



ESL Podcast 362 – Getting In-Flight Service

GLOSSARY

call button – a small button to push when one wants a worker to come because one needs service, especially on a train or plane, where the call button is usually above one's head

* When Arvedya woke up on the plane, he was very thirsty, so he pushed the call button to ask for a glass of water.

flight attendant – steward/stewardess; a worker who provides service on an airplane; a worker who brings food, drinks, blankets, and pillows to airline passengers while they are on the plane

* The flight attendant asked us whether we would like anything else to drink.

cabin – the part of an airplane where passengers are seated

* How many seats are in the cabin of a Boeing 747?

blanket – a large piece of thick cloth that is placed over one's body to keep one warm, usually when one is asleep

* It is going to be very cold tonight, so we should put an extra blanket on the bed.

pillow – a soft fabric bag filled with feathers, cotton, or synthetic fibers that is placed under one's head for comfort while sleeping

* Do you sleep with one pillow or two?

meal service – the time during a flight when food is given to the passengers

* During the meal service, we were given a choice of chicken or beef.

bean – legume; a pod or seed that is cooked and eaten

* Mexican food uses a lot of black beans.

complimentary – free; at no additional cost; with the price already included

* The hotel gives its guests complimentary breakfast each morning.

in-flight magazine – a magazine that is produced by an airline and given to passengers for free

* Asher spent most of the flight studying the maps in the in-flight magazine.

cocktail – an alcoholic drink that is made by mixing two or more different drinks

* Her favorite cocktail is vodka with cranberry juice.



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out of – no longer having something; having given away or sold all of something so that nothing is left

* The store was out of chicken, so we decided to get some fish instead.

turbulence – strong movements that are felt on a plane, caused by wind

* Does turbulence make you feel sick to your stomach?

seatbelt – two strong pieces of fabric that are pulled around one's waist and connected together for safety while one is sitting in a car, train, or plane

* Many states have laws requiring people to wear seatbelts while driving.

fastened – connected; joined together tightly on two sides

* Make sure your coat is fastened tightly because it is very windy outside.

airsickness bag – a paper bag given to airline passengers so that they can vomit into them if they get sick

* Craig didn't feel sick until the man sitting next to him started using his airsickness bag.



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COMPREHENSION QUESTIONS

1. Why can't Hal have a blanket?
 - a) Because they have all been given to other people.
 - b) Because they are given out only during the meal service.
 - c) Because they are not complimentary.

2. Why does the flight attendant want Hal to fasten his seatbelt?
 - a) Because they are out of airsickness bags.
 - b) Because it's against the rules not to use one.
 - c) Because the plane is moving a lot in the wind.

WHAT ELSE DOES IT MEAN?

bean

The word “bean,” in this podcast, means a legume, or a pod or seed that is cooked and eaten: “Sally made some delicious red-bean chili for dinner.” A “jelly bean” is a small, colored candy in the shape of a bean that comes in many different flavors: “Humberto likes watermelon-flavored jelly beans best.” The phrase “to spill the bean” means to tell a secret accidentally: “Who spilled the beans about Reka’s surprise birthday party?” The phrase “to not amount to a hill of beans” means to not be important: “He’ll never amount to a hill of beans because he is just too lazy to work hard.” Finally, a “bean counter” is an informal and impolite term for an accountant: “Bean counters always have a lot of work to do when taxes are due.”

out of

In this podcast, the phrase “out of” means no longer having something, or having given away or sold all of something so that nothing is left: “During the storms, all the stores ran out of flashlights and water.” The phrase “out of” or “outside of” can also be used to talk about the distance away from a place: “They live in a beautiful small town just outside of Hackensack, New Jersey.” Sometimes the phrase “out of” means not included in something: “Britney will be out of the choir until the doctors can cure her sore throat.” Finally, the phrase “out of” can be used to mean that something or someone is no longer in a particular situation: “The doctors finally said that Mary Ann is out of danger and can go home from the hospital.”



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CULTURE NOTE

U.S. flights offer many services to their passengers, beyond the food, drinks, blankets, and pillows mentioned in this podcast. In general, the longer a flight is, the more services are offered to passengers. International flights have many more services than “domestic” (within a single country) flights do.

