



ESL Podcast 277 – Garage Sales

GLOSSARY

bargain hunter – a person who always looks for the lowest price before buying something; a person who always looks for cheap prices

* Claire is a good bargain hunter. She went to four stores to find the best price for her new sofa.

collector – a person who has many interesting or beautiful things of the same type, such as coins, stamps, dolls, or dishes

* Grandpa was a stamp collector and had albums with stamps from every country in the world.

homemade – made at home; made by hand; not made professionally

* I love to eat my aunt's homemade cookies. They taste much better than the cookies that are sold in stores.

sign – a piece of paper, wood, or metal that has words or pictures that provide information

* It's the law that drivers must stop their cars when you come to a stop sign.

spring cleaning – to clean one's home or office very thoroughly, getting rid of things that one doesn't use, usually once a year during the spring season

* While they were doing their spring cleaning, they found a box of love letters that her grandmother had written to her grandfather during the war.

to bargain – to negotiate for a better price; to ask a seller to sell something for less money than originally asked for

* The seller wanted \$75 for the sweater, but we were able to bargain down to \$50.

par for the course – standard; normal; expected

* Lia is a very good student, so getting straight A's is par for the course for her.

to get ripped off – to get a bad deal; to pay more than one should; to pay more for something than it is worth

* Freddy bought a car for \$5,600, but he got ripped off because it stopped working the next day.

early bird – a person who wakes up very early, before most people are awake; a person who begins doing the day's activities before most other people do

* Fernando is an early bird who usually wakes up, goes running, eats breakfast, and reads the newspaper before anyone else in his family is awake.



ESL Podcast 277 – Garage Sales

desperate – very anxious to do something; very worried about something and willing to do almost anything to change it

* Jessie is desperate to find a new job because she doesn't like her boss.

to store – to put things somewhere when one is not using them so that they can be used later

* Where do you store your skiing equipment during the summer?

to lug – to carry or pull something that is heavy and difficult to move

* Could you please help me lug this heavy suitcase into the guest bedroom?

charity – an organization that helps poor people by giving them money, food, clothes, or other things that they need

* How much money do you give to charities each year?

to give (something) away – to give something to someone for free; to give something to someone without asking for money or anything else in return

* The grocery store is giving away free samples of its fresh bread.

to slash (one's) prices – to greatly reduce the cost of something; to sell something for a much lower price than usual

* This store is going out of business next week, so it is slashing its prices to try to sell everything as quickly as possible.

junk – things that have no value or use; worthless, old things

* The Gamarra family's garage is full of old junk, like broken radios, used toys, and torn clothes.

knickknack – a small thing that is used as decoration but doesn't have any use, usually put on a table or shelf

* Dinah's desk is covered in knickknacks that she bought while she was traveling in Eastern Europe.

trash – garbage; something that has no value and should be thrown away

* One of my chores when I was young was to take out the trash once a week.

treasure – something that is very valuable, important, and special; something that one values and thinks is important

* Miko's most prized treasure is the watch that his grandfather used to wear.



ESL Podcast 277 – Garage Sales

COMPREHENSION QUESTIONS

1. Why do people slash their prices at the end of a garage sale?
 - a) Because they want people to get ripped off.
 - b) Because bargaining is par for the course.
 - c) Because they don't want to move unsold things.

2. What kinds of things does one want to find at a garage sale?
 - a) Junk
 - b) Signs
 - c) Treasures

WHAT ELSE DOES IT MEAN?

to store

The verb “to store,” in this podcast, means to put things somewhere when one is not using them so that they can be used later: “During the summer, we store our winter clothes under the bed.” As a noun, a “store” is a supply of something that you’re saving to use later: “You should have a store of candles, fresh water, and canned food in case there’s a big snow storm and we lose electricity.” A “store” is also a shop, or a place where one can buy things: “Can you please buy milk and eggs at the grocery store?” Or, “He bought some aspirin at the drugstore.” The phrase “to be in store” means that something is going to happen in the future: “California is in store for a major earthquake.” Or, “After all the bad luck we’ve had, we’re in store for something good to happen soon.”

to give (something) away

In this podcast, the phrase “to give (something) away” means to give something to someone for free, without asking for money: “Why did you give away your motorcycle? You could have sold it for at least \$400.” The phrase “to give (something) back” means to return something to the person it belongs to: “Yes, you can listen to this CD, but please don’t forget to give it back to me.” The phrase “to give (something) up” means to stop doing something: “Carolina decided to give up smoking and drinking when she became pregnant.” Finally, the phrase “to give (something) out” means to give something to many people: “A woman was giving out free newspapers in the main square this morning.”



