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**ESL Podcast 377 – Reporting a Stolen Car**

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**GLOSSARY**

**stolen** – taken illegally; taken without permission

\* He couldn't find his wallet and thinks that it's been stolen.

**to put down** – to write; to record

\* Put down on our grocery list that we need milk and bread.

**make** – name of the company who makes a specific product; the manufacturer's name

\* - What is the make of your vehicle?

- It is a Toyota.

**model** – a specific product among several that a company makes; style of a product; design of a product

\* - What Toyota model do you drive?

- I drive a Toyota Corolla.

**vehicle** – automobile; an object which transports people or things; car, truck, van, etc.

\* On the first day of work, we were told not to park the company's vehicles in the customer parking lot.

**license plate number** – a number found on a metal plate on the front and the back of a vehicle; a number which shows that a vehicle has been officially registered through the government

\* The driver left the scene of the accident, but we got her license plate number and we'll report her to the police.

**VIN number** – vehicle identification number; a number used to identify automobiles

\* A car's VIN number is usually found on the dashboard or on the side of the driver's door.

**to launch an investigation** – to begin a search for the truth; to start to look for facts

\* The committee is going to launch an investigation into the use of steroids and other drugs in sports.

**to recover** – to find; to regain; to get back

\* The police recovered my credit cards after they had been stolen.



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**joyride** – taking a stolen vehicle for a ride for fun; driving a stolen vehicle for pleasure

\* The teenagers stole the teacher's car and took it for a joyride.

**to abandon** – to leave something without the intention of returning for it; to give up completely

\* The family abandoned their village when war spread into the region.

**in one piece** – without major damage; not destroyed; not ruined; in good condition

\* I made it through my first day of skiing in one piece.

**car thief** – a person who steals cars; people who take cars illegally, without the owners' permission

\* We heard noises in the garage and when we went outside to investigate, we saw a car thief drive away with our brand new car!

**a different story** – the opposite situation; not the same situation or outcome

\* If I had studied for the test, the outcome would have been a different story.

**to strip** – to take apart completely; to take away the main parts or sections, leaving very little

\* To make this old car look new again, we need to strip away all of these layers of old paint.

**parts** – components of an automobile; the pieces of an object

\* Because the car is old, it will need a lot of new parts if we want to make it run again.

**chop shop** – a place where parts are taken from stolen cars and then sold; a garage where stolen cars are taken apart

\* The car thieves sold the car they had stolen to a chop shop.

**to hoof it** – to have to walk; to travel by walking

\* Since there is no public transportation in this part of town and because I don't own a car, I'm going to have to hoof it to the store.



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### COMPREHENSION QUESTIONS

1. What information does Kenji have to give the officer about his stolen vehicle?
  - a) The store where he bought the vehicle.
  - b) The make and model of the vehicle.
  - c) A copy of the vehicle's repair history.
2. What do car thieves usually do to stolen cars?
  - a) They strip them and sell their parts.
  - b) They keep them and drive them.
  - c) They sell them to auto dealerships.

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### WHAT ELSE DOES IT MEAN?

#### **model**

The word “model,” in this podcast, means the specific product that a company sells: “This company makes three models of MP3 players. Which one do you like best?” “Model” can also mean a small or miniature version of something: “He liked to build model airplanes.” Or, “Before starting to build the new government building, the architect made a model to show what the new building will look like.” A “model” is also a person who is paid to wear a company’s clothing for advertising: “She is a model for a children’s clothing store.” Finally, “model” can also mean a standard or an example of something used for other people to follow: “He is a model citizen.” Or, “The new workers were shown a model of what they would be building.”

#### **to strip**

In this podcast, the phrase “to strip” means take apart completely or to remove the major parts of something: “The burglars stripped the store of all its computers.” The word “strip” also means a thin and narrow piece of something: “Can you cut the chicken into long strips?” Or, “I don’t think that even a small airplane can land on this thin strip of land.” Also, “strip” means to remove one’s clothes: “The kids stripped down to their bathing suits when they got to the swimming pool.” Finally, “strip” means to take away: “The country’s leader was stripped of her power and a new leader took her place.”



