



ESL Podcast 422 – Shopping for Underwear

GLOSSARY

underwear – clothes worn underneath one’s regular clothing that shouldn’t be seen normally

* I need to do laundry because I don’t have any more clean underwear!

unmentionables – underwear; a funny way to refer to underwear, as if it were indecent or inappropriate to talk about underwear in a conversation

* Whenever Aunt Peggy talks about underwear, she gets embarrassed, turns red, and refers to the clothes as “unmentionables.”

lingerie – women’s underwear, especially when it is very fancy, sexy, and/or expensive

* Many stores sell red and pink lingerie in the weeks before Valentine’s Day.

bra – a type of underwear worn by women that goes over their shoulders and around their chest to support their breasts

* How old was your daughter when she started wearing a bra for the first time?

underwire – a curved piece of metal that is sewn into some bras to provide extra support for large breasts

* Some women think that wearing a bra with an underwire is uncomfortable, but most women who have very large breasts like them.

strapless – a piece of clothing that does not have any fabric going over a woman’s shoulder, usually a dress or bra

* Beth plans to wear a strapless dress to the dance, but she needs to buy a strapless bra to wear with it.

cup – the part of a bra that has a rounded shape and fits over one breast available in sizes AAA (the smallest) through DDD (the biggest)

* During pregnancy, her breasts grew and her bra cup size went from a B to a C.

panties – underwear worn around a woman’s waist, over her bottom, and between her legs

* Becca wore black panties under white pants, and everyone could see them.



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slip – a piece of underwear that is like a skirt made from very thin fabric, designed to be worn under a regular skirt so that light cannot be seen between a woman's legs

* Normally, I wear a slip under my skirt, but with a black skirt it doesn't seem necessary.

pantyhose – nylons; a type of leggings; a very thin fabric that one can see through and usually has a brown or black color that is worn over a woman's legs up to her waist, used to make her legs look smooth and evenly colored when she is wearing a skirt or dress

* Women who work in a bank are supposed to wear pantyhose every day because it makes them look more professional.

to snicker – to laugh quietly at another person in a way that is not very nice

* The students snickered when they saw that their teacher had broccoli in her teeth.

boxers – underwear worn around a man's waist, over his bottom, and between his legs that is loose and comes down to the middle of his thigh (upper leg)

* Louis wanted to go swimming, but he had forgotten to bring a swimsuit, so he just wore his boxers instead.

waistband – the expandable piece of elastic around the waist of one's clothes that keeps one's clothes from falling down

* Jared lost a lot of weight and now the waistband in his pants is too big for him.

button fly – the front part of a pair of pants or underwear that can be opened and closed with buttons (instead of a zipper, which is more common)

* In the 1980s, button-fly jeans were very popular in the United States.

boxer briefs – underwear worn around a man's waist, over his bottom, and between his legs that is tight and comes down to the middle of his thigh (upper leg)

* Boxer briefs have the same shape as boxers, but they are much tighter, like briefs are.

seamless – without seams; without lines that are created by sewing two pieces of fabric or cloth together; made of only one piece of fabric that hasn't been sewn

* Lynn doesn't like the feeling of seams rubbing against her skin, so she often wears a seamless shirt underneath her regular shirts.



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briefs – underwear worn around a man’s waist, over his bottom, and between his legs that is tight and does not cover any part of his thigh (upper leg)

* Do you prefer wearing briefs or boxers?

g-string – a type of underwear for men or women that goes around one’s waist and between one’s legs, but that has only a very small piece of fabric in the back that goes between one’s buttocks (the two large areas of skin on one’s bottom) so that the buttocks can be seen

* G-strings are very uncomfortable, but some people like to wear them because they think they’re sexy.

COMPREHENSION QUESTIONS

1. Which of these covers a woman’s legs?
 - a) A bra.
 - b) Panties.
 - c) Pantyhose.
2. Which of these is the smallest type of underwear for a man?
 - a) Boxers.
 - b) Boxer briefs.
 - c) G-string.

