



ESL Podcast 1012 – Preventing Shoplifting

GLOSSARY

to redesign – to change the shape, style, and/or organization of something

* We need to find a way to redesign this coffee shop so that it has more seating.

anti-theft – with protection against things being stolen; with ways to make it more difficult for thieves to take things without permission

* The cashier forgot to remove the anti-theft tags from the shopper's purchases, so when she walked out the door, the alarm system started beeping.

surveillance camera – a small video camera that constantly records what is happening in a room, store, or area

* Have you thought about installing a surveillance camera so that you can see what the babysitter is doing when she's watching your kids?

security guard – a person whose job is to protect a building against intruders, thieves, and damage

* The security guard won't let anyone into the building without checking their identification first.

shoplifter – a person who steals things from a store by walking in and taking items without paying for them

* The store manager started locking up small electronics to protect them from shoplifters.

zero tolerance – a policy of following the rules very strictly, not making any exceptions to those rules

* The school has a zero-tolerance policy against weapons. Any student who brings a knife or gun to school will be suspended.

petty thief – a person who steals things that are unimportant and have little value

* Are you really going to arrest a petty thief for stealing a piece of candy?

kleptomaniac – a person who feels compelled to steal things and cannot control his or her actions

* Ingrid is a kleptomaniac who always wears a large jacket with big pockets so that she can steal items without getting caught.

to root out – to investigate and completely destroy or eliminate something so that no trace of it remains

* The mayor is determined to root out corruption in city government.



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instance of – occurrence; happening; existence

* Please don't interpret this one instance of murder as meaning that the entire city is unsafe.

to prosecute – to pursue a legal decision against someone in a court of law; to try to have the consequences of breaking a law enforced on someone

* Mrs. Sawyer has agreed not to prosecute you for the broken window if you simply apologize to her.

to the full extent of the law – as much as possible; as much as is allowed by law; with the maximum legal punishment

* If judges always punished criminals to the full extent of the law, our prisons would be overflowing.

merchandise – items that are for sale; products that are being sold

* Please don't touch the merchandise unless you're prepared to buy it.

under lock and key – locked up; protected by a lock so that something cannot be touched or taken by others

* Quentin sometimes wishes that he could put his daughter under lock and key until she's at least 35 years old.

security tag – a small device that is attached to valuable items so that, if they are taken out of a building, an alarm sounds

* This security tag is in the waistband of the pants, so it's really uncomfortable to try them on.

to weigh – to consider the advantages and disadvantages of doing something; to balance the pros and cons of something

* We need to carefully weigh the benefits against the potential problems before we make a decision.

exit inspection – an examination of a person and his or her belongings as he or she leaves a building

* If you choose to keep your bag with you while you are in the museum, it will be subjected to an exit inspection when you leave.

to go overboard – to do too much of something; to do something at an extreme level

* When you said you wanted to redecorate, I thought you'd get some new paint and buy a lamp. But you've really gone overboard, spending thousands of dollars at the furniture store.



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COMPREHENSION QUESTIONS

1. Who would steal most often?
 - a) A security guard
 - b) An exit inspector
 - c) A kleptomaniac

 2. What is Thelma doing with the most expensive items?
 - a) She wants the store to stop selling them.
 - b) She wants to lock them up in protective cases.
 - c) She wants to attach anti-theft devices to them.
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WHAT ELSE DOES IT MEAN?

to root out

The phrase “to root out,” in this podcast, means to investigate and completely destroy or eliminate something so that no trace of it remains: “The health inspectors are trying to root out the cause of the food poisoning cases.” The phrase “to root for (someone)” means to cheer for someone or to encourage that person and hope that he or she does well: “Which team are you rooting for?” The phrase “to be rooted to the ground/spot” means to be unable to move, usually because one is very frightened, surprised, or shocked: “When I heard that terrifying scream, I was rooted to the spot and couldn’t do anything.” Finally, the phrase “to be rooted in (something)” means to be grounded or based in something: “Many of our deepest fears are rooted in our childhood experiences.”

to weigh

In this podcast, the verb “to weigh” means to consider the advantages and disadvantages of doing something, or to balance the pros and cons of something: “Be sure to include the cost of housing when you weigh which university you want to attend.” The phrase “to weigh on (someone)” mean to make someone worry or feel upset: “My argument with my sister has been weighing on me all day.” The related phrase “to be weighed down by (something)” means to feel worried or upset about something: “Lately I’ve felt weighed down by the responsibility of caring for a family and paying for my children’s college education.” Finally, the phrase “to weigh in” means to join an argument or discussion and offer one’s opinion: “This decision is between Jonathan and Jasnery. There’s no need for you to weigh in.”



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CULTURE NOTE

Mystery Shopping

Many businesses use the services of “mystery shoppers,” also known as “secret shoppers,” to “evaluate” (measure the value of) the “shopping experience” (how customers feels while they are shopping) of their stores and the level of customer service provided by their employees. A “mystery shopper” is paid to go into a store and buy a certain product, ask certain questions, “make a return” (request a credit or refund for something that he or she bought, but no longer wants), or “make a complaint” (say that he or she is dissatisfied with something). The mystery shopper secretly records the experience or creates a report that is then share with the company, which uses the information to evaluate employee performance.

