



ESL Podcast 405 – Buying Computer Accessories

GLOSSARY

desktop – a computer that has a large machine and a separate monitor, keyboard, and mouse, designed to be put on a desk and not to be moved around very often

* The nice thing about a desktop computer is that if the keyboard breaks, you can get a new keyboard without having to replace the whole computer.

laptop – notebook computer; a small computer that folds and can be put in a bag or backpack, designed to be moved around a lot

* Many students take their laptops to that coffee shop so that they can study with their friends.

versatile – with many different uses; something that can be used in many different ways and/or with many different purposes

* Tomatoes are very versatile, since they can be cooked in many different ways, or even eaten without cooking them.

screen – the flat, rectangular part of a computer monitor that one looks at, which produces light and has text and images on it

* Jake was pointing to things on the computer screen and now his fingerprints are all over it.

monitor – the part of a computer that sits on a desk and holds the screen so that users can look at it to read text and see images

* Can you change the color settings on the monitor?

connector – something that puts two pieces of electronic equipment together, usually with many holes in one end or both ends

* We bought a connector so that we could plug our MP3 player into the car stereo and listen to podcasts as we drive.

cable – a long piece of wire covered in plastic that connects two pieces of electronic equipment together

* Under his desk there are a bunch of unorganized cables for printers, scanners, digital cameras, keyboards, phones, and more.

to hook (something) up – to connect two things, usually electronics, by plugging one part into another part

* Dad hooked the DVD player up to the TV.



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monitor stand – a piece of plastic and/or metal that one puts a monitor on top of to hold the monitor where it should be at whatever height or angle the user wants
* The monitor stand should be high enough so that you don't have to lean over to read the text on the screen.

to elevate – to raise; to make something higher; to move something up
* You'll need a special tool to elevate your car when you need to change the tire.

speaker – a piece of electronics that makes noise and is used to listen to music, podcasts, the radio, and more
* Your speakers are too loud! Please use headphones so that we don't have to hear your music.

to plug (something) into (something) – to connect a piece of electronic equipment into another piece or into a source of electricity, usually by putting small pieces at the end of a cable into a small hole
* Do you know how to plug your digital camera into the computer so that you can see the photos?

battery – a piece of electronics that stores electricity so that cell phones, cameras, computers, and other things can be used without being connected to the source of electricity in a wall
* How often do you have to buy a new battery for your watch?

spare – extra; an additional piece or copy of something
* We need to always have a spare tire in the back of our car so that we can get home even if one of the tires loses all its air.

power cord – a long cable (a piece of wire covered with plastic) that connects a piece of electronics to the source of electricity in a wall
* Theo wanted to use his computer at the airport, but he couldn't find anywhere to plug the power cord in.

keyboard – a rectangular piece of plastic with many keys (buttons), each with a letter, number, or symbol on it, that is used to enter information into a computer
* The dollar sign (\$) and the number 4 are on the same key on most U.S. keyboards.

cramped – crowded; very close together, without very much room
* Their car is cramped whenever they travel with all five of their children.



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mouse – a small piece of electronics that is connected to a computer and has two buttons, which one puts under one’s hand and rolls over a desk or table to make things move on a computer screen

* Use the mouse to move to the upper-right hand corner and click the red box to make that program close.

accessory – something that is used with another machine or product and, although it is not necessary, makes it better, faster, easier to use, or prettier

* When we bought a new digital camera, we also bought two accessories: a black bag for carrying it and a bigger memory card.

COMPREHENSION QUESTIONS

1. Which of these is not an accessory?
 - a) Desktop.
 - b) Speakers.
 - c) Mouse.
2. Why does Ginger think a desktop is better than a laptop?
 - a) A desktop has louder speakers.
 - b) A desktop has a better battery.
 - c) A desktop has a smaller keyboard.

WHAT ELSE DOES IT MEAN?

screen

The word “screen,” in this podcast, means the flat, rectangular part of a computer monitor that one looks at, which produces light and has text and images on it: “Her eyes were tired after looking at the computer screen all day.” The phrase “the big screen” is used to talk about movies that are seen at the movie theater: “I wanted to see that movie on the big screen, but then we decided to wait and watch it at home on DVD instead.” Finally, a “screen” is a large piece of thin metal netting that is put over a window or door to keep out insects: “If we don’t want flies in our house, we need to get screens for our windows.”

speaker

In this podcast, the word “speaker” means a piece of electronics that makes noise and is used to listen to music, podcasts, the radio, and more: “They sat in front of the speakers at the concert and it was so loud that their ears hurt for days afterward.” A “speaker” is also a presenter or a person who speaks formally in



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public: “Did you hear the speaker’s comments about the economy in Southeast Asia?” Or, “After the presentation, the speaker will answer questions from the audience.” Another meaning of “speaker” is a person who speaks a certain language: “Some Spanish speakers are able to learn Portuguese and Italian more easily because the languages are similar.” A “native speaker” is someone who grew up speaking a certain language: “He is a native speaker of Arabic, but he speaks English fluently.”