WHAT ELSE DOES IT MEAN?

slip

The word “slip,” in this podcast, means a piece of underwear that is like a skirt made from very thin fabric, designed to be worn under a skirt so that light cannot be seen between a woman’s legs: “Many teenage girls choose not to wear slips under their summer dresses.” As a verb, “to slip,” means to fall or to almost fall, sliding a short distance, usually because one stepped on something that was resting on the floor or ground: “Be careful not to slip on the icy sidewalks!” The phrase “to let (something) slip” means to say something that one was not supposed to say because it was a secret or because the other person shouldn’t



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know about it: “Edoardo’s friends were planning a surprise birthday party for him, but someone let it slip and he found out about it.”

briefs

In this podcast, the word “briefs” means underwear that is worn around a man’s waist, over his bottom, and between his legs that is tight and does not cover any part of his thigh: “I wouldn’t ever want to wear briefs and be photographed for an advertisement. How embarrassing!” The word “brief” is also a statement and/or summary used in legal cases: “Who’s writing the brief for the Supreme Court’s newest legal case?” The word “brief” or “briefing” can be a short report about something: “Have you had time to read the brief about last month’s sales?” Finally, the phrase “in brief,” means using as few words as possible: “It’s a long story, but in brief, I can say that we were successful.”

CULTURE NOTE

“Department stores” (large stores that sell many things) in the United States have many different kinds of unmentionables in their lingerie departments besides the ones mentioned in this ESL Podcast.

Most lingerie departments have a lot of “pajamas,” which are the clothes that people sleep in. Many of these pajamas are “nightgowns,” which are like long, loose dresses. Other pajamas have a “top” and “bottoms,” which are like a shirt and pants. Both men and women wear pajama tops and bottoms.

Lingerie departments also sell many types of “bathrobes,” which are sometimes called just “robes.” A robe is a large piece of fabric that is a little bit like a jacket, but it is long and might reach down to the floor. It has “sleeves” (the part of clothing that is worn over one’s arms) and is open in the front. People “tie” (fold to create a knot that holds something together) a special piece of fabric around their waist to hold the bathrobe around them. Bathrobes are often used right after someone finishes taking a shower and before he or she gets dressed.

Some women buy “camisoles” in lingerie departments. A camisole is like a “tank top,” or a shirt with no sleeves. Camisoles are usually worn underneath sweaters or other shirts, often by women who do not want to wear a bra.



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Lingerie stores also sell many socks and “tights,” which are like pantyhose, but made from thicker fabric. Tights come in more colors than pantyhose do. Some women also buy “knee highs,” which are pantyhose that only come up to one’s knees instead of the waist and are used when one is wearing pants or a long skirt.

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



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COMPLETE TRANSCRIPT

Welcome to English as a Second Language Podcast number 422: Shopping for Underwear.

This is English as a Second Language Podcast episode 422. 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 there to download a Learning Guide for this episode. The Learning Guide is an 8 to 10 page file that contains all of the vocabulary, definitions, sample sentences, additional definitions, cultural notes, comprehension questions, and a complete transcript of this entire episode.

This episode is called "Shopping for Underwear." Everyone – well, almost every one wears underwear, and this is a dialogue that gives you some vocabulary about buying underwear for both men and women. Let's get started.

[start of dialogue]

Kerry: We're almost done with the shopping. We just need some underwear for you and some unmentionables for me.

Russell: It's perfectly acceptable for women to buy men's underwear, but do I have to go into the lingerie store? All of the women in the store laugh at me.

Kerry: No, they don't. I just need a few things. Here we are. Okay, I need a new bra with underwire, and I need a strapless one, too. Do you see any in a B cup?

Russell: I'm not helping you look. I'm standing over here where nobody can see me.

Kerry: Fine. Let's see, I need some panties and a slip, too. Oh, these pantyhose are on sale.

Russell: Can you please hurry up? That woman over there is snickering.

Kerry: She's only laughing because you look so uncomfortable. Okay, I'm done. Let's go get your underwear.