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### CULTURE NOTE

Oftentimes when a car is stolen in the United States, the car thief will take the car to a chop shop. At the chop shop the stolen car is “disassembled” (taken apart). After the stolen car is disassembled, its parts are sold to “disreputable” (not trustworthy; not honest) auto service and auto body shops across the country that use these parts to repair their customers’ cars, usually without their customers knowing that the parts are stolen.

When a chop shop sells a stolen car’s parts, it is very difficult for the police to “track” (find; locate) those parts. Individual parts do not have a VIN number printed on it, so there is no way for the police to “identify” (recognize) or “trace” (locate the owner of) a part from a stolen car.

For this reason, it is not easy to avoid buying stolen parts unless you buy your car parts directly from a large auto supply store or a store that is part of a “chain” (a main company with many store locations). If you are getting your car repaired or serviced, you can take your car to the “dealership” (store that sells cars) where the car was purchased, or an “authorized” (having official permission to do business) service location. Those who don’t take their car to the dealership, but to an independent auto repair shop instead, can ask if the shop buys its parts directly from the dealership.

Interestingly, chop shops prefer to get older cars rather than newer cars because the parts for older cars are usually worth more money than parts to newer cars. It is easy for people to find new car parts at any auto store, but it’s difficult to find parts for older cars.

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



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### COMPLETE TRANSCRIPT

Welcome to English as a Second Language Podcast number 377: Reporting a Stolen Car.

This is English as a Second Language Podcast episode 377. I'm your host, Dr. Jeff McQuillan, coming to you from the Center for Educational Development in beautiful Los Angeles, California.

Did you know we have a website? Yes, we do! You can find it at [eslpod.com](http://eslpod.com). Go there and download a Learning Guide for this episode to help you improve your English even faster. You can also take a look at our ESL Podcast Store, which has additional courses in English you may be interested in.

This episode is a dialogue between Kenji and a police officer, about his car that has been stolen. Let's listen.

[start of dialogue]

Kenji: Hello, my car was stolen and I want to report it.

Officer: Where was it when it was stolen?

Kenji: It was parked outside of my apartment building. I went outside this morning to drive to work, and it was gone.

Officer: Okay, you need to fill out this form. Put down the make and model of the vehicle, the year, and the color. You'll also need the license plate number. Do you know the vehicle's VIN number?

Kenji: No, I don't.

Officer: That's okay. Just fill it out and we'll launch an investigation.

Kenji: What do you think the chances are that I'll recover my car?

Officer: That's hard to say. If it was stolen by some kids who wanted to take a joyride, they'll abandon it afterwards and you may get it back in one piece. If it was taken by professional car thieves, that's a different story. They usually strip the cars of their parts and sell them to chop shops. You may not want your car back after it's been stripped.



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Kenji: I'll just have to wish for the best.

Officer: We'll notify you if we have some news.

Kenji: Thanks. In the meantime, I'd better get used to hoofing it around town!

[end of dialogue]

The telephone conversation begins with Kenji saying, "Hello, my car was stolen and I want to report it (to report it stolen)." "Stolen" means it has been taken without his permission; it has been taken illegally. The police officer says, "Where was it when it was stolen (where was the car parked – where did you have the car when it got stolen)?" Kenji says, "It was parked outside of my apartment building. I went outside this morning to drive to work, and it was gone." This happen to me once about, oh, 15 years ago, when I first moved to Los Angeles. I parked my car outside of my apartment building; I got up in the morning – this was a Saturday morning – to meet a friend for breakfast, and my car was gone! There was another car where I had parked my car. So, it's not a very fun experience; I had to call the police.

Kenji says that he was going to work when he "found out," or discovered his car was stolen. The officer says, "Okay, you need to fill out (or complete) this form (this piece of paper). Put down the make and model of the vehicle." "To put down" means to write, in this case. The "make" of the vehicle is the name of the company who makes a specific product, such as Toyota or Ford or Mercedes Benz; these are the makes of cars. The "model" of the car is the specific car among the many that that company makes. So, if you drive a Toyota, you not only drive a Toyota, you drive a specific kind of Toyota – a Toyota Corolla; that would be the model of the car. So the make is Toyota; the model is Corolla. The "vehicle" is just another word for the car – the automobile.