Many flights have in-flight entertainment. Often passengers are given “headsets” (small devices that one can put in one’s ears and connect to the plane with a cable) to listen to music. Sometimes flights have television shows, too. International flights or “cross-country” (between the U.S. east and west coasts) flights often have in-flight movies. However, passengers are “increasingly” (more and more often) being asked to pay to use the headsets.

On international flights, flight attendants “pass out” (distribute) “customs forms” (paperwork that must be presented to immigration officials when one enters another country). Sometimes they help passengers fill out those forms.

Most international flights also help passengers with their “duty-free purchases.” Before getting on the plane, passengers may buy things “duty-free” (without paying “tariffs,” or international taxes). Then they sit on the plane and airline workers bring their packages to them. On some flights, people can shop for duty-free goods in the in-flight magazine and “place orders” (make an order) on the flight so that their purchases are waiting for them when they land.

Finally, some planes have telephones that passengers can use by “swiping” (moving one’s credit card through an electronic reader very quickly) their credit cards on the back of the seat in front of them. A few planes even have “electrical outlets” (sources of electricity) so that passengers can plug in their laptop computers and other electronics during the flight.

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



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COMPLETE TRANSCRIPT

Welcome to English as a Second Language Podcast number 362: Getting In-Flight Service.

This is English as a Second Language Podcast episode 362. I'm your host, Dr. Jeff McQuillan, coming to you from the Center for Educational Development in beautiful Los Angeles, California.

Our website is www.eslpod.com. Go there to download a Learning Guide for this episode that will help you improve your English even faster. You can also take look at our ESL Podcast Store that has additional courses in daily and business English.

This episode is called "Getting In-Flight Service." We are going to go on an airplane and try to get some "service," or some help from the people who work on the airplane. Let's get started.

[start of dialogue]

I pushed the call button to get the attention of the flight attendant.

Flight attendant: Yes? What can I do for you?

Hal: It's very cold in the cabin. Is it possible to get a blanket?

Flight attendant: We're out of blankets, but here's a pillow.

Hal: Okay, thanks. I was asleep during the meal service. Could I get a meal?

Flight attendant: We don't have any more of the Baked Chicken. We only have the Bean Salad left.

Hal: Oh, okay, I'll take that. Could I also get a drink?

Flight attendant: What would you like?

Hal: What do you have?

Flight attendant: The complimentary drinks are listed in our in-flight magazine. Beer, wine, and other cocktails are \$4.



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Hal: I'll have a diet soda.

Flight attendant: We're out of diet soda.

Hal: How about just some water? What's that?

Flight attendant: That's turbulence. Make sure your seatbelt is fastened.

Hal: Could I get an airsickness bag, please?

Flight attendant: I'm sorry, but we're out of those, too.

[end of dialogue]

We're on an airplane in this episode. Hal begins by pushing the call button to get the attention of the flight attendant. The "call button" is a small button that you push when you need help or need "service," you need someone to help you. This is especially true on an airplane. The call button is usually above your head, and you click on it and the flight attendant is supposed to see it and then come to help you. The "flight attendant" – used to be called the "stewardess" for a woman, and "steward" for a man – is the person who works on the airplane, and brings food and drinks, and perhaps blankets and pillows to the people who are on the airplane, sitting in the seats. They are also the people responsible for helping you if there's an emergency on the airplane.

The flight attendant comes and says, "Yes? What can I do for you?" How can help you? Hal says, "It's very cold in the cabin." The "cabin" is the part of the airplane where the passengers are seated. The front of the airplane, where the "pilots" are, the people who are operating the plane, is called the "cockpit." The main part of the airplane, where everyone sits, is called the "cabin."

Hal says, "It's very cold in the cabin. Is it possible to get a blanket," a piece of thick cloth that you put on you to keep yourself warm. The flight attendants says, "We're out of blankets, but here's a pillow," a bag that is soft that you can put your head on. Of course if you are cold, having a pillow doesn't really help!

Hal then says, "Okay, thanks. I was asleep (I was sleeping) during the meal service." The "meal service" is the time in your airline flight when they serve you food and something to drink. This used to be free on most airlines in the United States, now many times you have to pay for any food that you want. So, he missed the meal service and he wants to get a meal, he wants to get some food.



