



GLOSSARY

to cook the books – to change written numbers illegally, especially financial information, so that they are no longer true

* Pilar lost her job when the company found out that she had been cooking the books for years.

to embezzle – to steal money from the company that one works for; to rob money from an organization where one has been trusted with the money

* Rachelle had to pay back all of the money that she embezzled from the church.

upstanding – honest and good; respectable

* Adrian is an upstanding citizen who always volunteers to help others, votes, and pays his taxes on time.

to stretch the truth – to exaggerate; to tell a small lie

* Eric was stretching the truth when he said that he had a perfect GPA, because it's actually 3.90, and a perfect GPA would be 4.00.

dishonest – not honest; untrue; lying

* We were shocked to learn that James was so dishonest, lying to us about getting a job.

integrity – the state of being honest, moral and good; doing the right thing

* The police department wants to hire people with high integrity.

greed – the desire to have more money, power, and things

* His greed destroyed his marriage, because he was more interested in working to earn money than spending time with his family.

best of intentions – a desire to do the right thing; a wish to do something correctly or honestly, although it doesn't actually happen that way

* Efram was worried about his wife's health and had the best of intentions when he talked to her about starting to exercise, but she became very angry and upset.

only a matter of time – something that is inevitable; something that will happen no matter what one does

* Jan is a very bad driver and it is only a matter of time before she gets into a car accident.



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to cover (one's) tracks – to hide what one has done, especially when one has done something wrong; to do something so that other people cannot learn what one has done

* The murderer tried to cover his tracks by cleaning up the blood and burying the body.

liar – one who tells lies; one who does not tell the truth; one who is dishonest

* Hector is such a liar! He said that he loved only her, but he was actually dating three women!

to catch on – to find out the truth about something; to learn about something

* The children tried to hide their report cards, but their parents caught on.

irregularity – something that is unusual; something that is not normal or ordinary, often in a bad way

* Becca complained about irregularities in the way that fruits and vegetables were weighed at the market.

to press charges – to take someone to court for something that he/she has done; to ask the legal system to punish someone for doing something

* The man decided not to press charges against the boy who broke his window, as long as the boy's family agreed to pay for the new one.

under the circumstances – in this particular situation; considering the specific details of a certain situation

* The nuclear physicist took secret papers from the office to his home. Normally he would lose his job for doing that, but, under the circumstances, the company decided to give him a warning instead.

judgment – one's ability to make good decisions; one's ability to evaluate a situation and decide what to do

* Ileana showed very poor judgment when she left her keys in the car while she went into the restaurant to pick up her order.

general consensus – agreement among most people; and opinion shared by most people

* The general consensus is that stock prices will continue to go up.

to take up a collection – to ask other people to give money to help a certain person, project, or cause

* The schoolchildren decided to take up a collection for the people who lost their homes in the earthquake.



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COMPREHENSION QUESTIONS

1. What does Amina mean when she says “he had been cooking the books”?
 - a) He had been writing a cookbook.
 - b) He had been using the books in the kitchen.
 - c) He had been lying on financial reports.

 2. What does Amina mean when she says “he covered his tracks”?
 - a) He swept the floor where he had walked.
 - b) He hid what he had done.
 - c) He put his tracks under something else.
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WHAT ELSE DOES IT MEAN?

to cover (one's) tracks

The phrase “to cover (one’s) tracks” in this podcast, means to hide what one has done, especially when one has done something wrong: “They tried to cover their tracks by burning all the letters that they had written to each other.” The phrase “to cover (one’s) back” (or, very informally and somewhat crudely, “to cover one’s ass”) means to do something to protect oneself because one realizes that one might be blamed for something in the future: “You should save that email from your boss to cover your back in case you get in trouble about that project later.” Finally, the phrase “to cover all the bases” means to do something very thoroughly, considering each and every part carefully: “Hank covered all the bases for the wedding, making sure that they had an indoor and outdoor location, depending on the weather.”

to catch on

In this podcast, the phrase “to catch on” means to find out the truth about something: “How long did it take Aunt Yemmy to catch on about the surprise party?” The phrase “to catch on to (something)” means to learn something or understand something: “How long did it take the student to catch on to basic algebra?” The phrase “to catch up on (something)” means to spend extra time doing something that one is behind schedule on: “I couldn’t go to the party on Friday because I had to catch up on my work.” Finally, the phrase “to catch up with (someone)” means to reach someone who was walking ahead of oneself: “You two should start walking to the park and I’ll catch up with you once I’ve finished washing the dishes.”