Mystery shoppers typically record how many employees are working in the store, whether they were “greeted” (someone saying “hello” to one), whether they were “addressed” (spoken to) in a friendly manner, how difficult it was to find what they were looking for, how long they had to stand in the “checkout line” (the line of people waiting to buy something), whether they received a “receipt” (a piece of paper with proof of purchase), and whether they were thanked for their business. The mystery shopper might also be asked to comment on the store’s organization and cleanliness. Often multiple mystery shoppers are sent to multiple stores, so that their results can be examined and compared to identify the best- and worst-performing stores.

Some companies specialize in selling mystery shopper services to retail stores. In some states, they must have special licenses or certifications. This is especially true when the mystery shopper model is used in professional environments, such as “mystery shopper patients,” or people who “pose as” (pretend to be) people needing medical attention to evaluate a doctor’s “bedside manner” (how a doctor interacts with patients).

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



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COMPLETE TRANSCRIPT

Welcome to English as a Second Language Podcast number 1,012 – Preventing Shoplifting.

This is English as a Second Language Podcast episode 1,012. I'm your host, Dr. Jeff McQuillan, coming to you from the Center for Educational Development in beautiful Los Angeles, California.

Visit our website at ESLPod.com. Like us on Facebook at facebook.com/eslpod, and follow us on Twitter at [@eslpod](https://twitter.com/eslpod).

This episode is a dialogue between Thelma and Luis about preventing or stopping people from stealing things from the store – what we call “shoplifting.” Let's get started.

[start of dialogue]

Luis: Wow, what happened here? I was only away on vacation for two weeks.

Thelma: While you were gone, we redesigned this store with an anti-theft system.

Luis: Is that why there are surveillance cameras and security guards everywhere?

Thelma: That's right. We're losing too much money to shoplifters, and I'm finally doing something about it. From now on, it's zero tolerance. I don't care if they're petty thieves or kleptomaniacs. I'm rooting out every instance of shoplifting and prosecuting to the full extent of the law.

Luis: What are all these cases for?

Thelma: I'm putting the pricier merchandise under lock and key, and I've put security tags on most other items. I'm weighing whether to do exit inspections. I don't want to go overboard.

Luis: [sighs] No, you wouldn't want to do that.

[end of dialogue]

We begin with Luis saying to Thelma, “Wow, what happened here?” I should explain, before we get into the dialogue, that Luis is spelled (Luis) if it's a man. If



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it's a woman, it's spelled as (Louise). The same pronunciation is used, but we have a different spelling.

Luis then asks Thelma, "What happened here? I was only away on vacation for two weeks." Thelma says, "While you were gone" – while you were on vacation – "we redesigned this store within an anti-theft system." So, Luis and Thelma are inside some kind of store. Luis works at the store. However, he went on vacation, and when he came back, he found that things had changed.

Thelma says that they "redesigned" the store. "To redesign" means to design again. Really, it means here to change the way something is organized, especially if you're talking about a place such as a store or a house or any room that you have. You could also redesign a car. You could redesign a program for your school. We can use it both for physical things and for nonphysical things. Here, we're talking about the store in which Thelma and Luis work. Part of the redesign of the store was to put in an "anti-theft system."

"Theft" refers to stealing. "Anti-" (anti-) is something that is against. We use that prefix quite frequently in English. You can talk about "anti-discrimination laws" – laws that are against discrimination. You could talk about "anti-freeze," which you put in your car in places where it gets very cold. "Anti-theft" would be something that is trying to stop or prevent theft. It could also mean that you're against theft – you don't like it. It's a bad idea. But here, it really refers to some change that was made in the store to prevent people from stealing things from the store.

Luis says, "Is that why there are surveillance cameras and security guards everywhere?" A "surveillance (surveillance) camera" is a small video camera that is always on. It's always recording whatever is going on in the room. Many buildings have surveillance cameras. Even some houses have surveillance cameras on the outside and the inside so you can see what's going on. They are designed to produce a video of anyone who might come into the store or come into the building and steal something or do something wrong.

A "security guard" is a person who protects a building or a house or someplace. Security guards aren't police officers. They don't work for the government. Security guards are typically people who work for private companies but who also try to protect a building or a house. Thelma says, "That's right," meaning yes, there are surveillance cameras and security guards as part of this new anti-theft system.

She goes on to say, "We're losing too much money to shoplifters, and I'm finally doing something about it." The word "shop" is sometimes used as a noun to



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describe a store, especially a smaller store. The term “shoplifting” refers to stealing something from the store. “To lift” something is to raise it up, usually with your hands. Sometimes, however, we use that word “lift” to mean “steal,” and in the case of shoplifting, we’re referring to people who are stealing things from a store. A “shoplifter” is a person who steals.