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Russell: Thank God! I just need some new boxers with a comfortable waistband and a button fly.

Kerry: I thought you liked the boxer briefs I bought before, you know, the seamless ones.

Russell: I tried them, but they were too small. I think I'd actually like to try some regular briefs. Here are some over here.

Kerry: You'd better look again. Those are g-strings. If you insist on buying those, it'll be my turn to hide.

[end of dialogue]

Our dialogue begins with Kerry saying to Russell, "We're almost done with the shopping. We just need some underwear for you and some unmentionables for me." "Underwear" is the clothing you wear underneath your regular clothing. It's clothing that you don't normally see. Kerry says she needs to get some underwear for Russell and some unmentionables for herself. To "mention" something is to say something. If you say it is "unmentionable" that means that you shouldn't or don't say it. In this case, Kerry is simply making a joke, "unmentionables" is just a funny way to refer to underwear. The joke is that it's somehow inappropriate to talk about underwear in a conversation, so she makes a little joke and says "unmentionables."

Russell says, "It's perfectly acceptable for women to buy men's underwear." So, a woman can buy underwear for a man in a store. "But," he says, "do I have to go into the lingerie store? All of the women in the store laugh at me." So Russell, who's a man, is embarrassed by going into the women's underwear store. A women's underwear store is sometimes called a "lingerie (lingerie) store." "Lingerie" actually refers to women's underwear, but sometimes it refers also to fancy, expensive, perhaps sexy clothing that a woman might wear as underwear.

Russell doesn't want to go into the lingerie store. Kerry says that the women are not laughing at Russell. She says, "I just need a few things," and they walk into the store. "Here we are," she says, "Okay, I need a new bra with underwire, and I need a strapless one, too." A "bra" (bra) is a type of underwear that a woman wears; it goes over her shoulders. They have what are called "straps," and these straps go over the shoulders, and in the front of the body, the bra is there to



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support the woman's breasts. So, it's the chest of a woman where you will find a bra. Men, typically, do not wear bras – most men, the men I know!

The bra that Kerry is looking for has an underwire. An "underwire" is a piece of metal that is sewn into – that is made as part of the bra to provide extra support for large breasts, shall we say. Kerry says she also needs a strapless bra. Remember I said that there are these things that go over the shoulder, they connect the front of the bra to the back, so they help hold up the breasts. The "strapless" bras are bras that don't have this strap going over the shoulder. Usually it's a dress that is strapless or a bra that is strapless, so you don't see anything on the woman's shoulder.

Kerry then asks Russell, "Do you see any (any bras) in a B cup?" A "cup" is a part of the bra that is round and that fits over one breast. Cups come in different sizes because, of course, women have different sized breasts, or least that's what people tell me. Now that I'm married, I don't look at other women any more! The bras come in cups sizes from triple A (AAA), which is the smallest to triple D (DDD), which is the biggest. Most women are somewhere in between there: A cup, B cup, C cup, maybe D cup. But, well, women come in all different sizes, so there are all different sizes of bras. Isn't this exciting?!

Now, Russell says, "I'm not helping you look. I'm standing over here where nobody can see me." So, Russell is embarrassed. Kerry says, "Fine. I need some panties and a slip, too. Oh, these pantyhose are on sale." Kerry says she needs some panties. "Panties" are the underwear that a woman wears around her waist, over her bottom, and between her legs. That's "panties." We don't usually call that kind of underwear "panties" for a man, however. We never do, only for a woman. A "slip" (slip) is a piece of underwear that is like a skirt, and it is supposed be worn under a regular skirt so that you cannot see in between the woman's legs; it blocks the light. So, if a woman is wearing a very thin skirt, she might also wear a slip underneath it to cover up her legs better. The word "slip" has a couple of different meanings in English; take a look at the Learning Guide for some additional explanations.

Kerry says she also sees some pantyhose. "Pantyhose" (one word) are also called "nylons" (nylons). They're a type of clothing that you put on your legs (a woman puts on her legs). They are made from a very thin material (a thin fabric, we would say) that you can usually see through; they're often brown or black in color. A woman wears these over her legs, up to her waist. They're used to make her legs look smooth and evenly colored, especially when she is wearing a skirt or a dress. Often they're used for more formal occasions, as well.



