



ESL Podcast 270 – Airport Announcements

GLOSSARY

attention – a word used to ask a particular group of people to listen carefully to whatever is said next

* Attention shoppers. The owner of a green Honda with license plate number SKW 394 has left the car's lights on in our parking lot.

departure gate – the seating area in an airport where passengers wait for their specific flight to leave

* The departure gate is at the other end of the airport, so we need to hurry!

flight information – information about when and where flights will arrive (come) and depart (leave)

* We can call the airline a few hours before we go to the airport to ask for updated flight information, just in case there has been a change in the schedule.

monitor – a television or computer screen that shows information

* Most hospital beds are next to monitors that show how quickly the patient's heart is beating.

opposite direction – backward; behind; 180° from the direction one was going early

* We thought the lake was east of town, but it's actually west, so we have to drive in the opposite direction.

to approach – to move nearer to something; to come closer to something

* Slow down! You're approaching a school zone with a lot of children nearby.

to be delayed – to be rescheduled to arrive later than originally planned

* We were supposed to fly from Houston to Portland and then from Portland to Eugene, but we missed our second flight because the first flight was delayed for three hours.

flight crew – the pilots and flight attendants; the airline employees who work on the plane while it is flying in the air

* Members of flight crews get to fly all over the world, but they very rarely get to see foreign cities because they're always in the plane or at the airport.

ground crew – the airline employees who work outside to prepare the plane for flying

* Members of the ground crew fix things that are broken on the plane, clean the seating area, and move suitcases from the plane to the airport.



ESL Podcast 270 – Airport Announcements

to de-ice – to remove ice from an airplane before it can fly

* Planes have to be de-iced before they can fly again, or else they won't be able to get off the ground.

wing – one of the two long “arms” of an airplane that are on each side and keep the plane in the air

* I was excited to have a window seat on the plane, but unfortunately it was over the wing, so I wasn't able to see the view.

aircraft – airplane; plane

* The Boeing 737 is a popular type of aircraft.

departure time – the time when a plane is scheduled to leave (depart)

* The plane's departure time was 4:55 p.m., but we couldn't leave until 7:15 because of bad weather.

gate agent – the airline employee who works where people are waiting for a plane, changing people's seats, making announcements, and taking tickets

* The gate agent said that anyone with tickets in rows 15-30 can get on the plane now.

to overbook – to sell more tickets than the number of seats on an airplane

* There were 130 people waiting for a plane that had only 125 seats, because the airline overbooked the flight by selling five extra tickets.

travel voucher – a piece of paper that gives someone a certain amount of credit (money that can be spent only with one airline) for a future trip

* Delma received a \$120 travel voucher for Aerial Airlines, but she has to use it before the end of the year.

worth – valued at; with a monetary value of; for the amount of

* Her diamond ring is worth \$1,200. I would be scared to wear something that expensive!

to get bumped – to be asked to take another flight because the original flight that one was supposed to take is already full

* Bobbie got bumped from her evening flight to Anchorage to one that would leave in the morning, so the airline paid for her hotel room.



ESL Podcast 270 – Airport Announcements

music to (one’s) ears – very good news; something that one hears that makes one feel happy and relieved

* Miko was very worried about his wife driving in the snow, so it was music to his ears when she called and said that she had arrived safely.

to board – to get on a plane, bus, or train

* Families with small children are sometimes allowed to board planes before the other passengers do.

COMPREHENSION QUESTIONS

1. Why does the man in the story walk in the opposite direction?
 - a) Because he decided to go home.
 - b) Because he needed to see the monitors.
 - c) Because he had to go to a different gate.
2. Why does the gate agent offer passengers a travel voucher?
 - a) Because she wants to apologize for making them wait.
 - b) Because she needs someone to agree to travel later.
 - c) Because she needs to give money for de-icing the wings.

WHAT ELSE DOES IT MEAN?

to get bumped

The phrase “to get bumped,” in this podcast, means to be asked to take another flight because the original flight that one was supposed to take is already full: “Dad got bumped in Miami, so he’s going to come home a few hours later than we expected.” “To bump (something) means to hit something by accident: “Corwin is very tall, so he often bumps his head when he enters rooms.” “To bump into (someone) means to meet someone by chance, without having planned it: “I bumped into my third-grade teacher and her husband this morning. What a surprise!” “To bump something up” means to increase something a little bit: “The company was able to bump sales up by lowering the price of its products.”

to board

In this podcast, the verb “to board” means to get on a plane, bus, or train: “I don’t think they’re going to let you board the plane with such a large suitcase.” As a



ESL Podcast 270 – Airport Announcements

noun, a “board” is usually a long, flat piece of wood used to build things: “We’ll need a lot of boards to build the new playhouse.” A “board” is also a flat object used for sports, such as a “surfboard” or “snowboard.” In business, a “board,” or a “board of directors” is a small group of people who make decisions for an organization or company: “Adona is on the board for three educational organizations.” The word “board” can also mean the meals that one gets while staying at a hotel or school: “When you look at the price of going to college, don’t forget to consider the cost of room and board.”