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CULTURE NOTE

Most U.S. companies have “policies” (written rules) about “dealing with” (interacting with or reacting to) employees who are being dishonest or otherwise “misbehaving” (not acting appropriately) at work. Employees are sometimes asked to read and sign these policies when they begin to work there, showing that they agree to them.

The “strictest” (most severe) way that companies deal with dishonesty is by “firing” (making someone lose his/her job) the employee. This is an “extreme” (very strong) reaction. In most cases, the employee is given a “warning” (a written or spoken statement that something bad may happen in the future) and/or a “lighter” (less serious) punishment.

One of these lighter punishments is being “suspended” (temporarily not allowed to work), often until more information is available for the company to decide what to do. If the employee is found “guilty” (having done something wrong), the employee may be “demoted” and moved into a less important position at the same company that has less power and pays less. If the employee’s dishonestly “incurred” (caused) financial losses for the company, the employee’s pay may be “docked,” meaning that an amount of money is taken out of each of his/her paychecks for a certain period of time until the company has gotten back the lost money.

Many employees are too “embarrassed” (feeling ashamed and uncomfortable) to accept these punishments, so they choose to “quit” by telling the company that they no longer wish to work there. These people often have difficulty finding another job, because they cannot ask their previous employer to write a letter of recommendation or serve as a “reference” (a person or organization that can say whether a person would be good for another job).

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



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COMPLETE TRANSCRIPT

Welcome to English as a Second Language Podcast number 328: Dishonesty at Work.

This is English as a Second Language Podcast episode 328. 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 download a Learning Guide for this episode. Each episode of ESL Podcast comes with a 8 to 10 page Learning Guide that contains all of the vocabulary, definitions, sample sentences, additional definitions, cultural notes, comprehension questions, and a complete transcript of this episode.

This episode is called “Dishonesty at Work.” “Dishonesty” is someone who is not honest – who lies at work. We’ll listen to a dialogue between Shane and Amina over some problems with one of the employees at work. Let’s get started.

[start of dialogue]

Amina: Have you heard the latest news?

Shane: No, what is it?

Amina: Charlie was fired last Friday after the company found out that he had been cooking the books for over six months and had embezzled more than \$50,000.

Shane: Charlie? I don’t believe it! He is the most upstanding person I know. I can imagine him stretching the truth now and then, but he’s the last person I would think of as being truly dishonest. I would never think to question his integrity.

Amina: It wasn’t greed that made him do it. His wife has been ill and he couldn’t pay the medical bills. I think he had the best of intentions in trying to get his wife the healthcare she needed, but it was only a matter of time before he got caught, no matter how well he covered his tracks.

Shane: Well, I know he’s a bad liar and he’s not known to make mistakes, so I’m not surprised that someone caught on pretty quickly when there were



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irregularities in the accounting. What I don't understand is, if he was having financial problems, why didn't he tell anybody? Some of us may have helped.

Amina: I don't know. Maybe he felt desperate and just didn't know what to do. I'm sure his wife being sick has been difficult for him. I don't think the company is going to press charges, though, under the circumstances.

Shane: I'm glad to hear that. That's the last thing he needs. It's clear that he showed poor judgment, but he's not a criminal.

Amina: That's the general consensus. I'm thinking of taking up a collection to help him out. Do you think the company would mind?

Shane: Considering he was fired, I'd keep it a secret from management, but I think it's a great idea.

[end of dialogue]

Our dialogue begins with Amina asking Shane, "Have you heard the latest news?" – the most recent news. Shane says, "No, what is it?" Amina answers, "Charlie was fired last Friday after the company found out that he had been cooking the books for over six months." Charlie was "fired," he lost his job; the company told him to leave because they discovered he had been cooking the books. "To cook the books" means to change financial information so that it is no longer true, to lie when it comes to how much money you are making, or how much money you are paying. This is illegal, for tax purposes especially, and that is, of course, not a good thing.

Charlie had embezzled more than \$50,000. "To embezzle" (embezzle) means to steal money from the company where you work or from an organization. Usually you do this, of course – well, you don't usually do this, of course, but if you did, you would do it secretly or privately. And then, if you're discovered, well, you'll lose your job and perhaps something worse will happen to you.

So, Charlie has embezzled \$50,000 – stole \$50,000. Shane says, "Charlie? I don't believe it! He is the most upstanding person I know." "To be upstanding" (one word) means to be honest and good, to be "respectable," people have a good opinion of you. "I can imagine him," Shane says, "stretching the truth now and then." "To stretch the truth" means to exaggerate, to tell a small lie. Not a big lie, but a small lie: "to stretch the truth," it's still a lie, however.



