



ESL Podcast 338 – Refusing an Invitation

GLOSSARY

invitation – a written or spoken request for one to attend an event or do something with another person

* Holly and Daniel sent more than 750 wedding invitations to their family and friends!

to send (one's) regrets – to politely say that one cannot do something that one has been invited to do

* Clark invited me to his graduation party, but I had to send my regrets because I needed to go to my cousin's graduation party instead.

excuse – a reason for not doing something

* The child's excuse for not giving the teacher his homework was that his dog had eaten it.

to attend – to go to an event; to participate in an event

* Did you attend the conference last year?

to take offense – to be offended; to become angry and upset because of what another person has done or said

* Magdalena took offense when her husband said that her fried chicken wasn't as good as his mother's.

to have another engagement – to have an obligation to do something else; to need to go somewhere or do something during the time that another person has asked one to do something

* Unfortunately I can't meet with you on Tuesday afternoon because I have another engagement that I can't reschedule.

white lie – a small, unimportant lie; something that is not truthful, but is not very important; something that is only a little bit dishonest

* When Hilda gave me an orange and green sweater for my birthday, I told a white lie and said, "Oh, I love it!" even though I really thought it was ugly.

to turn down – to decline; to say no to an invitation or to a person's offer to do something

* Bernard turned down the job offer because he decided he didn't want to live in New York.

relative – family member; a person to whom one is related by blood or marriage

* All of my relatives are going to Aunt Patty's house for Thanksgiving dinner.



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to look after (someone) – to care for someone or something; to take care of someone or something

* Who’s going to look after your kids while you go to the concert?

assignment – task; project; something that needs to be done in a specific period of time

* The chemistry professor gave us an assignment to answer questions 1-15 in chapter 7.

far-fetched – difficult to believe; exaggerated; too big or strange to be believed

* One hundred years ago, people thought that the idea of walking on the moon was far-fetched.

You’ve got a point there – a phrase used to show that one believes that another person has a good idea, or that what another person has said is correct

* When Matt began talking about how expensive a European vacation can be, his brother said, “You’ve got a point there,” and they started talking about taking a vacation closer to home instead.

to decline – to turn down; to say no

* Freddy offered to drive me to the airport, but I declined, saying that I was going to take the bus instead.

to extend an apology – to say that one is sorry for or about something

* I need to extend an apology to Carol Ann for having forgotten her birthday.

acronym – a word where each letter is the first letter of a word in a longer phrase

* Many people use the acronym “ASAP” to mean “as soon as possible.”



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COMPREHENSION QUESTIONS

1. What does it mean “to have another engagement”?
 - a) One is engaged to be married to another person.
 - b) One has to do something else at the specified time.
 - c) One must be engaged in a work-related project.

 2. Why is Roberto’s idea about a special assignment too far-fetched?
 - a) Because a dog would have to fetch too far.
 - b) Because June’s job is too far away for fetching.
 - c) Because store clerks usually don’t get special assignments.
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WHAT ELSE DOES IT MEAN?

relative

The word “relative,” in this podcast, means a family member, or a person to whom one is related by blood or marriage: “Do you have more relatives on your mom’s side of the family, or on your dad’s side?” A “relative” is also an animal that is genetically similar to another animal: “The llama is a distant relative of the camel.” The word “relative” can be used to talk about two things that are being compared: “The relative strength of Plan A is that it is inexpensive, but Plan B seems more effective.” Finally, the word “relatively” can be used to talk about something that is true only if it is compared with something else: “They have a relatively nice house now, considering what a horrible apartment they used to live in.”

to look after

In this podcast, the phrase “to look after” means to take care of someone or something: “They asked their neighbors to look after their house while they were traveling.” The phrase “to look back on (something)” means to think about something that happened in the past: “What is your happiest memory when you look back on your childhood?” The phrase “to look forward to (something)” means to think happily about something that will happen in the future: “We’re all looking forward to the day when his first book is published.” The phrase “to look in on (someone)” means to visit someone for a short period of time, often when that person is sick: “We looked in on Grandma, because she wasn’t feeling well.” Finally, the phrase “to look into (something)” means to examine or research something: “The economists are looking into the causes of the falling housing prices.”



