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## **GLOSSARY**

**to come up with (something)** – to think of something, usually a new idea or a solution to a problem

\* How did you come up with that idea? I've never heard anything like it before.

**holiday promotion** – activities to increase sales during the holiday season, usually in November and December

\* The store's holiday promotions are incredible! They sell everything at 30% off of its regular price.

**inroad** – progress; advancement

\* Japanese car companies rapidly made inroads into the U.S. automobile industry.

**gift-buying market** – the economic market of people (group of buyers) who buy presents

\* Was there an increase in the gift-buying market during February for Valentine's Day?

**retail sales** – sales of small number of products to individual buyers (not to other businesses)

\* Because it was extremely hot last August, retail sales of air conditioners increased significantly that summer.

**sales cycle** – the same time of year when there are very high or low sales

\* Most types of products have predictable sales cycles. For example, sales of school supplies and children's clothing are highest right before the school year begins.

**innovative** – new and creative; original

\* Everyone admires her innovative ideas for making this a better team this year.

**brick-and-mortar store** – a business that serves customers in a real store, not through a website

\* My mother likes to see and touch what she's buying, so she prefers shopping at brick-and-mortar stores.

**computer savvy** – knowledgeable about computers

\* Today, children are often more computer savvy than their parents are.



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**more likely than ever** – more likely now than anytime before; more probable than before

\* Harold's boss yelled at him yesterday in front of all of the other employees, and now it's more likely than ever that he'll quit his job.

**to capitalize on** – to take advantage of, to profit from

\* The team capitalized on its early lead and won the game by more than 20 points.

**to slash prices** – to greatly reduce prices, usually during a sale

\* When one company slashes prices, many competing companies feel pressured to do the same because they fear losing their customers.

**inventory** – a complete list of what is in a place, such as the products a store has available for sale

\* We are closing our store for two days to do an inventory of what we have in the store.

**stock** – the number of products that a store has available for sale

\* I'm sorry, sir, but we don't have that product in stock, but I think our downtown store does.

**gimmick** – an unusual or clever trick to encourage people to buy something

\* His sales gimmicks were so annoying that most people left the store without buying anything.

**to jump-start** – to start quickly

\* He jump-started his career in business by getting a graduate degree when he was very young.

**to count on (someone)** – to rely on someone; to depend on someone

\* I can't attend the meeting so I'm counting on you to tell me what was discussed.



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### COMPREHENSION QUESTIONS

1. How does this company plan to enter the gift-buying market?
    - a) By opening a brick-and-mortar store.
    - b) By thinking of creative ideas for holiday promotion.
    - c) By slashing prices.
  
  2. This company's customers:
    - a) Like to buy products online.
    - b) Like to buy products from companies that use sales gimmicks.
    - c) Like to buy products at brick-and-mortar stores.
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### WHAT ELSE DOES IT MEAN?

#### **promotion**

The word “promotion,” in this podcast, means the things a business does to increase sales: “The new store is offering a great promotion this month: if customers buy two sweaters, a third sweater is free.” “Promotion” can also refer to activities that encourage people to support an idea or belief: “The Center for the Promotion of Peace works to prevent wars in Asian countries.” As a verb, “to promote” means to help sell a product: “Authors often promote their books by signing them in a public place, like a bookstore.” The verb “to promote” can also mean to help something happen: “Supporting private businesses is one way that governments can promote economic growth.” Another meaning of “promotion” is a move to a better job: “She received a promotion to vice-president of sales because of her excellent work on the sales team.”

#### **stock**

In this podcast, the word “stock” means the amount of products that a store has available to sell: “We need to order more AA batteries because we’re out of stock.” Or, “Are any of the blue dishes still in stock, or have we sold them all?” A “stock” can also be a share in a company, making you one of the owners: “I wish I had bought stock in that company ten years ago.” A “stock” is also a liquid used to make soups: “My mother makes an excellent vegetable stock by boiling carrots, onions, and potatoes in water for two hours.” As a verb, “to stock up” means to buy a large quantity of something to use later: “We stocked up on so much toilet paper when it was on sale that we won’t need to buy anymore this year.”



