



ESL Podcast 249 – At a Casino

GLOSSARY

slot machine – a machine where one puts in a coin and pushes a button to move the images (pictures) inside the machine, and if three images are the same, one receives a prize of a lot of coins

* Grandma likes to play the five-cent slot machines because with just ten dollars, she can play all night.

jackpot – a large amount of money; the maximum amount of money that one can win when playing a game

* The jackpot for this game is one million dollars!

to break even – to win the same amount of money that one has already lost

* When I had lost \$100, I started to get very nervous, but fortunately a few minutes later, I won \$100 and broke even.

to rub off on (someone) – to be contagious; to move from one person to another

* Basho is so smart! We should start spending more time with him, to see if some of his intelligence rubs off on us.

high roller – a person who bets a lot of money at a casino

* High rollers sometimes bet thousands of dollars on a single game.

blackjack table – where people play a card game, trying to get cards that are close to but not more than 21 points

* Pete lost \$250 at the blackjack table last night. He isn't very good at card games.

roulette – a game where a small ball is dropped onto a moving round plate with numbers and people bet money on which number the ball will land on

* Don't touch the roulette wheel while it's moving or you might change which number the ball lands on!

high-stakes – very risky, where a lot of money can be won or lost

* In her job, Naomi is responsible for some very high-stakes deals that are worth millions of dollars.

to bet – to make a guess about how a game will end, so that if one is correct one receives more money, but if one is wrong one loses the money that one has bet

* Luke bet \$415 that the black horse would win the race, but when it fell and broke its leg, he lost all his money.



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comps – “complimentary;” free gifts that casinos give to the players who are betting large amounts of money, such as free meals or a night stay at the hotel
* When Yvonne started placing big bets in Las Vegas, the casinos gave her lots of comps, including a free room and free meals.

to gamble – to bet or risk money on a game or race
* We spent the night gambling and stopped only when we lost all of our money.

to bankroll – to provide money usually for someone else to play casino games
* Lisbet doesn't have enough money to go to casinos, but her uncle is bankrolling her to keep her busy.

to count cards – to remember which cards have already been seen in a game, so that one can make better bets
* You'd better not get caught counting cards while you're playing with your friends. They won't be your friends for long!

to try my hand at – to try to do something for the first time, especially to play a game or to make something
* Shelly's learning how to cook and today she has decided to try her hand at making lasagna.

to get kicked out of (somewhere) – to be told to leave a place
* Last night, a group of men were kicked out of the bar because they were yelling and fighting with each other.

casino – a place where gambling games are played
* In the United States, each state has a minimum age (usually 18 or 21) for people who can go into casinos.

tournament – a competition with many different games to see who is the best player or team
* Are you going to watch the final game in this year's soccer tournament?

chips – small, round pieces of plastic that represent money and are used in casino games to make bets on a game
* In most casino games, a white chip is worth \$1, a red chip is worth \$5, a blue chip is worth \$10, a green chip is worth \$25, and a black chip is worth \$100.

dice – plastic cubes used to play games, and each of the six sides has 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, or 6 dots
* When Rita rolled the dice, they fell off the table, so she had to roll again.



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COMPREHENSION QUESTIONS

1. How much money did Hannah lose before winning \$80 on the slot machine?
 - a) The entire jackpot.
 - b) \$80, the same amount she won.
 - c) One bankroll.

 2. Tad tells Hanna that to count cards is:
 - a) A good way to win in card games.
 - b) A bad idea.
 - c) Easy to learn.
-

WHAT ELSE DOES IT MEAN?

to bet

The verb “to bet,” in this podcast, means to make a guess about how a game will end, so that if one is correct one receives more money, but if one is wrong, one loses all the money that he or she has bet: “Bhawna bet \$100 in that poker game, and she was really happy when she won!” The verb “to bet” can also mean that one believes that something is true or that something will happen: “Looking at the sky, I bet it’s going to rain this afternoon.” People sometimes say, “I bet!” to show that they understand how another person feels. For example, if one person says, “I was really tired after working 60 hours last week,” the other person might respond by saying, “I bet!” to show that he or she understands.

chips

In this podcast, the word “chips” means small, round pieces of plastic that represent money and are used in casino games to make bets on a game: “I thought that black chips were \$1, but they’re actually \$100, so I lost a lot of money.” The word “chips” also means thinly sliced pieces of potato that are cooked in oil and salted: “Sunder likes to eat potato chips with his lunch everyday.” A “chip” is also the place on a piece of glass, ceramics, or wood where a small piece has broken off: “Be careful when you drink from that cup, because there is a small chip near the top.” The phrase, “he’s a chip off the old block” refers to someone who is very similar to his or her father: “Leo is a chip off the old block. He dresses just like his dad.”



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CULTURE NOTE

In the United States, gambling is “illegal” (against the law) in most states. However, “reservations” or communities of Native American populations are allowed to make their own laws, and many of them have decided to make gambling legal. They have opened many casinos on their reservations and people travel for many miles to gamble there.

