



ESL Podcast 302 – A Problem with a Restaurant Check

GLOSSARY

to get (someone's) attention – to do something so that another person pays attention to oneself; to do something to get another person to look at oneself and/or listen to what one is saying

* During the football game, Rhonda got her husband's attention by standing in front of the TV so that he couldn't see it!

check – bill; a piece of paper at a restaurant that shows what one has ordered, how much each thing costs, and how much a person needs to pay

* Our check for dinner was more than \$120 because we ordered a very nice bottle of wine.

dessert – a sweet thing eaten after the rest of a meal

* Hank's favorite dessert is chocolate cake with vanilla ice cream.

to ring (something) up – to enter the cost of what someone is buying into a machine, and then take that person's money to make the sale

* When the sales clerk rang up my book, she accidentally typed an extra zero, so instead of costing \$10, it was \$100!

mistake – error; something that is incorrect; something that is wrong

* Tanya made a mistake when she decided to buy that car. It broke down the first time she drove it.

appetizer – a small amount of food eaten before the rest of a meal

* This restaurant has delicious appetizers, like spinach dip and stuffed mushrooms.

to adjust – to make a small change to correct something; to make a small change to make something better

* Did you adjust your watch for the time difference when you flew from New York to San Francisco?

to take (something) off – to remove something from a list

* Please take my name off of the participant list because I won't be able to go to the conference after all.



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two-for-one coupon – a small piece of paper that lets one receive two of something for the price of one; a small piece of paper that lets the holder pay for one thing, and get a second one for free

* With this two-for-one coupon, we can go to go to Disneyland together for the price of one.

to be charged for – to be asked to pay for something; to be billed for something

* Even though we returned the movie at 6:05 p.m., we were charged the late fee because we were supposed to have returned it by 6:00 p.m.

to place (one's) order – to tell a waiter or waitress what one would like to eat; to tell someone what one would like to buy

* We called the Thai restaurant and placed our order over the phone so that the food would be ready when we got to the restaurant.

stated – said or written; made clear; expressed; communicated

* The sign we just passed stated that we needed to turn right to go to Dollywood, but we made a mistake and turned left instead.

to be a pain – to make trouble; to make things difficult for another person

* My little brother is a pain! He always comes into my room when I want to be alone.

to make an exception – to do something that one normally wouldn't do; to not follow the regular rules just once; to decide to change the way that one does something this time

* Normally the professor makes all of his students take tests at the same time, but he made an exception when Shelby was sick, and let him take the test a week later.



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COMPREHENSION QUESTIONS

1. What did the waiter do with the appetizer?
 - a) He took it off of the table.
 - b) He took it off of the bill.
 - c) He used it to adjust the check.

2. According to the waiter, when should Leslie have presented the coupon?
 - a) During dessert.
 - b) After paying.
 - c) While ordering.

WHAT ELSE DOES IT MEAN?

to ring (something) up

The phrase “to ring (something) up,” in this podcast, means to enter the cost of what someone is buying into a machine, and then take that person’s money to make the sale: “The store employee was new, so it took her a long time to ring up my purchases.” The phrase “to ring (something) in” means to celebrate something noisily: “They rang in the New Year with a big party in Chicago.” The phrase “to ring a bell” means to seem familiar, as if one had heard something before but isn’t able to remember where or when: “The name ‘Kelly Drake’ rings a bell, but I can’t think of how I know her.” Finally, the phrase “to ring off the hook” means for a telephone to ring repeatedly, too many times: “The phone has been ringing off the hook all afternoon, and I’m tired of answering it!”

to take off

In this podcast, the phrase “to take (something) off” means to remove something from a list: “Please take Jaime’s name off of your mailing list because he no longer works here.” The phrase “to take (something) off” also means to remove a piece of clothing: “Please take off your jacket and get comfortable.” The verb “to take off” can mean for a plane to leave the ground and begin to fly: “Our plane didn’t take off until almost 5:50 p.m. because it was too foggy earlier in the day.” A similar phrase, “to take some time off,” means to take a short vacation, or to spend a few days not working: “Janice is very stressed out, and she needs to take some time off to relax.”