ESL Podcast 277 – Garage Sales

CULTURE NOTE

In the United States, shopping at garage sales and “estate sales” (garage sales that are held when someone dies) is a good way to buy the things you want and need without spending very much money. But there are also many charity and “secondhand” stores where you can buy used things without having to wait for someone to have a garage sale.

Two well known charity stores are Goodwill and The Salvation Army. These are “nonprofit organizations,” or organizations that do not try to make money, but instead try to help people. They “accept” or take “donation items” (things that people give to an organization for free) like used clothing, furniture, and books. Then they “sort through” the donation items, meaning that they examine their quality, decide which ones can be sold, and put them into groups based on the type of donation. Then, they sell the donation items in their stores very inexpensively. The money is used to keep the stores open. Many poor people shop in charity stores, but many college students and bargain hunters also go there to buy things.

Most cities also have “secondhand stores,” or stores that sell used items. These stores are more expensive than charity stores, but less expensive than “normal” or regular stores. People who have things that they no longer want but are still in good “condition” (quality) take their items to a secondhand store and try to sell them. The store gives them a small amount of money for these items and then sells them to other people for a higher price. Shopping at a secondhand store can be a good way to find inexpensive clothing or books, but it takes time to find what one is looking for.

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



ESL Podcast 277 – Garage Sales

COMPLETE TRANSCRIPT

Welcome to English as a Second Language Podcast number 277: Garage Sales.

This is English as a Second Language Podcast episode 277. 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 and take a look at our ESL Podcast Store, which contains some additional premium courses you may be interested in. You can also download a Learning Guide for this episode that will help you improve your English even more.

Our episode is called “Garage Sales,” and it's a story of someone who likes to go and buy things from other people that they are selling at something called a “garage sale.” Let's get started.

[start of story]

One of the things I like to do on the weekends is go to garage sales. I'm a bargain hunter and collector, so garage sales are good places for me. I look in the newspapers or just follow homemade signs to find the sales in my neighborhood. Whether it's because people are doing spring cleaning or getting ready to move, there are always plenty of sales in my area.

After going to a lot of garage sales, I've learned a few things about getting what I want at the price I want. Bargaining on price is par for the course at any garage sale. If you don't want to get ripped off, you'll try to get the sellers to lower their price. I'm an early bird and I usually get to the sales before other people to get the best items. But to get the best prices, be sure to go back right before the sale ends. Most people are desperate to sell so that they don't have to store those things again or to lug them to a charity office to give them away. That's when people are ready to slash their prices. It's true that there is a lot of junk and knickknacks at garage sales. But one person's trash is another person's treasure!

[end of story]

Our story today is about garage sales. A “garage” is a place where normally you keep your car. A “garage sale,” however, refers to when a person decides to sell some of their own things to other people. They take all their things that they want to sell and they put them in their garage and open the door, and people will come



ESL Podcast 277 – Garage Sales

by and buy them from them. So, these are individual sales by people who are trying to sell some of their old things – chairs, books, electronics – many different things.

There's a similar term, “yard (yard) sale,” and that's like a garage sale except instead of putting the things in your garage, you put them out on the lawn, what we would call the “yard,” the space in front of the building or your house.

The person in our story says that he's a bargain hunter and collector. A “bargain” (bargain) is when you get a low price on something. A “hunter” is someone who looks for, or hunts, something. “To hunt” usually means to try to go and kill an animal, but we use the term here to mean someone who looks for something. So, a “bargain hunter” is a person who looks for the lowest price on something before they buy it.

A “collector” is a person who likes to have interesting or beautiful things of the same type. You could be a coin collector; you could be a stamp collector; you could be a doll collector – not me, but somebody! These are people who buy things of the same type because they like to have a collection of these items, because they like coins or stamps or dolls. You can be a collector of many different kinds of things.

Garage sales are places where bargain hunters and collectors go to buy things. To find a garage sale, you can look in the local newspaper or you can just drive around the streets, and on Fridays, Saturdays, and Sundays – on the weekends – you will usually see signs that will say there is a garage sale and give the address of the house where you can find the sale. These signs are “homemade” (homemade – one word), which just means made at home – at someone's house. “Made by hand” is another way of saying this. These are not professional signs; they are signs that people make to advertise their garage sale.