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Shane says Charlie's "the last person I would think of as being dishonest." "Dishonest" is not honest, someone who lies. "I would never think to question his integrity," Shane says. "Integrity" (integrity) is being honest, or being moral and good, doing the right thing. It's the state of being honest; it's the situation where someone is honest. You say, "he has integrity," means he's an honest person.

Amina says, "It wasn't greed that made him do it." "Greed" (greed) means you have a desire to have more money, more things, more power. Someone may say to you, "don't be greedy," meaning don't try to get more than what is due you, more than what you deserve. Although "greedy" usually used with money, it could be used in other circumstances: if there are three pieces of pizza and you take two of them, leaving only one for your friend, your friend may say, "Don't be greedy (don't try to take more than what you should), we should split the second piece."

Amina says that Charlie's wife was "ill and he couldn't pay the medical bills." Amina says, "I think Charlie had the best of intentions in trying to get his wife the healthcare she needed." "The best of intentions" means you have a desire to do the right thing. You want to do something correctly or honestly, but in the end it doesn't happen that way, there's some problem that you have – but you wanted to do the right thing.

Amina says, "it was only a matter of time before Charlie got caught." The expression "it's only a matter of time" means that something is inevitable. "Inevitable" means it will happen eventually: not today, not tomorrow, but some time in the future it will happen. It cannot be avoided: "it was only a matter of time." It can be a good thing or a bad thing; you could say, "It is only a matter of time before I am discovered as a great singer and release my first CD" – it's only a matter of time!

Amina said, "it was only a matter of time before Charlie got caught, no matter how well he covered his tracks." "To cover your tracks" (tracks) means to hide something that you have done – something wrong that you have done so that other people will not know about it. There's a couple of meanings of this expression; take a look at our Learning Guide for some additional explanation.

Shane, says, "I know Charlie's a bad liar," a liar is someone who doesn't tell the truth; a person who lies is a "liar." He says, "I'm not surprised that someone caught on pretty quickly." "To catch on" is a two-word phrasal verb meaning to find out the truth about something. "The children tried to hide their report cards (their grades from their schools) from their parents. But their parents eventually caught on" – they found out about it, they discovered what the situation was.



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Once again, this has a couple of different meanings, this expression; take a look at the Learning Guide for some more explanation.

Shane says that “there were irregularities in the accounting.” “Irregularities” are things that are not usual, things that are not normal, usually in a bad way. “What I don’t understand,” Shane says, “is, if he was having financial problems, why didn’t he tell anyone?” Amina says, “I don’t know. Maybe he felt desperate and just didn’t know what to do.” “To feel desperate” means you feel you have no other choice. Amina says, “I don’t think the company is going to press charges.” “To press charges” means to take somebody to court, to begin some sort of legal action against someone. She says, “I don’t think the company is going to press charges, though, under the circumstances.” “Under the circumstances” means in this particular case – in this particular situation.

Shane says, “I’m glad to hear that. That’s the last thing he needs. It’s clear that he showed poor judgment, but he’s not a criminal.” “Judgment” is your ability to make good or bad decisions. If you have “poor judgment” that means you make bad decisions; if you have “good judgment,” you make good decisions.

Amina says, “That’s the general consensus.” The expression “general consensus” means an agreement among most people. The opinion that most people have of something, that’s the “general consensus.” Amina says, “I’m thinking of taking up a collection to help Charlie out.” “To help him out” means to help him. “To take up a collection” means to ask other people to give money (to donate money) for a certain person or a certain project.

Shane says, “Considering he was fired (if we consider the fact that Charlie was fired), I’d keep it a secret from management.” He’s telling Amina she shouldn’t tell her bosses that she’s taking up a collection. But he thinks (Shane thinks) “it’s a great idea.”

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

[start of dialogue]

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Shane: Well, I know he's a bad liar and he's not known to make mistakes, so I'm not surprised that someone caught on pretty quickly when there were irregularities in the accounting. What I don't understand is, if he was having financial problems, why didn't he tell anybody? Some of us may have helped.

Amina: I don't know. Maybe he felt desperate and just didn't know what to do. I'm sure his wife being sick has been difficult for him. I don't think the company is going to press charges, though, under the circumstances.

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[end of dialogue]

The script for this episode was written by the always honest 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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