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### CULTURE NOTE

Stores in the United States often offer “sales” to attract customers. Sales are short periods of time when the prices of certain of products are reduced or lowered. There are many different types of sales.

Some sales offer low prices for specific categories of products. For example, a “white sale” offers lower prices for “household goods” such as towels, dishes, sheets, blankets, and small kitchen electronics, such as a coffee maker. “Back-to-school sales” happen in late August, before the academic year begins in September. During a back-to-school sale, school supplies (such as paper, notebooks, pens, and pencils), children’s clothing, and backpacks cost less than usual.

Other sales, such as Memorial Day sales and Labor Day sales, are related to specific U.S. holidays. The most famous of these sales is the “day-after-Thanksgiving sale,” which happens in late November on Friday after the Thanksgiving holiday. This day is also called “Black Friday,” because the phrase “in the black” means to make money (“in the red” means to lose money). This is the biggest shopping day of the year and many people stand in lines in front of stores for hours so that they can be the first ones to enter the store when it opens. Prices on certain items are extremely low, and some stores offer free gifts to the first 100 customers who enter the store that day.

An “early-bird sale” offers low prices to shoppers who arrive at the store early in the morning, sometimes as early as 6:00 a.m. Recently some businesses, especially “car dealerships” (stores selling cars), offer “employee-pricing sales.” These sales offer the general public the same “discounted” (lower) prices that are normally offered only to the store’s employees.

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



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### COMPLETE TRANSCRIPT

Welcome to English as a Second Language Podcast number 224: Holiday Promotions.

This is English as a Second Language Podcast episode 224. I'm your host, Dr. Jeff McQuillan, coming to you from the Center for Educational Development in beautiful Los Angeles, California. How are you today?

In this podcast, we are going to talk about buying things, or actually, selling things for the holiday season. Remember, this episode will also have a Learning Guide on our website. The Learning Guides include all of the vocabulary, definitions, sample sentences, additional definitions that we don't talk about on the podcast, cultural notes and a free trip to Los Angeles. Well okay, not a free trip to Los Angeles, but everything else is on the Learning Guide! You can find those that at [eslpod.com](http://eslpod.com). Now let's get started.

[Start of story]

My boss asked me to come up with some holiday promotion ideas so that we can make inroads into the gift-buying market. For us to stay competitive, our company has to increase retail sales for this important sales cycle. My boss is expecting some innovative ideas from me.

Since we're an online business and not a brick-and-mortar store, we can't just put signs in the window or do other types of traditional advertising. Lucky for us, though, consumers are increasingly computer savvy and are more likely than ever to buy online. That's something we want to capitalize on.

Like other companies, we're willing to slash prices to attract holiday shoppers. We have a large inventory and we don't have to worry about running out of stock. The trick is, how do we increase sales without resorting to gimmicks? Dressing up salespeople to look like Santa Claus may work for some businesses but not ours.

I'm just hoping that I can come up with some fresh ideas to jump-start this sales season. I know that my boss is counting on me.

[End of story]



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The title for our podcast today is “Holiday Promotions.” Holiday, when we are talking about December in the United States, means Christmas and the Jewish celebration of Chanukah. A promotion, “promotion,” is when a company tries to sell something; it's like a sale. It's something special a store will do to try to get people to buy gifts - buy things from their store. That's one meaning of the word promotion, for additional meanings take a look at today's Learning Guide.

Our story begins by the woman saying that her boss had asked her “to come up with some holiday promotion ideas.” To come, “come,” up with is an idiom, which means to think of - to invent - to create a new idea. “I'm going to come up with some new things to do on ESL Podcast” - I'm going to create - I'm going to invent. That is the meaning of that expression.

So, she has “to come up with some holiday promotion ideas,” and the reason she's doing this is that her company wants to “make inroads into the gift-buying market.” To make inroads, “inroads,” (all one word) means to make progress - to advance. Usually, we use this when we are talking about moving into a new area - making progress into a new and sometimes difficult area for our company or for whatever organization you're a member of.

Well, this company wants to make progress - inroads - into gift-buying markets or “the gift-buying market.” The market is the group of people who will buy and sell things, in this case, will buy things. She's talking about the gift-buying - people who will buy gifts - buy presents for the holiday season. The word gift-buying is hyphenated, “gift-buying.” You could also say, “the car-buying public,” or “car-buying market,” or “the PlayStation Portable Three-buying public.” You can use that “-buying” with any sort of product or whatever is being sold.