CULTURE NOTE

Many people in the United States like to travel by airplane because it is much faster than traveling by car, bus, or train. But these people often complain about the “inconveniences” (things that cause problems or difficulties) of flying. Some of these inconveniences include delays due to “inclement weather” (bad weather) and poor scheduling. They also complain about overbooked flights and getting bumped from flights. In addition, many people complain about bad service and uncomfortable seats.

Airlines are trying to find ways to “remedy” (fix) these problems and “compensate” passengers, or pay them for their troubles. As discussed in this podcast, airlines sometimes issue travel vouchers for a few hundred dollars, giving people credit to use for future trips when they get bumped from an overbooked flight. When flights are rescheduled for the next day, airlines sometimes pay for passengers’ hotel rooms, dinner, and breakfast if they have to stay in the city for an extra night. When passengers complain about these inconveniences, sometimes the airline gives them free “upgrades,” letting them sit in a more expensive class of seats for the same price, where they will have larger and more comfortable seats.

Airlines are also trying to improve their service. They are teaching their flight crews to provide better “customer service” (how customers are treated by employees). They now let passengers do “online check-in” so that they can register for their flights using the Internet and not have to stand in line for such a long time when they arrive at the airport. Some airlines are trying to make seats bigger, provide better food, and offer “on-flight entertainment” such as movies, music, and video games.

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



ESL Podcast 270 – Airport Announcements

COMPLETE TRANSCRIPT

Welcome to English as a Second Language Podcast number 270: Airport Announcements.

This is English as a Second Language Podcast episode 270. 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 download a Learning Guide for this episode, as well as take a look at our ESL Podcast Store, which has additional premium courses that you may be interested in.

This podcast is called “Airport Announcements.” We're going to hear a story of someone who is listening to announcements at an airport. You get to hear some of the typical vocabulary you might hear when you are at the airport. Let's get started.

[start of story]

I was walking through the airport to Gate 11 to catch my flight when I heard this announcement:

“Attention passengers on English Air flight 232 to Boise. The departure gate has been changed. The flight will now be leaving from Gate 26.”

That was my flight! I looked at the flight information monitors, turned around, and walked in the opposite direction. As I was approaching Gate 26, there was another announcement:

“This is an announcement for passengers on flight 232 to Boise. The flight has been delayed due to bad weather conditions. The flight crew has arrived at the gate, but the ground crew is still de-icing the wings of the aircraft. Our new departure time is 10:50 a.m.”

I thought the gate agent was done, but she had another announcement to make:

“I'm afraid that flight 232 is overbooked. We're looking for passengers who are willing to take a later flight in exchange for a travel voucher worth \$300. Any passenger who is interested should see an agent at Gate 26.”



ESL Podcast 270 – Airport Announcements

Oh, no, I thought. I hope I don't get bumped from this flight. Fortunately, a few minutes later, I heard this. It was music to my ears.

"We are now ready for boarding."

[end of story]

Our story begins with the person saying that he is walking through the airport – he is walking in the airport – to catch his flight at Gate 11. "To catch your flight" means to get on the plane – to go to your airplane so you can be on the flight, or trip, that your airplane will take.

He hears an announcement, which is: "Attention passengers on English Air flight 232 to Boise." We use the word "attention" at the beginning of an announcement so that everyone will pay attention, or will listen. So it is sort of like saying, "listen everybody."

"Attention passengers," the people who are on the airplane are called passengers, "on flight 232 to Boise. The departure gate has changed." The "departure (departure) gate" is the place in the airport where the plane is parked, and you can get onto the plane from this gate. Normally, a "gate" is like a door into an outside area, but here "gate" means the place, or the door, where you walk through to get to the airplane. "Departure" means taking off, or leaving. The opposite would be "arrival" (arrival), which means to come into; to arrive.

The flight is now leaving from Gate 26. So, this is what we would call a "gate change announcement." A "gate change announcement" is when the airline decides to put your plane somewhere else, so you can get more exercise by walking all over the airport!

Well, the person in the story says, "That was my flight!" He looks at the flight information monitors (monitors). A "monitor" is a general term we use for a small television screen that has information that you need. In an airport, there are "monitors," or screens, that have information about where the airplanes are taking off from – where they're departing from – what gate and what time. So, "flight information monitors" are where you get information about your airplane: which airplane you're going to be taking and where it is going to be leaving from.