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CULTURE NOTE

Americans have many “terms” (words with special meanings) to talk about “party-goers” (people who go to parties). A “guest of honor” is the person whom a party is “held” (organized and hosted) for. For example, at a birthday party, the person who is celebrating a birthday is the guest of honor. At a graduation party, the person who is finishing school is the guest of honor. Often there are “VIPs” (an acronym for “very important people”) at a party. If your “boss” (supervisor, or the person one works for) comes to a party, then he or she would be a VIP even if he or she isn’t the guest of honor.

Sometimes people come to a party without an invitation. These people are called “party crashers,” especially if they “crash” (ruin and destroy) a party. In American movies, you may see parties on college “campuses” (areas with many university buildings) which are ruined by party crashers who drink too much alcohol and damage the home where the party is being held.

A “party-pooper” is a person who isn’t very much fun at a party. A party-pooper is someone who is sad or depressed and makes it difficult or impossible for other people to have fun. Often a “party-pooper” is a person who doesn’t want to do what everyone else wants to do. In contrast, a “party animal” is a person who really enjoys going to parties and has a lot of fun.

Finally, some people who go to parties are known as “wallflowers.” A “wallflower” is a very quiet and shy person who doesn’t enjoy talking to other people and sits quietly next to the wall. This is especially true at dances, where wallflowers sit and watch everyone else dance, but are too “timid” (shy) to dance.

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



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COMPLETE TRANSCRIPT

Welcome to English as a Second Language Podcast number 338: Refusing an Invitation.

This is English as a Second Language Podcast episode 338. 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. Take a look at our ESL Podcast Store, which contains business and daily English courses we think you'll be interested in.

In this episode, we're going to hear a dialogue between June and Roberto about an invitation that they have received from someone, and how they are going to say no to that invitation. Some good vocabulary here on refusing a request or refusing an invitation. Let's get started.

[start of dialogue]

June: Did you get an invitation to Kelly's party?

Roberto: Yes, I did. I'm going to send my regrets. How about you?

June: I'm trying to find an excuse not to attend, without Kelly taking offense.

Roberto: Couldn't you just tell her that you have another engagement that night?

June: I used that little white lie last time I turned down one of her invitations. I have to think of something else.

Roberto: How about telling her that you have to take care of a sick relative? That one always works for me.

June: I've used that one, too. I told her that I was looking after my mother the last time she invited me to dinner.

Roberto: How about if you tell her you're on a special assignment at work and you have to work night and day to get it done?

June: That's a little far-fetched, don't you think? I work as a store clerk.

Roberto: You've got a point there.



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June: What are you going to tell Kelly when you decline her invitation?

Roberto: I'm going to extend an apology and just say that I can't make it.

June: That's it? I'd never thought of just saying "no."

Roberto: You know the old acronym: KISS – Keep It Simple, Stupid.

June: You're right. Hey! Who are you calling stupid?

[end of dialogue]

Our dialogue begins with June saying to Roberto, "Did you get an invitation to Kelly's party?" An "invitation" is either a written or spoken – something someone says to you – request to attend or to go to a certain event, or to do something with someone else. I got an invitation from my friend to go see a movie in Hollywood with many famous actors, and I said, "Nah, I'm too busy." I received this invitation – this request to do something, to go somewhere.

Roberto says to June, "Yes, I did (get the invitation). I'm going to send my regrets." "To send one's regrets" means to say, very nicely, very politely, that you are unable to do something that you were invited to do. So, your friend invites you to go to his daughter's fifth birthday party and you don't really want to or have time to go, you can "send your regrets," you can politely tell them that you are not going to go.

June says, "I'm trying to find an excuse not to attend." An "excuse" is a reason for not doing something. "To attend" means to go to the event – to participate in the event. So, June is trying to think of a reason – a good reason why she can't go to this party. June says I want to think of an excuse, or "find an excuse, without Kelly taking offense." "To take offense" means the same as "to be offended"; it means to become angry and upset because what someone has said to you. "I take offense at your remark about people who live in Los Angeles. They're not all stupid." "I take offense" – I'm angry, I get upset. Well, some of them are stupid, but not everyone!

Roberto says, "Couldn't you just tell her that you have another engagement that night?" This is also a good excuse: you tell someone "I have another engagement." Here, "engagement" is another appointment – another obligation that you have to do, something that you have to do with another person. It's a



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vague excuse. That is, it's not a specific excuse, you're just saying, "No, I have another engagement" – I have something else I'm doing that night.