CULTURE NOTE

Technology stores in the United States sell many computer accessories. Printers, scanners, keyboards, mice, monitors, and monitor stands are just the beginning. There are also many smaller accessories that computer users can purchase to make their computers work faster or be more comfortable.

Some computer accessories are “ergonomic,” meaning that they are designed to correct one’s “posture” (the way that one holds one’s body) to avoid “injuries” (painful problems with one’s body). A “wrist rest,” for example, is a soft piece of material that one puts in front of a keyboard and/or mouse for one’s “wrist” (the part of one’s body between one’s hand and arm) to rest on in the correct position.

Another common computer accessory is a “mouse pad,” or a small piece of cloth-covered plastic that one puts the mouse on and moves the mouse over the top. A mouse pad helps the mouse move smoothly so that one has more control when trying to move the “cursor” (the arrow on one’s computer) around the screen. Many mouse pads have pretty photos or funny drawings on them.

Many people who work at a desk want to buy a “keyboard drawer.” This is put under the desk where one sits and can be pulled toward oneself like a “drawer” (a small box that opens in a piece of furniture). The keyboard sits on top of the drawer, so one can use it while the drawer is open, or hide it while the drawer is closed.

Finally, many people have “document holders” next to their computers. A document holder “holds” (keeps something in a position) a piece of paper “at eye level” (at the height of one’s eyes) so that one can look at it while using the computer without having to use one’s hands.

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



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COMPLETE TRANSCRIPT

Welcome to English as a Second Language Podcast number 405: Buying Computer Accessories.

This is English as a Second Language Podcast episode 405. I'm your host, Dr. Jeff McQuillan, coming to you from the Center for Educational Development in beautiful Los Angeles, California.

If you go to our website at eslpod.com you can download a Learning Guide for this episode that contains all of the vocabulary, definitions, sample sentences using the vocabulary, additional definitions not discussed on the episode, cultural notes, comprehension questions, and, if that weren't enough, a complete transcript of this episode.

This episode is called "Buying Computer Accessories." An "accessory" is something you buy that works with something else; it's something that helps you or improves on another product. This is going to be a dialogue between Kevin and Ginger about buying things for your computer, so we'll have lots of vocabulary related to the computer. Let's get started.

[start of dialogue]

Ginger: It's really nice of you to come with me to buy my computer. This is the desktop I'm thinking about.

Kevin: This is okay, but if I were you, I'd buy a laptop. It's more versatile. You can travel with it.

Ginger: I'm not sure about getting a laptop. The screen is so small.

Kevin: No problem. You can get a separate monitor. This is a good one. You just need a connector and a cable to hook it up to your laptop. Here's a monitor stand, too, so you can elevate it if you want to.

Ginger: The speakers on the laptop aren't very loud.

Kevin: You can get these great speakers. You plug them into your laptop and the sound is amazing.

Ginger: I'm not sure about the battery.



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Kevin: It comes with a battery that lasts three to five hours, but you can always buy a spare. Of course, it comes with a power cord, too, so you can just plug it in if your battery runs low.

Ginger: The keyboard is a little cramped, too.

Kevin: That's what a full-size keyboard is for. You can buy a separate keyboard and mouse and attach them to your laptop. It'll be just like having a desktop.

Ginger: Then why don't I just buy a desktop?

Kevin: If you do, you won't be able to buy all of these great accessories. That's half the fun of buying a new computer!

[end of dialogue]

Our dialogue begins with Ginger saying, "It's really nice of you to come with me to buy my computer. This is the desktop I'm thinking about." Ginger says, "This is the desktop." The "desktop," here, refers to the desktop computer, which is a computer that has a large machine and usually a separate "monitor," the thing that you use to see what's on your computer; it has a screen that you look at. A "desktop," then, is a machine – a computer that is separate, usually, from the monitor.

Kevin says, "This is okay (this desktop is okay), but if I were you, I'd buy a laptop." A "laptop" (laptop) is sometimes called a "notebook" computer; it's a small computer that you can fold up and put in a bag or in a backpack. Kevin says the laptop is "more versatile." "Versatile" (versatile) is something that has many different uses, something that can be used in different ways. You could say, "That person is versatile, she can do different things for her company."