The casinos are usually very large buildings with restaurants, bars, and hotels. They are usually far from large cities. Inside the casinos, people can play slot machines, roulette, poker, blackjack, and many other gambling games.

Gambling on reservations is known as “Indian gaming” and it is very “controversial,” which means that some people think it is good, and other people think it is bad. The people who don’t like Indian gaming say that it encourages people to gamble and to lose money, and that it hurts their families. They also think that it isn’t fair that Native American communities are the only people allowed to build casinos in most states.

People who like Indian gaming say that the casinos are an important source of “income” or money for the Native American “tribes” or small Indian nations. Because the tribes don’t have to pay federal, state, or local taxes, Indian gaming is very “profitable,” meaning it makes a lot of money for tribes that have been very poor. Most of the casinos give a lot of their money to a tribal organization that supports other community groups working on important “causes” such as education, environmental protection, or health programs.

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



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COMPLETE TRANSCRIPT

Welcome to English as a Second Language Podcast number 249: At a Casino.

This is English as a Second Language Podcast episode number 249. I'm your host, Dr. Jeff McQuillan, coming to you from the Center for Educational Development in beautiful Los Angeles, California.

Remember to visit our website at eslpod.com. You can get the transcript of the dialogue of this episode, as well as our complete Learning Guide.

This episode is called "At a Casino." A casino, "casino," is a place where you go to gamble. Las Vegas, Nevada, is the most famous place in the United States for casinos. Let's go!

[start of story]

Hanna: Where have you been? I've been trying to find you. I just won \$80 from this slot machine. It's not the jackpot, but now I've broken even.

Tad: That's really great. Maybe some of your luck will rub off on me. I'm just about to see what the high rollers are doing. Do you want to come with me to check out the blackjack tables or roulette?

Hanna: I'm not that good at those high-stakes games, where people bet hundreds of dollars on a single play! I'd like to get the comps they get, but I don't have that kind of money to gamble with.

Tad: Yeah, I wish I had somebody rich to bankroll me, too.

Hanna: I'll just come and watch you play. You know, I wish I knew how to count cards. Then, I might try my hand at poker.

Tad: Don't even think about counting cards. If you get caught, you'd get kicked out of this casino in a minute. Hey, there's a poker tournament going on over there. I want to go watch that later. But first, I want to get my hands on some chips or some dice. I'm feeling lucky.

Hanna: Let's go.

[end of story]



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This is a dialogue between Hanna and Tad. Hanna begins by asking Tad “Where have you been?” Hanna has been trying to find Tad to tell him that she “just won \$80 from” a “slot machine.” A slot, “slot,” machine is a gambling machine where you put in a quarter or a dollar in coins and you either push a button or pull what we would call a lever, “lever,” and that causes the numbers - the pictures - inside the machine to go around, and there are usually three of these images and if all three images are the same, then you win a prize. So, it's a type of gambling machine - a slot machine. Some people just call them the slots. Those are the machines that you can play sometimes for as little as a nickel - five cents - but usually they're a quarter - 25 cents - or a dollar.

Hanna says that she didn't win the jackpot, but she's “broken even.” The jackpot, “jackpot,” (one word) is a large amount of money in a casino when you are gambling. Usually the verb we use is hit the jackpot. “I hit the jackpot,” that can mean I've won a lot of money or it can mean I've been very successful at something. You might hear somebody say, “When I met my wife, I hit the jackpot, ‘not that she's rich - though that would be nice, too - but she is so wonderful she's like winning a prize.

Hanna says that she's “broken even.” To break even is an expression that means to win, in this case, the same amount of money back that you bet - that you gave. So, if you put 20 dollars into a slot machine, and then you win 20 dollars back, you've broken even. Businesses also break even when they get more or the same amount of money in as they are spending to produce their product. After you break even - what's sometimes called the break even point - then you start to make a profit.

Tad says, “That's really great. Maybe some of your luck will rub off on me.” When we say something will rub off on someone, we mean it will move from one person to the other. Usually it's something that you use for a positive quality - “Maybe some of your luck will rub off on me,” meaning maybe I'll be lucky now.

Tad says he's “just about to see what the high rollers are doing.” The high, “high,” rollers, “rollers,” are people who spend a lot of money at a casino - people who gamble a lot of money, who bet 100 dollars on a pair of cards - that would be a high roller.

“Do you want to come with me to check out the blackjack tables or roulette,” Tad asks. Blackjack, “blackjack,” (one word) is a game. It is a card game where you try to get 21 points. A blackjack table is a place in the casino where they play blackjack. Usually there's one person, who works for the casino, who we call the dealer, “dealer.” The dealer deals the cards - he gives people the cards - and



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you play against the dealer; if you beat the dealer, then you get money. Usually there are five, maybe six people sitting at this table.

Roulette, “roulette,” is a game where a small ball is dropped or put into a moving round plate, and there are numbers on this plate - it's almost like a bowl - and the ball drops into the bowl and it bounces around, and then it stops at a number. We would say it lands, “lands,” on a number, and whichever number the ball landed on, that person, if they bet money on that number, would win money.