June says that she "used that little white lie" the last time she turned down one of Kelly's invitations. A "white lie" is considered a small or unimportant lie. It's still a lie, it is not the truth, but it's considered not very serious - not very important. We often say either "white lie" or "little white lie." June used the little white lie about having another engagement last time when she turned down Kelly's invitation. "To turn down" means to decline. It's a two-word phrasal verb meaning to say no to someone's invitation: "I'm sorry, I have to turn down your invitation to come over to your house and help you paint it. I'm very sorry, I have to decline." Why? Because I don't like you – no, I have another engagement!

Roberto says, "How about telling (Kelly) that you have to take care of a sick relative?" A "relative" is someone who is part of your family, a person who is related to you "by blood," meaning your brother, your sister, your father, your cousin, or "by marriage," your brother-in-law, your sister-in-law, your mother-in-law to, and so forth. So, Roberto is suggested to June that she tell another little white lie, and say that she has to take care of a sick family member. The word "relative" actually has a couple of different meanings. You know what to do; go to our Learning Guide for some additional explanations.

Roberto says, "That one always works for me"– that excuse. June says, "I've used that one, too. I told her that I was looking after my mother the last time she invited me to dinner." "To look after someone" is another two-word phrasal verb meaning to take care of someone or something. "Will you look after my children while I go to the beach and get a suntan?" You're asking someone else to take care of your children.

Roberto says, "How about if you tell her you're on a special assignment at work and you have to work night and day to get it done?" "How about" means "why don't you tell her you're on a special assignment" – a special project, a special task that you need to work day and night on. "To work day and night" means to work a long time, 24 hours a day.

June says, "That's a little far-fetched." To say something is "far- (hyphen) fetched" (fetched) means it is difficult to believe; it is too strange to believe, too exaggerated. Someone says, "Oh, yesterday I was walking down the street and I saw a person from Mars (a Martian) riding his bike to work." You might say, "Hmm, that's a little far-fetched" – a little too difficult to believe that a Martian would be riding a bike. They would be taking a car, clearly!



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Roberto says, “You’ve got a point there.” The expression “you’ve got a point there” means you believe the other person is correct, or you believe the other person has a good idea. June says, “What are you going to tell Kelly when you decline her invitation?” “To decline” means to say no, to turn down. Roberto says, “I’m going to extend an apology and just say that I can’t make it.” The expression “to extend (extend) an apology” means that you are going to say you are sorry about something, or sorry for something. “I extended him an apology after I punched him in the face: ‘Oh, I’m sorry, I meant to punch the other person in the face!’” That’s to “extend an apology.”

June says, “That’s it? I’d never thought of just saying ‘no.’” She’s saying, “Oh, I don’t have to come up with an excuse.” Roberto says, “You know that old acronym: KISS – Keep It Simple, Stupid.” An “acronym” (acronym) is a word where each letter is the first letter of another word. For example, “ASAP” – “I need this ASAP,” that means as soon as possible. Sometimes acronyms are pronounced with each letter spoken; sometimes they’re pronounced as a word. So, you may hear someone say, “I need this ASAP” – A-S-A-P. In this case, “KISS” is pronounced like the word “kiss.” A “kiss” is (Jeff makes kissing sounds) when you touch your lips to someone else, but here “KISS” is an acronym; it means “keep it simple,” meaning don’t be complicated, don’t be complex. “Keep it simple, stupid,” meaning, well, you’re not very smart if you try to make it complicated.

June says, “You’re right.” Then she says, “Hey! Who are you calling stupid?” realizing that Roberto is calling her stupid.

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

[start of dialogue]

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Roberto: Yes, I did. I’m going to send my regrets. How about you?

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last time she invited me to dinner.

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you have to work night and day to get it done?

June: That's a little far-fetched, don't you think? I work as a store clerk.

Roberto: You've got a point there.

June: What are you going to tell Kelly when you decline her invitation?

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Roberto: You know the old acronym: KISS – Keep It Simple, Stupid.

June: You're right. Hey! Who are you calling stupid?

[end of dialogue]

The script for this episode was written by the always polite 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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hosted by Dr. Jeff McQuillan. This podcast is copyright 2008.