Kevin says you can travel with a laptop computer. Ginger says, "I'm not sure about getting a laptop." She says, "The screen is so small." The "screen" is the part of the computer monitor that you look at, as we mentioned before. Kevin says, "No problem. You can get a separate monitor" – you can get a separate piece of equipment that you can put on your desk that has the screen on it. "This is a good one," Kevin says, "You just need a connector and a cable to hook it up to your laptop." A "connector" is something that helps you put one piece of electronic equipment together with something else. A connector usually has holes in it, on one or both ends, and it plugs into some electronic device. A "cable" is the long piece of wire, usually covered in plastic that connects two pieces of electronic equipment. So, a cable will typically have a connector on



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both ends, one for one piece of equipment, the other for the other piece of equipment. To “hook something up” means to connect two things together, usually electronic things: “I hooked up my DVD player to my television” – I connected it so I could watch a DVD movie.

Kevin says, “Here’s a monitor stand, too, so you can elevate it if you want to.” To “elevate” means to raise, to make something higher, to move something up. If you go into a large building, they’ll typically have something called “elevators,” which is a noun, comes from the verb to “elevate,” means to go up, it takes you up into the building. It’s a small box that “elevates,” or goes up. Kevin says that the monitor stand will elevate the computer monitor. The “monitor stand” is a piece of plastic or metal that you can put a monitor on top of, so it’s a little higher up off your desk. That’s a “monitor stand.”

Ginger says, “The speakers on the laptop aren’t very loud.” “Speakers” are parts of a radio or a computer or a television that we use to listen to music, to people talking, to this podcast perhaps; you may have speakers. Usually a speaker is something that more than one person can hear. If it’s just one person putting it into their ears, those things are called “earbuds” or “headphones.” But, a speaker is something that is meant for many different people to hear.

So, Ginger is complaining that the speakers are too “soft,” they’re not loud enough. Kevin says, “You can get these great speakers. You plug them into your laptop and the sound is amazing.” To “plug something into something else” is to connect a piece of electronic equipment to another piece of electronic equipment, or to some source of electricity. For example, if you have a computer you will plug it into the wall; you will get electricity from your wall – from your electrical system in your house. So, you can plug something in to get electricity – to get power, or you can plug something in as a way of connecting two pieces of equipment. Kevin is suggesting that Ginger can buy these speakers, and then plug them into her computer so she can have better sound. She doesn’t have to use the speakers that are “built-in” to the laptop, that are part of the laptop frame – the laptop container or case, we would say.

Ginger says, “I’m not sure about the battery” (on the laptop). The “battery” is what stores electricity; it “stores,” or keeps, power so you can use something without having to plug it into the wall for electricity. Your cell phone has a battery; most laptop computers have a battery.

Kevin says the laptop “comes with a battery (meaning it is sold with a battery) that lasts (that will be good for) three to five hours (of use), but you can always buy a spare.” A “spare” (spare) is an extra copy of something – an extra piece of



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something, usually in case something that you have breaks and you need another one right away. For example in your car, if you have a car, you may have a spare tire. The “tire” is the part of the car that goes around the wheels and allows you to drive on a street. A “spare tire” is an extra tire; in case you have one tire that doesn’t work properly you can put on the extra – the spare tire. So, you can have a spare battery for your laptop as well. He says, “Of course, (the laptop) comes with a power cord, too, so you can just plug it in if your battery runs low.” A “power cord” is a long cable that connects your piece of electronics to the source of electricity in the wall. So, you “plug in” the power cord; it’s a cable that connects something to a wall where you have electricity.

Ginger then says, “The keyboard is a little cramped, too.” The “keyboard” is the part of the computer that you type on, that has letters and numbers that you can hit. We call those “keys.” To say something is “cramped” means it is very close together, too close together. You might say it’s “crowded.” You might walk into a room and say, “It’s cramped in here. It’s so small; there are too many people here.” That is to be “cramped.” Ginger says the keyboard is cramped; it’s too small. Kevin says you can buy a “full-sized,” a bigger, keyboard and a mouse and attach them to your computer.

Ginger says, “Then why don’t I just buy a desktop?” Kevin says, “If you do, you won’t be able to buy all these great accessories. That’s half the fun of buying a new computer!” When we say something is “half the fun,” we mean that’s part of the excitement – that’s part of the fun of doing something. Kevin is suggesting that buying all these extra things is part of the fun of buying a computer.

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

[start of dialogue]

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Kevin: This is okay, but if I were you, I’d buy a laptop. It’s more versatile. You can travel with it.

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[end of dialogue]

The script for this episode was written by the versatile 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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