Hanna says that she's “not good at those high-stakes games, where people bet hundreds of dollars on a single play.” High-stakes, “high stakes,” (either two words or with a hyphen in between) is something that is very risky, where you can win or lose a lot of money. To bet, “bet,” means to make a guess about how something will end so that the correct person wins money and the wrong guess means you lose money. More generally, however, a bet, when we talk about a casino, to bet means to put money into a machine or to risk money in hopes that you will win more money back.

Hanna says, “I'd like to get the comps” the high rollers get, “but I don't have that kind of money to gamble with.” Comps, “comps,” is short for complimentary, which is another word that means free. In a casino, comps are things that the casino gives the high rollers - people who spend a lot of money - they give them certain things so that they will continue to gamble at their casino. To gamble, “gamble,” means to bet or to risk money on a game, or perhaps, on a race of horses you could gamble - lots of things you can gamble on.

The expression, “I don't have that kind of money,” means I don't have that much money. When someone says, “I don't have that kind of cash” - “I don't have that kind of money,” they mean they don't have that much - they don't have enough.

Tad says, “Yeah, I wish I had somebody rich to bankroll me.” To bankroll, “bankroll,” (one word) means to give money to someone, in this case, to give money to someone so they can gamble. You can bankroll a business, for example - that's also a gamble! But here, Tad means someone to give him money so he can play at the casino.

Hanna says, “I'll just come and watch you play. You know, I wish I knew how to count cards. Then, I might try my hand at poker.” To count cards is to remember which cards have been played in a game so that you can make a better bet. In most casinos in the United States, counting cards is not allowed - they don't like people who count cards.



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Hanna says she wants to try her “hand at poker.” The expression to try your hand, “hand,” at something means to do something for the first time, often when we are talking about a game. “I’m going to try my hand at roulette” - I’ve never played roulette before, but I’m going to try it.

Interestingly, the word hand is also the word we use for the cards that you get in a game of poker, which is a card game. You talk about your hand; those are the cards that you are given by the dealer in blackjack or in poker.

Poker is a game that usually involves each person getting five cards. The person with what we would call the best hand - the person who has the highest cards or the best kind of cards - would win. The game of poker has its own vocabulary that we don’t have time to go into today, maybe in another podcast.

Tad says, “Don’t even think about counting cards.” When we use that expression, don’t even think about it, you’re warning somebody not to do something.

Tad says that “If you get caught,” meaning if the casino realizes that you are trying to count cards, you’ll “get kicked out of this casino in a minute.” To be kicked out of somewhere means to be told to leave. You could be kicked out of your house if your wife doesn’t like what you have been doing, so be careful! Tad says Hanna could be “kicked out in a minute.” In a minute means immediately or right away - very soon.

Tad says that “there’s a poker tournament going on over” on another side of the casino. A tournament, “tournament,” is a formal competition - a game - usually many different games to see who is the best player.

Tad says that he doesn’t want to go there right now; he wants to get his “hands on” - meaning he wants to get some - “chips or some dice.” Chips, “chips,” has a couple of different meanings. In this episode, chips are small, usually round pieces of plastic that represent money. So, you don’t put actual money on the table when you are betting, say, in blackjack or poker, you use these colored chips - these little pieces of plastic. At the end of the night, you take your chips and you cash them in. To cash in your chips means to get real money back, the amount of money equal to the kind of and number of chips you have. For additional definitions of this word chips, take a look at the Learning Guide for today.

Dice, “dice,” is the plural of the word die, “die,” as a noun, and those are little cubes - little pieces of plastic or wood that have six sides on them, each side has



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a number, usually a little dot. There's one, two, three, four, five, six - so each side has either one, two, three, four, five or six dots, and dice are used in playing certain kinds of gambling games.

Now let's take a listen to the dialogue at a normal speed.

[start of story]

Hanna: Where have you been? I've been trying to find you. I just won \$80 from this slot machine. It's not the jackpot, but now I've broken even.

Tad: That's really great. Maybe some of your luck will rub off on me. I'm just about to see what the high rollers are doing. Do you want to come with me to check out the blackjack tables or roulette?

Hanna: I'm not that good at those high-stakes games, where people bet hundreds of dollars on a single play! I'd like to get the comps they get, but I don't have that kind of money to gamble with.

Tad: Yeah, I wish I had somebody rich to bankroll me, too.

Hanna: I'll just come and watch you play. You know, I wish I knew how to count cards. Then, I might try my hand at poker.

Tad: Don't even think about counting cards. If you get caught, you'd get kicked out of this casino in a minute. Hey, there's a poker tournament going on over there. I want to go watch that later. But first, I want to get my hands on some chips or some dice. I'm feeling lucky.

Hanna: Let's go.

[end of story]

The script for today's podcast was written by Dr. Lucy Tse.

If you have a question or comment, be sure to email us. Our email address is 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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