



---

## ESL Podcast 1049 – Buying Theater Tickets

---

### GLOSSARY

**play** – a theatrical performance; a dramatic work performed by actors on a stage  
\* Shakespeare wrote many plays, some comedies and some tragedies.

**front row** – the line of seats that are closest to the stage, presenter, performer, or screen  
\* Sitting in the front row of the movie theater always makes my neck hurt, because I have to look up to see the screen.

**venue** – the place where something is performed, presented, or held  
\* Have you started researching venues for the trade show?

**seating plan** – a map showing where people can sit, who will sit where, and/or which seats are still available  
\* After we purchased our flight tickets, the next webpage displayed a seating plan for the airplane so we could choose our seats.

**taken** – not available; already set aside for someone else's use  
\* Excuse me, are these seats taken?

**run** – the period of time when a particular show is performed at a specific theater; all the shows of a particular performance  
\* Which Broadway musical has had the longest run?

**season ticket holder** – a person who purchases tickets for every event during the season (a few months) at a particular theater or stadium  
\* The Hampsleys are season ticket holders, but when they can't attend an event they give the tickets to their friends.

**stage** – the raised floor and the surrounding area at the front of a theater, where performers or presenters stand in front of an audience  
\* Vladislav hates speaking in public. Even the thought of stepping onto a stage makes him nervous.

**orchestra** – the part of the theater where the musicians play music, and the audience seats immediately surrounding it  
\* We sat in the orchestra section, but the music was so loud that we could barely hear the actors.



---

## ESL Podcast 1049 – Buying Theater Tickets

---

**partially obstructed** – with only a partial view of something, or with only partial access to something, because another object is in the way

\* This apartment used to have a view of the ocean, but now it's partially obstructed by that new skyscraper.

**loge** – the front section of the balcony in a theater, where the seats are raised off the ground

\* Sometimes the loge seats are better than the seats close to the stage because you can see the entire stage more clearly.

**mezzanine** – the lowest balcony in a theater

\* Juliet is so afraid of heights that she refuses to sit in the mezzanine.

**balcony** – one of the upper decks or floors of seating in a large theater

\* Even from the balcony, we could see how beautiful and graceful the dancers were.

**matinee** – a daytime showing of a movie or a theatrical performance

\* The theater's matinees are intended for families with young children who can't stay up for the evening performances.

**wheelchair access** – with enough room and appropriate physical features to allow someone who uses a wheelchair (a chair with wheels that helps people move when they cannot walk) to use the space

\* Finding an apartment with wheelchair access can be a challenge in this city.

**to break** – to use strength or force to separate something into two pieces, especially when talking about bones

\* How did you break your wrist?

**obsessed** – able to think about only one thing; not able to concentrate on anything else

\* Frederico is obsessed with that TV show. He never misses an episode, and it's all he can talk about.

**fan** – someone who enjoys something very much and spends a lot of time learning about it and participating in it

\* James is a huge fan of this author and has read every book she's written.

**devotion** – love and loyalty shown toward someone, something, or God

\* Shawna expresses her devotion to God through prayer, fasting, and Bible study.



---

## ESL Podcast 1049 – Buying Theater Tickets

---

### COMPREHENSION QUESTIONS

1. Which of these would be closest to the stage?
    - a) Front-row seats
    - b) Loge
    - c) Balcony
  
  2. What is a matinee performance?
    - a) The first performance in a run
    - b) A performance during the day
    - c) A morning performance
- 

### WHAT ELSE DOES IT MEAN?

#### **run**

The word “run,” in this podcast, means the period of time when a particular show is performed at a specific theater, or all the shows of a particular performance: “The theater manager originally planned for a six-month run, but the show was so popular that she decided to extend it.” A “beer run” is when someone goes to a store to buy more beer, especially in the middle of a party: “At halftime, they sent Robin on a beer run.” A “print run” refers to the number of copies of printed materials that are made: “How big was the first print run for the book?” Or, “He ordered a print run of 1,000 business cards.” Finally, a “dry run” is an opportunity to practice something before the actual event: “Would you mind listening to a dry run of my presentation?”

#### **to break**

In this podcast, the verb “to break” means to use strength or force to separate something into two pieces, especially when talking about bones: “Kelly broke her leg and two ribs in the car accident.” The phrase “break a leg” is used to wish an actor good luck before a show: “Wow, it’s finally opening night. Break a leg!” The phrase “to break a record” means to do something better or faster than anyone else has ever done it: “Samuel is determined to break the record for eating the most hot dogs in one minute.” Finally, the phrase “to break the bank” means to cost a lot of money: “We’d like to let the veterinarian perform the surgery on our dog, but it’s going to break the bank.”



---

## ESL Podcast 1049 – Buying Theater Tickets

---

### CULTURE NOTE

#### The Longest-Running Plays in the United States

Most of the longest-running shows in the United States are “musical theater” (shows that involve a lot of singing and dancing), but many plays have had long runs, too. The longest-running “Broadway” (performances presented at one of the 40 large professional theaters in part of New York City) play is Life with Father, which had 3,224 performances between 1939 and 1947. The play is a “comedy” (a type of theater intended to make people laugh) about a middle-class man who tries to control his family, with “humorous” (funny) “consequences” (results).

