



ESL Podcast 380 – Hiring Temp Workers

GLOSSARY

replacement – a person or a thing that takes the place of another; a new employee after an old one no longer works there

* Two of my co-workers quit last week, so my boss is looking for replacements.

permanent – lasting a long time; forever; not temporary

* Tania is tired of jobs that only last a few months, so she's currently looking for a permanent position.

to make do – to do the best you can with what is available, which may not be enough; to get by

* I don't have any money to buy groceries this week, so I'll just have to make do with the food in my refrigerator.

temp – short for temporary employee; a worker who is not permanent; an employee usually hired through an agency who will only work for a company for a set amount of time

* We had so much work to do last month that my boss hired some temps to help.

perspective – point of view; opinion; way of seeing something

* Yohanna grew up on a potato farm and Eve grew up in the city so they have two very different perspectives.

to staff – to hire; to employ

* Jorge's new restaurant is almost ready to open, but he still needs to staff the restaurant for lunch and dinner.

to cover – to do the necessary work; to finish; to complete

* The teacher covered the entire chapter last week in class.

to undervalue – to not appreciate someone or something; to think something is worth less than it is

* His mother really undervalues the large amount of work he does around the house.

skilled – with the ability needed to complete a task or a job; good at doing something; talented; able

* I discovered last week at the concert that Karl is a very skilled guitarist.

to land – to get; to win; to acquire

* Inez couldn't believe that her sister actually landed a job as a fashion model.



ESL Podcast 380 – Hiring Temp Workers

to turn (something) down – to say “no” to an offer; to not accept

* They offered me the job, but I turned it down because the pay was too low.

to test the waters – to try something before making a decision; to do something a little or for a short time to see the result before deciding whether to continue

* I went to the gym a few times to test the waters before signing up for a one-year membership.

in retrospect – looking back at the past; another way to say “now I know something that I didn’t know before”

* In retrospect, I should have asked Jon out on a date when he was still single.

job security – knowledge that a person will not lose his or her job; knowledge that a company will not fire a person

* His pay is not very high, but at least Kane has job security at the butcher shop because people will always need to buy meat.

perks – benefits; extra good things that are not part of one’s salary; bonuses

* One of the perks of my job at the café is that I get all the free coffee I can drink.

to get (one’s) foot in the door – to get an opportunity to begin something, such as a job; to begin the first step in working toward a goal

* I’m not a very well known singer yet. I’ve been singing at local clubs to get my foot in the door.

to get out of line – to misbehave; to behave badly; to not act appropriately; to not do one’s job

* Her teacher is very strict and does not allow the students to get out of line.

to set (someone) straight – to correct wrong behavior; to tell someone that he or she is mistaken

* Jamie’s mother set him straight after he kicked his younger brother in the leg.



ESL Podcast 380 – Hiring Temp Workers

COMPREHENSION QUESTIONS

1. Why did Enrique work as a temp?
 - a) He couldn't find another job.
 - b) He wanted to try jobs at different companies.
 - c) He moved around too often for a permanent job.

 2. What does it mean to undervalue a person?
 - a) To not think that a person is as good as he or she is.
 - b) To give the person money.
 - c) To tell someone how much something costs.
-

WHAT ELSE DOES IT MEAN?

to staff

In this podcast, the verb “to staff” means to hire employees to work at a business or company: “Jo really did a great job staffing her store. Her employees are so helpful to customers.” The noun “staff” means workers or employees: “The fast food restaurant’s staff isn’t friendly, but they are efficient.” A “staff” is a commonly used word for a long, sturdy stick used to help someone walk or climb up a mountain: “The old man walked up the mountain with a wooden staff.” The set of five horizontal lines on which music is written is also known as a “staff”: “Please play the notes written on this staff,” said her piano teacher.”

landing

The word “landing,” in this podcast, means getting or winning something: “My uncle landed a great new job as a journalist.” The area at the top or bottom of a staircase is called a landing: “Please wait for me on the downstairs landing outside my apartment.” Or, “Everyone at the party looked up at Sheila when she appeared on the landing in a orange and green dress.” The last part of an airplane flight is also known as a landing: “That was a bad flight. The landing was so rough that I thought we were going to crash!” A landing strip is a long road at an airport on which planes can take off (depart) or land (arrive): “Ty and his friends liked to go to the airport and watch the planes take off from the landing strips.”



ESL Podcast 380 – Hiring Temp Workers

CULTURE NOTE

In the United States, many people looking for jobs go to a temp agency. A temp agency is a company that matches people looking for jobs with businesses that need to hire temporary staff. Companies use temp agencies to search for temporary employees for a few reasons. For example, a company may need to quickly fill available jobs, and don't have time or money "to recruit" (to look; to attract applicants) on their own. While most jobs available through temp agencies are not permanent, they can often help a person get his or her foot in the door in a particular company or industry so that he or she will be able to find a permanent job later on.