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Russell says, “Can you please hurry up (can you go faster)? The woman over there is snickering.” To “snicker” (snicker) means to laugh quietly, usually laughing at another person. It’s not considered very nice to snicker at someone; it’s something that children might do. They’re laughing at another person, but not very loudly. Russell thinks this woman is snickering at him (is laughing at him). Kerry says, “She’s only laughing because you look so uncomfortable. Okay,” she says, “I’m done (I’m finished). Let’s go get your underwear.”

Russell is very happy to be leaving the lingerie store, or the lingerie section of the store. He says, “I just need some new boxers with a comfortable waistband and a button fly.” “Boxers” are a kind of underwear that a man and wears around his waist. Most men only wear one kind of underwear, that goes around the middle of their body, their legs (top of their legs), and their waist. “Boxers” is a particular kind of underwear that is loose, that is not tight. The “waistband” is the part of underwear (either for a man or a woman) or some other type of clothing worn around your waist, which is the center of your body. This is a “expandable” piece of fabric or material, meaning that it will get larger or smaller depending on how big your waist is. It helps to keep the clothing from falling down. So, you have a waistband on underwear; you may have a waistband on a pair of sweat pants. Russell wants a comfortable waistband, one that isn’t too small, one that isn’t too tight. He also wants a “button fly.” A “button” is what you use to connect two pieces of clothing. Usually you have buttons, for example, on the front of a formal shirt. Your “fly” is the part of a piece of underwear (for a man) that can be opened and closed. Men often use the restroom (use the bathroom – the toilet) by standing up. I think you understand what I mean. The fly, then, is used so that a man doesn’t have to take his underwear off when he wants to use the bathroom. Russell, then, wants a button fly; he wants a fly in the front of his underwear that has a button to keep it closed.

Well, Kerry says, “I thought you liked the boxer briefs I bought you before, the seamless ones.” “Briefs” are another kind of underwear for a man. They are not loose, but they are tight. “Boxer briefs” is sort of in between a boxer and a brief. They’re longer pieces of underwear, but they’re still tight around the legs as well as around the waist. “Seamless” means, literally, without seams. A “seam” is typically a line that is created when you sew two pieces of fabric or material together. Something that is “seamless,” then, is made with one single piece of fabric or one single piece of material.

Russell said he tried the boxer briefs, “but they were too small. I think I’d actually like to try some regular briefs.” So, Russell is interested in wearing a piece of



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underwear that is usually white, and that is smaller than a boxer, and is tight around the legs as well as around the waist. So, we have three kinds of underwear for men, here. We have briefs, which are tight around the leg and the waist. We have boxers, which are tight around the waist but loose around the legs, and are usually a little longer; they almost look like shorts. And then you have boxer briefs, which is somewhere in between, a combination of these two things. The word “brief” has several different meanings in English; take a look at the Learning Guide for some additional explanations.

Russell thinks that he has found some briefs in the store, but Kerry says, “You’d better look again (you better look more carefully). Those are g-strings.” A “g-string” is a kind of underwear that a woman wears. It’s a piece of underwear that doesn’t have any material in the back other than a single piece of fabric (a single piece of material) that goes up and connects to a very small waistline, so a woman’s behind (a woman’s butt) essentially has no fabric over it. This is a g-string; some women wear it because they think it’s sexy. Again, I don’t know! Well, obviously this is not something a man such as Russell would want to buy. That’s why Kerry says, “If you insist on buying those (if you must buy those or say that you have to buy those), it’ll be my turn to hide” – I’m going to hide because I’ll be embarrassed, just like Russell was embarrassed going into lingerie store.

Now let’s listen to the dialogue – wasn’t this a fun dialogue? Now let’s listen to the dialogue at a normal speed.

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[end of dialogue]

The script for this episode was written by Dr. Lucy Tse. Who else?

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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