but let me see if I can resolve this for you. How many of these charges were made in error?

May: All of them. Is it possible that my bill was switched with another room's? As I said, I didn't order any movies, I haven't had any room service, and I haven't visited the spa since I checked in to the hotel.

Hotel clerk: I see. I'll need to check with each of those departments to determine whether a mistake has been made.

May: How long will this take?



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Hotel clerk: Not long, I'm sure. If you could take a seat in the lobby...

May: I have a plane to catch and I don't have a lot of time. Is there a general manager I can speak to?

Hotel clerk: I'm not sure. If you'll have a seat, I'll see if I can get Ms. Cardenes for you.

May: Thank you. I'd appreciate it.

[End of story]

In our dialogue, we heard May and a hotel clerk having a conversation.

The hotel clerk says, "Here's the bill for your four-night stay. Would you like the incidentals charged to your credit card?" The bill is what the person has to pay. A four-night stay, "stay," means that the person slept in the hotel for four nights. You can say a four-night stay, a two-night stay, a one-week stay. Stay, here, means the amount of time you are somewhere or you are visiting somewhere.

There are other meanings of that word, stay, and we talk about those in the Learning Guide today.

The clerk also asks if the woman, May, would "like the incidentals charged to" her "credit card." Incidentals, "incidentals," are extra or additional costs that you have to pay for. For example, if you stay at an American Hotel and you make a phone call, that might be extra - that might not be included in your overall bill. So, they are going to charge you more money if you make a phone call, especially if you make a long-distance phone call.

May says, "Incidentals? I think there's some mistake." She doesn't think that she has any incidental charges or any additional costs that she has to pay. She then goes on and says that "I didn't order any pay-per-view movies and I never ordered room service. And, I didn't have any spa services, either." Pay-per-view, which is often hyphenated, "pay-per-view," are movies that you can watch in a hotel room and, in many cities, your own home if you have cable television or satellite television that you pay extra for. They're not included in the normal price of, in this case, the hotel room. Normally they charge eight, nine, maybe ten dollars a movie in a hotel, so they're not cheap - they're not inexpensive.



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She says that she didn't watch any of these movies and she “never ordered room service.” Room service is food that you would get from the kitchen brought up to your room. She also says that she didn't go to the spa - she “didn't have spa,” “spa,” “services.” And, these are health or beauty treatments - going and getting your toenails and fingernails cut, for example, or having a massage. These would be things that you would find at a very fancy or very expensive hotel, and they would be called spa services or spa services.

The hotel clerk questions her, “Are you sure? We show three movies and two room service orders.”

And May says, “I'm positive.” The expression to be positive means that you are absolutely sure - you have no doubt - you're certain that this is the truth. May says, “I'm positive. Could I speak to a supervisor, please?” Supervisor would be the boss or a person at a higher level in the hotel.

The hotel clerk says, “He's not on duty right now.” To be on duty, “duty,” means to be working - to be at the hotel, in this case. Well, the hotel clerk says the manager or the supervisor isn't “on duty, but” he says, “let me see if I can resolve this for you.” To resolve, “resolve,” means, really, to solve a problem, and that's what he's trying to do, to solve this problem - to find a solution for the problem.

The clerk then asks May, “How many of these charges were made in error?” In error means by mistake - someone did something wrong.

May says, “All of the them.” All of the charges are a mistake - they're in error. “Is it possible,” she asks, “that my bill was switched with another room's?” To switch means to change, usually when one person or one thing is changed for another, often by accident. She's saying here maybe I have someone else's bill - my bill was switched with someone else's.

She continues to go on and say that she “didn't order any movies” and she didn't have “any room service,” and she didn't visit the spa during her stay at the hotel. She says, “I haven't visited the spa since I checked in to the hotel.” To check in would mean to register or to sign in. When you first come to the hotel, the first day you are there, you check in. You get your key; you give them your credit card and so forth.

The hotel clerk says, “I see” meaning I understand. “I'll need to check with each of those departments to determine whether a mistake has been made.” He's



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saying here that he has to call or talk to the spa and the kitchen for the room service and so forth.

May says, “How long will this take?” How long is this going to be? The hotel clerk says, “Not long, I’m sure. If you could take a seat in the lobby...” meaning if you want to go sit down and wait in the lobby while I make these phone calls. The lobby, “lobby,” is the main part of the hotel - the entrance to the hotel, where you can sit and people can wait.

The word lobby is one that has several different meanings, take a look at the Learning Guide for today for the other meanings of that word, lobby.

May isn't too happy. She says, “I have a plane to catch,” meaning I have a airplane that I need to get to - I have to go to the airport so I can get on my plane. “I have a plane to catch and I don’t have a lot of time. Is there a general manager I can speak” with? Now she's asking to talk, not just with the hotel clerk's supervisor or boss, but with the main boss of the hotel - the general manager.

The hotel clerk says, “I’m not sure. If you’ll have a seat, I’ll see if I can get Ms. Cardenes for you.” He's going to see if he can get the hotel manager. May says, “Thank you. I’d appreciate it.” I'd appreciate it meaning I would be very thankful if you could do that. It's a polite thing to say when someone is going to do something for you.

What we're going to do for you is read this dialogue, this time at a regular, or normal, speed.

[Start of story]

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Hotel clerk: I see. I'll need to check with each of those departments to determine whether a mistake has been made.

May: How long will this take?

Hotel clerk: Not long, I'm sure. If you could take a seat in the lobby...

May: I have a plane to catch and I don't have a lot of time. Is there a general manager I can speak to?

Hotel clerk: I'm not sure. If you'll have a seat, I'll see if I can get Ms. Cardenes for you.

May: Thank you. I'd appreciate it.

[End of story]

The script for this podcast episode was written by Dr. Lucy Tse.

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

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