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CULTURE NOTE

When you eat at a restaurant in the United States, you might be surprised to see that your restaurant check includes “charges” (costs) for things “other than” (that are not) the food and drinks that you ordered. Some of these additional charges may include taxes, corkage fees, and tips for large parties.

Many cities have “dining taxes” and customers are charged a percentage of the cost of their meal as a “tax” (money that is given to the government). The dining tax is usually just a few percentages, but it will make your meal more expensive. The dining tax “revenues,” or the money that the government earns from the dining tax, is usually used for city government programs, and is sometimes used to help poor people who don’t have enough money to buy food.

Another common charge on a restaurant check is a “corking fee.” Sometimes people like to bring a favorite bottle of wine to a restaurant to enjoy with their meal, rather than buy a bottle of wine from the restaurant. Some restaurants will allow this, but will charge a “corking fee” for opening and “pouring” (moving the bottle so that the liquid falls out) the wine.

Finally, when “diners” (the people who eat at a restaurant) are in a large group, usually of eight or more people, the restaurant check may include a “tip for large parties.” In the United States, restaurants expect diners to pay about 15% “tip” (extra money for service) to the waiter or waitress. Waiters and waitresses are usually paid a small hourly rate and are expected to rely mainly on tips for their earnings. Large groups can be even more work for the waiters and waitresses, and diners often “under-tip” (pay less than the expected 15%), so the restaurant includes a “mandatory” (required) tip for large parties, so that they cannot leave without paying the tip for the service they’ve received.

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



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COMPLETE TRANSCRIPT

Welcome to English as a Second Language Podcast number 302: A Problem with a Restaurant Check.

This is English as a Second Language Podcast episode 302. 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 and take a look at the Learning Guide for this episode. Each episode has its own 8 to 10 page Learning Guide that contains all of the vocabulary, definitions, sample sentences, cultural notes, and a complete transcript of this podcast episode, as well as other things to help you in learning English.

This episode is called "A Problem with a Restaurant Check," or a restaurant "bill" (the little piece of paper that tells you how much money you have to pay). Let's get started.

[start of dialogue]

I waved my hand to get the waiter's attention.

Waiter: Yes?

Leslie: The check, please.

Waiter: Would you like any dessert, or some tea or coffee?

Leslie: No, just the check. Thanks.

Waiter: Here you are. I'll ring that up for you when you're ready.

Leslie: Thank you. Oh, there seems to be a mistake on our bill. We didn't order this appetizer.

Waiter: Let me check this and I'll be right back...Here you are. I've adjusted the check. I took off the appetizer.

Leslie: Thanks, but there still seems to be a problem. We had a two-for-one coupon, but we've been charged for both meals.



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Waiter: I'm sorry, but you needed to present the coupon to me when you placed your order, not when you've finished your meal.

Leslie: That isn't stated on the coupon. I don't want to be a pain, but could I see the manager, please?

Waiter: I'll see if she's available...I talked to the manager and she said to make an exception in this case and to give you the discount.

Leslie: Okay, thanks.

[end of dialogue]

Our dialogue in the restaurant begins with Leslie trying to get the waiter's attention. To "get someone's attention" means to do something so that the other person looks at you, or pays attention to you; this is to "get someone's attention." Leslie "waves his hand," he puts his arm in the air and moves his hand back and forth. The waiter says, "Yes?" Leslie says, "The check, please," meaning please bring us the bill so we can pay and leave. At some American restaurants, it is common for them to bring you your check (or bring you your bill) even though you do not ask for it. This is not considered rude in the United States; it's something that many restaurants do.

The waiter says, "Would you like any dessert, or some tea or coffee?" "Dessert" is usually something sweet that you eat at the end of your meal. Leslie says, "No, just the check. Thanks." The waiter comes back with the check and says, "Here you are," which is what we would say when you give something to someone: "here you are." "Here you are. I'll ring that up for you when you're ready." To "ring something up" means to enter the cost of what someone is buying, usually into a machine that we call a "cash register," and then you give them a little piece of paper from the machine (from the cash register) that tells them how much money they have to pay. That whole process is to "ring someone up," to find out how much money they need to pay.