Millions of Americans have found jobs through temp agencies. Because many temp jobs offer "flexibility" (a schedule that can be easily changed) that more permanent jobs do not, many students, parents, and recent college graduates "seek" (look for) employment by signing up with a temp agency. The most common types of temp jobs are in offices, usually as "entry-level" (beginner) "administrative assistants," or office helpers. The "wages" (amount of money earned) for temp jobs vary. Some jobs only pay "minimum wage," or the lowest amount a company is legally allowed to pay its employees, set by the government; others pay extremely well. Temp agencies make their profit by taking a "commission" (amount of money; fee) from the wages that the hiring companies pay temp workers.

So how can you find a flexible and well-paying job through a temp agency? The first step is to find an agency. Many agencies "advertise" (make themselves known) in the phonebook, on the Internet, and sometimes even on signs and billboards. After you've found a temp agency, you must schedule an interview in which you will be asked to give information about yourself and will have the chance to ask for more information about the temp agency. After the interview, the temp agency will often ask you to sign a contract. This contract will have information such as how much commission the agency will take from your wages. After you've signed the contract, all you can do is sit back and wait. Hopefully, your skills will match what a company is looking for.

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



ESL Podcast 380 – Hiring Temp Workers

COMPLETE TRANSCRIPT

Welcome to English as a Second Language Podcast number 380: Hiring Temp Workers.

This is English as a Second Language Podcast episode 380. I'm your host, Dr. Jeff McQuillan, coming to you from the Center for Educational Development in beautiful Los Angeles, California.

Our website is eslpod.com. Go here and download a Learning Guide for this episode. You can also take a look at our ESL Podcast Store, as well as our ESL Podcast Blog.

This episode is called "Hiring Temp Workers." "Temp" is short for temporary; this is when companies hire people for short amounts of time to do work. Let's get started.

[start of dialogue]

Bethany: I just talked to Steve about hiring replacements for Cyril, who quit last month and for Megan, who is leaving at the end of this week. Do you know what he told me? He doesn't want to hire permanent replacements. He wants to make do with temps!

Enrique: I can see it from Steve's perspective. The economy isn't so good right now and maybe he's not sure if we can afford full-time replacements.

Bethany: But how am I supposed to staff the office to cover all of the work that needs to be done with temps?!

Enrique: Don't undervalue temps. Many of them are very skilled and you may be surprised at how well they do. I should know. I worked as a temp right after graduating from college.

Bethany: You did? I didn't know that. But you went to a great school. I'm surprised you had trouble landing a full-time job.

Enrique: Actually, I was offered a full-time job before I graduated, but I turned it down. I decided I wanted to test the waters in a few different companies before deciding on where I wanted to work. In retrospect, it was the best thing I could have done.



ESL Podcast 380 – Hiring Temp Workers

Bethany: You didn't miss the job security?

Enrique: Yeah, I did, but there are other perks to working as a temp. I got offered permanent jobs with two of the companies I temped for. That's how I got my first full-time job. Working there was the best way to get my foot in the door.

Bethany: Well, thanks for the fresh perspective. Maybe working with temps won't be so bad.

Enrique: I hope not. And if they get out of line, just tell me and I'll set them straight.

Bethany: Yeah, right.

[end of dialogue]

Our dialogue begins with Bethany saying to Enrique, "I just talked to Steve about hiring replacements for Cyril, who quit last month." A "replacement" is a person that takes the place of another; it could also be a thing that takes the place of another. So, one employee leaves, the company then hires a replacement – another worker to take that job.

Bethany says that Steve is hiring replacements for Cyril and for Megan, who is leaving at the end of this week. She then asks, "Do you know what he (Steve) told me? He doesn't want to hire permanent replacements." Something or someone that is "permanent" is there for a long time – forever. It's the opposite of temporary. Bethany says Steve "wants to make do with temps!" "To make do" is an interesting verb combination; it means to do the best you can with what you have available to you, it may not be enough. For example, if you have to plan a company party but you only have a hundred dollars to spend, that's not very much money, that's not enough for a good party, but you have to make do – you have to do the best you can with that hundred dollars.

Steve wants to make do with temps, or temporary workers. It's popular in the United States, especially when the economy is not doing very well, to have companies hire temporary workers, not permanent workers. There are many different companies that specialize in temporary workers – in temps. In fact, there's a verb "to temp," which means to work as a temporary worker. I temped when I was in college. I needed a job but I didn't want a full-time, permanent job, so I worked for a "temporary employment agency," a company that hires people to work for other companies. I did some interesting jobs; one job, I had to take a mattress and "take it apart," meaning I had to remove the outer part of the



ESL Podcast 380 – Hiring Temp Workers

mattress from the metal part inside. I also worked once as a clerk in an office, doing simple tasks like copying and stapling papers. You can temp in almost every kind of work, and it pays okay. It pays more than you would get if you tried to work at McDonald's or some fast food restaurant.

Enrique says, "I can see it from Steve's perspective." "Perspective" is your point of view, your way of seeing things. Enrique is saying I understand Steve's viewpoint. "The economy isn't so good right now and maybe he's not sure we can afford full-time replacements." "Afford" means have enough money. Bethany says, "But how am I supposed to staff the office to cover all of the work that needs to be done with temps!" "To staff" is another verb for to hire – to employ. "Staff" has a couple of different meanings in English; take a look at our Learning Guide for some additional explanations. "To cover," here, means to do the necessary work, to finish or complete the work. So, Bethany is concerned how she is going to hire people to do all of the work that needs to be done if she only has temporary workers.