She continues by saying that for her company “to stay competitive,” meaning to be as good as other companies, they have “to increase retail sales for this important sales cycle.” Retail, “retail,” refers to things that you, as an individual, go in and buy in a store; that would be retail. The opposite of retail is wholesale, “wholesale,” (one word) and wholesale is when companies buy from other companies, usually things that they are going to use and make for their own product.

This company wants to increase its retail sales in “this important sales cycle.” The word cycle, “cycle,” here just means the time or season of the year - the particular period that we're talking about. For more information on the kinds of sales that are popular in the United States, take a look at the culture note in today's Learning Guide.



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The story continues with the woman saying that they have “an online business, not a brick-and-mortar store.” Brick-and-mortar has become more popular in recent years as a way of distinguishing an online store - a website store - with a physical store - an actual store that you can go and visit. The physical store would be called a brick-and-mortar store. Brick, “brick,” is a kind of baked clay that usually is in the form of a rectangle, and it's used to make buildings. It's a material for making buildings. Mortar is a kind of cement that you put in between the bricks to keep the bricks together - to keep them from falling down.

She later says that “consumers” - people who buy their products - the things they sell - “are increasingly,” or in higher and higher numbers, “computer savvy.” To be savvy, “savvy,” means to be knowledgeable about something - to know a lot about a particular topic. Customers are “computer savvy,” and because of that, “are more likely than ever to buy online.” The expression “more likely than ever” means that they have a better chance of doing this than before - that things have changed in such a way that now it is much easier or much more likely - much more probable - that they will do this.

“That’s something we want to capitalize on,” she says. To capitalize, “capitalize,” means, in this case, to take advantage of - to profit from. The word capitalize, as a verb, can also mean to make a letter bigger versus smaller. The first letter of a sentence in English is capitalized; you capitalize the letter. Here it means something very different; it means to take advantage of.

“Like other companies,” she says, her company is “willing to slash prices to attract holiday shoppers.” To slash, “slash,” means, here, to cut or to reduce. So, the company will lower the prices in order to get more people to buy - “to attract holiday shoppers.” Shoppers is just another name for consumers.

She says that they “have a large inventory.” Inventory, “inventory,” is a word we use to describe how much of a particular product you have. Usually, it's a list of what is in place, such as all of the things in your store. So, if you sell cars and you have ten cars to sell, you have ten cars in your inventory.

Because her company has “a large inventory” - they have a lot of things they can sell - they're not worried “about running out of stock,” “stock.” Stock is the number of things that you have in your store. The expression “out of stock” means you don't have any of that in your store to sell. The opposite of out of stock would be in stock. So, you may ask someone at the store, “Do you have this shirt in stock,” means do you have it here at your store. Again, like many



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words in English, stock has several different meanings; take a look at the Learning Guide today for additional meanings.

The woman is worried, in our story, about increasing “sales without resorting to gimmicks.” A gimmick, “gimmick,” is some unusual trick that would encourage people to do something, usually to buy something. Resorting to - the verb to resort to - means that it is not something that you want to do. It's going lower in terms of your standards or what you think is acceptable. “Don't resort to calling people bad names,” that means don't go that low in terms of your standards or your ethics or your morals.

Here, when she says, “resorting to gimmicks,” she means that it's not something they want to do - they don't want to have gimmicks to sell their products. She gives an example of that as “Dressing up salespeople to look like Santa Claus,” that would be a gimmick - a trick to get people to buy more.

She ends her story by saying that she hopes she “can come up with some fresh ideas,” or new ideas, “to jump-start this sales season.” The expression to jump, “jump,” start, “start,” means to begin something quickly, usually to begin something that is difficult to start. In this case, she wants to jump-start sales - she wants increase the sales quickly right at the beginning.

She says, finally, that she knows that her boss is counting on her. To count, “count,” on someone means to rely or depend on something or someone.

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. Remember, if you have a suggestion or comment about this podcast, you can email us. Our email address is [eslpod@eslpod.com](mailto:eslpod@eslpod.com).

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

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