Typically, these are arranged by airline, and they're arranged by the city that you are flying to. So, Anchorage, Alaska, would be before Los Angeles, California, and Los Angeles would be listed before Reno, Nevada. They're listed in alphabetical order by city.



ESL Podcast 270 – Airport Announcements

Well, this person in our story decided to look at the flight information monitor to check, and then turned around and walked in the opposite direction. In other words, if he was heading north, he would turn around and start walking south: the opposite direction.

As he's approaching Gate 26, he hears another announcement. The verb “to approach” (approach) means to move nearer to something; to come closer to something. So, as he's walking toward Gate 26, he hears another announcement.

This announcement says that his flight has been delayed due to bad weather conditions. When a flight is “delayed” (delayed), we mean that it is going to be leaving later than expected. You expect the airplane to leave at 10:00, if it doesn't leave until 1:00 in the afternoon, we would say the flight was “delayed.” Here, the flight is delayed due to “bad weather conditions,” meaning the weather is not good enough for the flight to leave. It may be raining; it may be snowing, and so forth.

“The flight crew has arrived at the gate, but the ground crew is still de-icing the wings of the aircraft.” Couple of different terms here that you will hear. The first is “flight crew” (crew). The “flight crew” are the people who work for the airline that are going to fly the plane. The flight crew includes the people who are also, what we would call, “flight attendants.” Those are the men and women who bring you your soda and help you to your seat. The combined group of the pilots and the flight attendants is called the “flight crew.”

Well, the flight crew is at the gate, but the ground crew is still de-icing the wings. The “ground crew” are the people who work at the airport who work on planes, and in this case, who help prepare the plane to leave. They're preparing the plane by de-icing the wings. “To de-ice” (de-ice) means to remove the frozen water – the ice – from the wings so the airplane can fly. The “wings” are the two arms of the airplane that go out. We use the word “wings” also for a bird. A bird uses its two wings to move them up and down in order to fly. Well, these are the wings of the airplane. The airplane is sometimes called the “aircraft” (aircraft); it's the same thing as the plane or the airplane.

Well now, the new departure time for this poor man's flight is at 10:50 a.m. The “departure time,” of course, is the time that the plane will leave the airport, will start flying to its destination. The “destination” is the place where you are going to. If you are flying from Los Angeles to London, your destination is London.



ESL Podcast 270 – Airport Announcements

The story continues by the man saying that he thought the gate agent was done, but she had another announcement. The “gate agent” (agent) is the person who works for the airline company who helps take your tickets and helps you find a new seat. They’re the person who is working out near the door where you get on the airplane. They are different from the flight attendants, who actually go on the airplane with you and fly with you.

So, the gate agent makes an additional announcement. She says, “I’m afraid that flight 232 is overbooked.” Notice how she uses the expression “I’m afraid that.” This is a very common expression to use when you are going to tell someone some bad news. The bad news here is that the flight is overbooked (overbooked). When we say “the flight is overbooked,” we mean that the airline sold too many tickets for the airplane. This is a very common practice, at least in the United States. Airlines will sell more tickets than they have seats because they know that some people will cancel or some people will be late and won’t be able to get on the airplane.

The law in the United States is that if an airline sells too many tickets, it has to give you money if it is going to say that you cannot fly on your plane when it is overbooked. What they normally do is ask people to volunteer to take a later flight, a flight that will be leaving later in the day, or perhaps the next day, in exchange for a travel voucher. “In exchange for” meaning this is what we are going to give you if you go on a later flight. A “travel voucher” (voucher) is like a coupon or a certificate that the airline gives you that you can use for another flight. So, they don’t give you money, they give you a coupon, what we would call a “voucher,” and you can use that to take another flight in the future. In this case, the travel voucher is worth \$300, that’s how much you can spend with the travel voucher to get another ticket.

The man worries that he may be bumped from his flight. When we say “you are bumped (bumped) from a flight,” that means the airline says, “I’m sorry, we don’t have any room. Even though you bought your ticket, you cannot fly on this airplane,” you have to wait until later.

Well, he does not get bumped from his flight. He is able to get on because he hears the gate agent say, “We are now ready for boarding.” “To board (board) an airplane” means to get on the airplane.

The man says this announcement is music to his ears. The expression “music to your ears” means it is good news. When someone emails me and tells me that they told their friends about ESL Podcast, that is music to my ears.



ESL Podcast 270 – Airport Announcements

Now let's listen to the announcements, this time at a normal speed.

[start of story]

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“We are now ready for boarding.”

[end of story]

The script for this podcast 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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