Some people have garage sales because they're doing spring cleaning. The expression “spring cleaning” means to clean out your house or your office very thoroughly to get rid of things that you don't use any more. This is traditionally done in the spring of the year – April, May, June, that time of year – but it could be done at any time, of course. I need to do some spring cleaning right now, because my office is a mess! But that's something I will do maybe next spring!

The person in the story says that bargaining on price is par for the course at any garage sale. “To bargain,” as a verb, means to try to get a lower price; to ask for a lower price for something. “Bargaining,” then, is asking for a lower price. He



ESL Podcast 277 – Garage Sales

says this is par (par) for the course (course). The expression “par for the course” comes from the game of golfing. When we use it normal conversation, it just means normal or standard or expected. Something that you can expect is “par for the course.” Originally, it was an expression that was only used in golfing to refer to the normal or expected score that you would have on each part of the golf course. Here, it just means what you can expect – what is normal.

“If you don't want to get ripped (ripped) off,” the person in our story says, you should try to get the sellers to lower their price. The expression “to get ripped off” means to pay more than you should; to pay more for something than it is really worth. To get a bad deal is “to get ripped off.” There's a noun, a “rip off,” which means a bad deal, paying more for something than you should.

The person in our story is an early bird. The expression “early bird” (two words) is someone who likes to wake up very early, before most other people are awake. This is not me; I am not an early bird! The opposite of an early bird is a “night owl” (owl). A “night owl” is a person who likes to stay up late at night. An “owl” is a type of bird that you will hear sometimes at night.

The person in our story is an early bird. He suggests going early to get the best things. But if you want to get the lowest prices, he says you should go right before the sale ends, at the end of the day. The reason is that people are desperate to sell. “Desperate” (desperate) is when you are very worried about something, or very anxious about something, and you will do anything to change it. “To be desperate” means to be willing to do anything because you are worried or anxious.

People are desperate to sell their things so they don't have to store them again. “To store,” as a verb, means to put things somewhere when you are not using them, so you can use them later. The word “store” has a couple of different meanings in English; take a look at our Learning Guide for an additional explanation.

People also don't want to lug (lug) their things to a charity office to give them away. “To lug” means to carry something, usually something that is heavy and difficult to move. You could lug your suitcase around the airport – carry your heavy suitcase in the airport. “Charity” is when you give something to someone who needs money, or food, or something else. “To give something away,” here means to give something to someone for free; to say, “Here, you can have this. You do not need to give me any money.” There are other meanings of this expression “give something away,” or, “give away something”; take a look, again, at the Learning Guide for more explanations.



ESL Podcast 277 – Garage Sales

The person in the story says that people at the end of the day are ready to slash their prices. “To slash (slash) your prices” means to reduce your prices; to lower the price, usually to lower it a lot – dramatically, we might say – a lot.

“It’s true that there is a lot of junk and knickknacks at garage sales.” “Junk” (junk) is a general term for anything that has no value or use, for old things that you don’t need and aren’t useful any more. A “knickknack” (knickknack – one word) is a small thing that is usually used for decoration, something you put on a table or on your bookshelf. But, it doesn’t have any real use; it just is a nice little thing to look at.

“One person’s trash is another person’s treasure,” that’s how our story ends. One person’s trash (trash) is another person’s treasure (treasure). “Trash” is another word for garbage; something that is junk, that has no value. “Treasure” is the opposite; it’s something that is very valuable, important, or special. So, the expression “one person’s trash is another person’s treasure” means you may think something is junk, but someone else will think that it is worth a lot of money.

Now let’s listen to the story, this time at a normal speed.

[start of story]

One of the things I like to do on the weekends is go to garage sales. I’m a bargain hunter and collector, so garage sales are good places for me. I look in the newspapers or just follow homemade signs to find the sales in my neighborhood. Whether it’s because people are doing spring cleaning or getting ready to move, there are always plenty of sales in my area.

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[end of story]



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ESL Podcast 277 – Garage Sales

The script for this podcast was written by our own wonderful producer and scriptwriter, Dr. Lucy Tse. Thank you Lucy, for your excellent work, as always.

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

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