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The flight attendant says, “We don’t have any more of the Baked Chicken. We only have the Bean Salad left.” “Bean” (bean) is a pod or a seed that is cooked and eaten. For example, in Mexico they have a lot of black beans, that’s a common food. “Bean” has a couple of different meanings; take a look at our Learning Guide for some additional explanations of how we use that word.

Hal says, “Okay, I’ll take that (meaning I’ll have the Bean Salad, please). Could I also get a drink?” The flight attendant says, “What would you like?” Hal says, “What do you have?” Notice when we say that quickly, it sounds like “whada ya have,” but slowly, “what do you have.” The flight attendant says, “The complimentary drinks are listed in our in-flight magazine.” If something is “complimentary, we mean it’s free, there’s no additional cost, it’s included in your price. “In-flight magazines” are magazines that are produced by the airline – by the company that owns the airplane – and given to passengers for free. They usually have articles inside of them and information about the airplane.

“The complimentary drinks (the free drinks) are listed in our in-flight magazine,” she says, “Beer, wine, and other cocktails are \$4.” A “cocktail” (cocktail) is an alcoholic drink usually made by mixing two or more liquids together, either soda and alcohol or different kinds of alcohol. This is a “cocktail,” it’s a general term for an alcoholic drink that you would get at a bar, for example. We used to call the women who would work in the bars and give you your drinks “cocktail waitresses.”

Hal says, “I’ll have a diet soda.” The flight attendant says, “We’re out of diet soda.” “To be out of something” means to no longer have something because you’ve used it or you’ve sold it so there’s nothing left. If you, for example, drink all of the milk you have in your refrigerator, you could say, “We’re out of milk. We need to go buy some more.” Well, on this airplane, like many of the airplanes I have been on recently, they are out of many things; they are out of diet soda – diet soda pop, like Coke or Pepsi.

Hal says, “How about just some water,” meaning that all I want now is water. Then he asks, “What’s that?” Something is happening on the plane. The flight attendant says, “That’s turbulence.” “Turbulence” (turbulence) are strong movements that you feel on a plane, usually because of wind. The plane will move back and forth, or go up and down quickly. This happens very commonly on airplane flights.

The flight attendant says, “Make sure your seatbelt is fastened.” Your “seatbelt” is something that goes usually around your waist and your shoulder that keeps you in your seat in case there’s an accident. You have seatbelts in your car,



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sometimes on a train, and always on a plane. They are things that go around your waist and chest – shoulder and chest – to keep you in your seat in case there’s an accident. The flight attendant says to make sure your seatbelt is fastened. You’ll hear that expression a lot on an airplane: “Make sure your seatbelt is fastened.” “To be fastened” means to be connected. In this case, it means that you are wearing your seatbelt. We use that expression “wear” even though it really just means you are behind your seatbelt; your seatbelt is over you and protecting you. So “fastening the seatbelt” means putting it on so that it is working correctly.

Hal says, “Could I get an airsickness bag, please?” “Airsickness” is what happens when people are on an airplane and you have a lot of turbulence. Sometimes it causes problems with your stomach, and sometimes you need to get rid of what’s in your stomach, even if you don’t want to. A “airsickness bag,” then, is a paper bag that you find usually in the seat in front of you – in the pocket on the back of the seat in front of you that you can use in case you’re going to be sick. But of course on this airplane, the flight attendant tells Hal they’re out of airsickness bags!

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

[start of dialogue]

I pushed the call button to get the attention of the flight attendant.

Flight attendant: Yes? What can I do for you?

Hal: It’s very cold in the cabin. Is it possible to get a blanket?

Flight attendant: We’re out of blankets, but here’s a pillow.

Hal: Okay, thanks. I was asleep during the meal service. Could I get a meal?

Flight attendant: We don’t have any more of the Baked Chicken. We only have the Bean Salad left.

Hal: Oh, okay, I’ll take that. Could I also get a drink?

Flight attendant: What would you like?

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Hal: How about just some water? What's that?

Flight attendant: That's turbulence. Make sure your seatbelt is fastened.

Hal: Could I get an airsickness bag, please?

Flight attendant: I'm sorry, but we're out of those, too.

[end of dialogue]

The script for this episode was written by the copilot of ESL Podcast, Dr. Lucy Tse.

From Los Angeles, California, I'm Jeff McQuillan. Thank you for listening. Come back and listen to us next time on ESL Podcast.

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