So, the officer asks Kenji to put down – to write down the make and model of the vehicle, the year (what year it was made), and the color. She also asks him to write down the license plate number. The "license plate number" is actually, usually, a set of letters and numbers that are on the metal plate on the front and sometimes on the back of your car. These are plates, little pieces of metal, given by the government – the state government here in the U.S. – that identify your car, and only one license plate number is used for the car. In other words, no one else has that same combination.

The officer then asks Kenji, "Do you know the vehicle's VIN number (or V-I-N number)?" "V-I-N" stands for vehicle identification number. It's a long number



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that the maker of the car puts on the automobile that identifies that specific car, just like the license plate. Kenji says, “No, I don’t (I don’t know the number).” Most people don’t know the VIN number for their cars; they’re very long numbers – long set of numbers. The officer says, “That’s okay. Just fill it out and we’ll launch an investigation.” “To launch” means to begin, so they will begin an investigation; they will try to find out what happened to his car.

Kenji says, “What do you think the chances are that I’ll recover my car?” “To recover” means to get back something that you’ve lost or that has been stolen from you. Kenji is asking the officer what the chances are – how probably is it that he will get his car back. I can tell you that here Los Angeles the answer is not very probable at all! Although, I did get my car back, unfortunately it had had a couple of accidents before I got it back. The people who stole it had managed to hit another car with it, so I wasn’t able to really use it after that.

The officer says, “That’s hard to say (it’s difficult to tell you how good of a chance you have). If it was stolen by some kids who wanted to take a joyride, they’ll abandon it afterwards.” A “joyride” is when kids – teenagers, young adults – steal a car just to ride it around for fun. This is what happened to my car; it was stolen for a few days, and then it was abandoned. “To abandon” something means to leave it somewhere with no intention of returning (to) it, to give it up completely.

The officer says, “you may get it back in one piece.” “In one piece” means without any major damage; not destroyed, like my car was. “If it was taken by professional car thieves,” that is, someone who steals a car; we call that person a “car thief.” A “thief” is anyone who steals things. “If it was taken by professional car thieves, that’s a different story.” When someone says “that’s a different story,” they mean that’s a completely different situation, usually something that’s not good. “They usually strip the cars of their parts and sell them to chop shops.” So, when a professional thief steals a car, they “strip” the car, meaning they take it apart completely. They take off the doors, they take out the engine, they take off the wheels; they take it apart – they strip the car. “To strip” has a couple of different meanings in English – something of a dangerous word if you use it incorrectly. Take a look at our Learning Guide so that you don’t!

The officer says that they – the professional thieves – strip the cars of their “parts,” of the individual components or pieces, and sell them to chop shops. “To chop” is another word meaning to cut. A “chop shop” is a place where parts are taken from stolen cars and then sold. It’s a garage where the stolen cars are taken apart and then they sell the parts. So, it’s not a public place, because it’s illegal, of course, to steal a car, so chop shops are often places in bad



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neighborhoods or places where you don't really know what is there. The officer says, "You may not want your car back after it's been stripped." So, if they take all the parts off of the car, you probably don't even want the car back.

Kenji said, "I'll just have to wish for the best," meaning "I'm going to have to hope that there is good news." The officer says, "We'll notify you if we have some news." Kenji says, "Thanks. In the meantime, I'd better get used to hoofing it around town!" "To hoof (hoof) it" means to walk, to travel by walking. It's an informal expression. If someone says, "I'm going to hoof it to the store," they mean "I'm going to walk to the store." A "hoof," as a noun, is the foot of an animal, like a horse has a hoof. Sometimes we call the feet of animals "paws," such as with a dog or a cat.

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

[start of dialogue]

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Kenji: I'll just have to wish for the best.





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Officer: We'll notify you if we have some news.

Kenji: Thanks. In the meantime, I'd better get used to hoofing it around town!

[end of dialogue]

The script for this episode was written by our very own Dr. Lucy Tse. Thank you Lucy!

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

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