Thelma says, “From now on, it’s zero tolerance.” “Zero tolerance” (tolerance) is a policy or a rule that says that you are not going to allow this even once. There are no exceptions to the policy. For example, let’s say a school has a zero-tolerance policy against students who are drinking. (We’re talking now about high school. Remember, in the United States you can’t drink legally until you’re 21 years old.)

If the school has a zero-tolerance policy on drinking, that means that if a student is caught drinking – say, by a teacher – there is no “next time” for that student. The student is removed from the school. Even one violation, even one time breaking the rule, is enough for you to perhaps be expelled, or kicked out of a school. That’s a zero-tolerance policy. Well, Thelma has a zero-tolerance policy on shoplifters.

She explains, “I don’t care if they’re petty thieves or kleptomaniacs. I’m rooting out every instance of shoplifting and prosecuting to the full extent of the law.” What Thelma is saying here is that she is going to catch every single person who steals something, and she’s going to have that person punished. It doesn’t matter if the person steals something small or something large, if a person steals something only once or many times.

She says, “I don’t care if they,” meaning the thieves, “are petty thieves.” “Petty” (petty) is something that is small or unimportant. A “petty thief” would be a person that steals small things, maybe a \$10 bracelet or a \$5 T-shirt – something that is not worth a lot of money. A “kleptomaniac” (kleptomaniac) is a person who steals all the time because they have almost like a disease; they need to steal things. They are addicted, if you will, to stealing.

Thelma says, “I’m rooting out every instance of shoplifting.” “To root (root) out” is a two-word phrasal verb meaning to investigate and then eliminate anything that you don’t want. “We’re going to root out corruption in government.” “Corruption” is when government officials get money from people to do things – illegally, that is. “To root out corruption” would be to get rid of corruption, to find it and then get rid of it. Thelma is going to root out “every instance of” – every case of – “shoplifting.”



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She's also going to "prosecute to the full extent of the law." The verb "to prosecute" (prosecute) means to pursue some sort of legal action against a person, especially a person who has committed a crime against you. Technically, the government is the one that prosecutes in a court of law before a judge, but you as the business owner can demand or at least request that the government go after this person, arrest this person, and punish this person.

The "full extent of" something is as much as possible, as much as allowed. The expression "to the full extent of the law" means as much as the law allows you to. If the law says this person can be arrested and punished with one year in jail, that's what you're going to try to get for that person. You're going to try to get the government to punish that person for an entire year. That would be "prosecuting to the full extent of the law" – arresting people for every crime that they commit.

Luis says, "What are all these cases for?" He's referring to what are probably metal and glass containers that are used in a store when you have something that is valuable that you want people to see, but you don't want people to steal. If you go into a jewelry store, for example, the diamond rings are not just sitting there for you to grab and look at. They're in, typically, a case, and the case is locked. You can see them, but you can't touch them. You have to ask the person at the store to take them out of the case so you can look at them.

Thelma says, "I'm putting the pricier" – the more expensive – "merchandise under lock and key." "Merchandise" (merchandise) is a general term referring to anything that you sell. It could be a shoe. It could be a computer. It could be a car. All of these could be considered merchandise. The expression "to put something under lock and key" means to take something and lock it up so that only someone who has a key to the lock can open the lock and get whatever it is that you are protecting. "To put something under lock and key" is to put it in a place where it is safe.

Thelma says, "I've put security tags on most other items." A "security tag" (tag) is a small device that is attached to something that a store sells. What happens is when you walk out of the store and you don't pay for the item and the item still has a security tag on it, an alarm will go off.

This is quite common in American clothing stores, for example. The clothing all have security tags on them, and if you walk out of the store without paying for it and without removing the tag – which is very difficult to remove without a special machine – the security system will be alerted and usually there'll be a loud noise made, indicating you're trying to steal something. So, it's not a very good idea to



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try to steal something, especially from one of the bigger stores here in the U.S. Of course, you shouldn't steal from any store.

Thelma says she's "weighing whether to do exit inspections." "To weigh" (weigh) here means to consider the advantages and disadvantages of something – to consider what we might call the "pros and cons" of some action. "Exit inspections" are when you go to a store and there are security guards that look at you and check the shopping bags you have to make sure that you haven't stolen anything.

Thelma says she doesn't "want to go overboard." The expression "to go overboard" (overboard) here means to do too much of something – to do something at an extreme level, we might say. Literally, on a ship or a boat, to go overboard means to fall out of the boat or fall out of the ship into the water, but we use it in a situation such as this to mean to go too far, to do too much of something.

Luis says, "No, you wouldn't want to do that." It seems like Luis thinks that Thelma has already gone overboard – has already done too much with all of these different security measures now.

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

[start of dialogue]

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Luis: [sighs] No, you wouldn't want to do that.

[end of dialogue]

This script is another instance of the wonderful work done by our very own Dr. Lucy Tse. Thank you, Lucy.

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

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