Enrique says, "Don't undervalue temps." "To undervalue" means not to appreciate someone or something, to think something is worth less than it really is. The opposite would be to overvalue something, to think it is worth more than it really is. Enrique says many temps "are very skilled." "To be skilled" means that they have an ability to complete a job or a task. To be good at something, that is to be skilled.

"Many temps are very skilled," Enrique says, "and you may be surprised at how well they do." He then says that he "worked as a temp right after graduating from college." Bethany is surprised; she says, "You did? I didn't know that. But you went to a great school. I'm surprised you had trouble landing a full-time job." "To land," here, means to get, to win, or to acquire something. "I landed an interview with Google" – Google wants to talk to me and I got an interview. We use the verb when we are talking about getting a prize or getting something that is very valuable such as a job. Usually it's used in talking about employment.

Enrique says, "Actually, I was offered a full-time job before I graduated, but I turned it down." "To turn something down" is a phrasal verb meaning to say no to something that someone is offering you – not to accept something. When I was younger, I used to ask many women out on a date to go with me for a romantic dinner, and usually they would turn me down – say "You? Come on!"

Enrique says that he turned down a job because he decided he "wanted to test the waters." "To test the waters" means to try something before making a final decision, to do something for a little while to see if it's something you like or



ESL Podcast 380 – Hiring Temp Workers

something that you're good at. So, Enrique decided to test the waters in a few different companies before deciding on where he wanted to work. He says, "In retrospect, it was the best thing I could have done." The expression "in retrospect" means looking back at it now. It's another way of saying now I know something that I didn't know before.

Bethany asks, "You didn't miss the job security?" "Job security" is knowing that you will not lose your job – knowing that the company will not fire you. In the U.S., most companies do not offer very much job security unless there is some sort of workers' union at the company. Enrique says, "Yeah, I did (meaning I did miss the job security), but there are other perks to working as a temp." A "perk" (perk) is a benefit. It's an extra good thing that isn't part of your salary, but it's something that is nice to have. For example: "At Google, where I landed my interview, they have free food" – they have a cafeteria where you can go and eat without paying for anything.

Enrique says, "I got offered permanent jobs with two of the companies I temped for." Notice the verb "temped," past tense. "That's how I got my first full-time job," he says, "Working there was the best way to get my foot in the door." The expression "to get your foot in the door" means to get an opportunity to begin something, such as a job. It's the first step in working toward a goal. Usually this is a job that is not very important, but at least it gets you into the company so they can get to know you – it gets your foot in the door.

Bethany says, "Well, thanks for the fresh perspective. Maybe working with temps won't be so bad" – maybe it won't be as bad as I thought. Enrique says, "I hope not. And if they get out of line, just tell me and I'll set them straight." "To get out of line" is an expression that means to act inappropriately, not to do your job; "to misbehave," we might say. "We don't want the employees getting out of line" – we don't want them doing things that they shouldn't be doing. If this happens, Enrique says that he'll "set them straight." "To set someone straight" is a two-word phrasal verb meaning to correct wrong behavior, to tell someone that he or she is wrong. It's a somewhat strong expression: "I'm going to set you straight" – I'm going to tell you what you're doing wrong

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

[start of dialogue]

Bethany: I just talked to Steve about hiring replacements for Cyril, who quit last month and for Megan, who is leaving at the end of this week. Do you know what



ESL Podcast 380 – Hiring Temp Workers

he told me? He doesn't want to hire permanent replacements. He wants to make do with temps!

Enrique: I can see it from Steve's perspective. The economy isn't so good right now and maybe he's not sure if we can afford full-time replacements.

Bethany: But how am I supposed to staff the office to cover all of the work that needs to be done with temps!

Enrique: Don't undervalue temps. Many of them are very skilled and you may be surprised at how well they do. I should know. I worked as a temp right after graduating from college.

Bethany: You did? I didn't know that. But you went to a great school. I'm surprised you had trouble landing a full-time job.

Enrique: Actually, I was offered a full-time job before I graduated, but I turned it down. I decided I wanted to test the waters in a few different companies before deciding on where I wanted to work. In retrospect, it was the best thing I could have done.

Bethany: You didn't miss the job security?

Enrique: Yeah, I did, but there are other perks to working as a temp. I got offered permanent jobs with two of the companies I temped for. That's how I got my first full-time job. Working there was the best way to get my foot in the door.

Bethany: Well, thanks for the fresh perspective. Maybe working with temps won't be so bad.

Enrique: I hope not. And if they get out of line, just tell me and I'll set them straight.

Bethany: Yeah, right.

[end of dialogue]

The script for this episode was written by the very skilled 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.



English as a Second Language Podcast
www.eslpod.com

ESL Podcast 380 – Hiring Temp Workers

English as a Second Language Podcast is written and produced by Dr. Lucy Tse, hosted by Dr. Jeff McQuillan. This podcast is copyright 2008.