Leslie says, "Oh, there seems to be a mistake on our bill," an error (something that is wrong or incorrect). "We didn't order this appetizer," Leslie says. The "appetizer" is the food that you can eat at the beginning of a meal. Usually it is a small amount of food before your main meal (your main dish).

The waiter says, "Let me check this and I'll be right back." Notice that we can use the word "waiter" for either a man or a woman nowadays. Traditionally, the woman was called a waitress and the man, a waiter, but as a more general term,



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waiter is now used. The waiter comes back and she says, once again, “Here you are. I’ve adjusted the check. I took off the appetizer.” To “adjust” usually means to make a small change in something in order to correct it. In this case, the change she made in the check (the bill) was to take off the appetizer. When she says, “to take off the appetizer,” the waiter means to remove it from the bill (to eliminate it from the bill). That expression, to “take off” (a two-word phrasal verb, we would call it), has other meanings in English as well. Take a look at our Learning Guide for an explanation of other meanings, as well as other meanings of the phrasal verb (the two-word verb) to “ring up.”

Leslie says, “Thanks, but there still seems to be a problem” (there is still a problem). To say something the way Leslie does, “there’s still seems to be a problem,” is a little more polite, but you are really saying there is a problem or I think there is a problem. Leslie says, “We had a two-for-one coupon, but we’ve been charged for both meals.” A “two-for-one coupon” is a small piece of paper that you give to the restaurant that gives you a discount so you can get two meals for the price of one; you buy one meal and you get a second one free. To be “charged” for something means to be asked to pay for something (to be billed for something).

The waiter then says, “I’m sorry, but you needed to present (or give) the coupon to me when you placed your order, not when you’ve finished your meal.” To “place an order” means to tell the waiter or the waitress what you want to eat, or to tell someone something that you want to buy. “I want to place an order for a new computer,” you say to the salesperson. I want to order one – I want to buy one. Usually when you order something, it takes some time before you actually get what you ordered.

Leslie said that’s not “stated on the coupon.” When we say something “is stated” (stated), we mean it’s written, it’s made clear, it is communicated to you. To “state” can sometimes be used as a synonym (as a similar word) for the verb “to say,” but here it means to be written on the coupon. Leslie then does what many people do when they are having a problem at a restaurant with the waiter, they ask to see the manager. Leslie says, “I don’t want to be a pain, but could I see the manager, please?” To “be a pain” means to make something difficult for someone else – to make trouble for someone else. You can say, for example, “My neighbor’s child is a pain,” he’s always yelling and screaming – always! This is an example of someone who causes difficulty (makes problems for other people). Leslie says “I don’t want to be a pain,” so he’s trying to be a little polite with the waiter, saying I don’t want to give you problems but I do want to see the manager.



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The waiter says, “I’ll see if she’s available.” She comes back and says, “I talked to the manager and she said to make an exception in this case and to give you a discount.” To “make an exception” means to do something that one would normally not do, to not follow the regular rules in this situation.

Leslie, of course, thinks that he doesn’t really need an exception since the coupon didn’t say that you had to present it (or give it) to the waiter when you place your order. But he simply says at the end, “Okay, thanks,” because the waiter is going to give him his discount (his two-for-one discount) from the coupon. If you pick up a local newspaper, many times you will see coupons from local restaurants, two-for-one or 25% off discount from your bill (or check). These are ways of getting you to come into the restaurant; it’s a kind of advertising.

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

[start of dialogue]

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Waiter: Yes?

Leslie: The check, please.

Waiter: Would you like any dessert, or some tea or coffee?

Leslie: No, just the check. Thanks.

Waiter: Here you are. I’ll ring that up for you when you’re ready.

Leslie: Thank you. Oh, there seems to be a mistake on our bill. We didn’t order this appetizer.

Waiter: Let me check this and I’ll be right back...Here you are. I’ve adjusted the check. I took off the appetizer.

Leslie: Thanks, but there still seems to be a problem. We had a two-for-one coupon, but we’ve been charged for both meals.

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Waiter: I'll see if she's available...I talked to the manager and she said to make an exception in this case and to give you the discount.

Leslie: Okay, thanks.

[end of dialogue]

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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