Tobacco Road is “right behind” (immediately following the first-ranked item; in second place) Life with Father. There were 3,182 performances of Tobacco Road between 1933 and 1941, “plus” (in addition) it had “revivals” (a new production of an old show) in three “subsequent” (later; following) years. The play is a “drama” (a type of theater that tells a story) about a very poor family of farmers in Georgia.

The third-longest-running play is Abie's Irish Rose, which had 2,327 performances between 1922 and 1927, plus revivals in 1937 and 1954. The play is a comedy about an “interfaith marriage” (marriage of people who have different religious beliefs) between an Irish Catholic girl and a Jewish man.

Finally, the fourth-longest-running play in the United States is Gemini, which had 1,819 performances between 1977 and 1981. Gemini is a comedy about the “dysfunctional” (not normal, especially in a negative way) interactions of family, friends, and neighbors who attend a birthday party in a Philadelphia, Pennsylvania “backyard” (the grassy area behind a house).

---

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



---

## ESL Podcast 1049 – Buying Theater Tickets

---

### COMPLETE TRANSCRIPT

Welcome to English as a Second Language Podcast number 1,049 – Buying Theater Tickets.

This is English as a Second Language Podcast episode 1,046. 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](http://ESLPod.com). Become a member of ESL Podcast and download the eight- to ten-page Learning Guide we provide for each episode that gives you all of the vocabulary words, definitions, sample sentences, cultural notes, and a complete transcript of everything we say.

This episode is a dialogue between David and Susie about buying tickets to see a play at a theater. Let's get started.

[start of dialogue]

Susie: I can't believe I'm going to get to see my favorite actor in a play. I want front row seats!

David: I'm looking at the venue's seating plan right now, and all front row seats are taken for the entire run. I'm guessing that season ticket holders got those.

Susie: Damn! All right. Let's try to get seats as close to the stage as possible, preferably in the orchestra.

David: The only orchestra tickets still available have partially obstructed views.

Susie: Okay, we'll take those.

David: But we won't be able to see the entire stage. These tickets in the loge or mezzanine, or even the balcony, will give us a better view of the play.

Susie: I don't need to see every part of the play. I just want to get as close to him as possible.

David: Wait one second. I see two seats in the second row still available for the matinee performance. Oh no, those are seats for wheelchair access.

Susie: That's great! We'll take those.



## ESL Podcast 1049 – Buying Theater Tickets

---

David: But neither of us needs wheelchair access.

Susie: I'll break a leg if I have to, to get that close to him.

David: Do the words "obsessed fan" mean anything to you?

Susie: You can call it obsession, but I call it devotion!

[end of dialogue]

Susie begins our dialogue by saying to David, "I can't believe I'm going to get to see my favorite actor in a play." A "play" is a theatrical performance, a dramatic performance usually done on what is called a "stage" inside of something called a "theater." "Play" as a noun refers to the performance, but it can also refer to the actual words of the performance. We talk about Shakespeare's plays, like Macbeth and Julius Caesar. These are dramatic pieces of literature that Shakespeare wrote and that are now performed as plays.

Here, Susie is using "play" in the sense of the performance – the actual acting out of the play, if you will. Susie says, "I want front row seats." The chairs of the places where you sit – the seats in a theater – are arranged in lines, often curved lines called "rows." Each row has a certain number of seats, a certain number of places where people can sit. The "front row" would be the row that is closest to the "stage" – the area where the play is being performed.

David says, "I'm looking at the venue's seating plan right now and all front row seats are taken for the entire run." A "venue" (venue) is just another word for the place where something is performed, such as a play or concert. The "seating plan" is a picture that shows the different rows in the theater. Nowadays, when you buy your tickets online over the Internet to see a play or concert, you can look and see which seats are available on the seating plan. The seating plan for this play shows all front row seats taken.

When we say the seats are "taken," we mean they're not available; someone else has already bought them. "The front row seats are taken for the entire run," David says. The "run" (run) of a play is the period of time that the play is being performed. Most plays are performed for a few weeks, sometimes for months and months. It depends on the play and where it is being performed. There are plays on Broadway; the street in New York that has large theaters where you can see theatrical performances has plays that have been running for years. So, it just depends on the play and how popular it is.



## ESL Podcast 1049 – Buying Theater Tickets

---

David says, “I’m guessing that season ticket holders got those.” “Season ticket holders” are people who buy tickets for all of the different plays being performed either at a specific theater or, more typically, by a theater company – a group of actors that puts on plays. You could also be a season ticket holder for a professional baseball team or for a college football team. That means you would have tickets for all of the games during the time when games are being played during the season.

For example, baseball season is from April to October. If you had season tickets, you would have tickets for all of the games during that period of time in a given year. I used to have season tickets for one of the theater groups here in Los Angeles. That was many years ago, I’m afraid. David says the season ticket holders probably got the front row seats. They get the first opportunity to buy seats.

Susie is not happy. She even swears, she’s so unhappy. She says, “Damn!” (damn) “All right. Let’s try to get seats as close to the stage as possible, preferably in the orchestra.” The “stage” is the place where the play is performed. It’s usually a raised floor that’s somewhat above the people who are watching the play, so everyone can see it easily.

In some theaters, right next to the stage there’s a place for an orchestra – a group of musicians – to play music. However, many theaters have what’s called an “orchestra section,” where there are seats that you can purchase that are also close to the stage in the very front section of the theater. That’s where Susie wants to get tickets. David says, however, “The only orchestra tickets still available have partially obstructed views.”

If your view is “obstructed” (obstructed), it is blocked. You can’t actually see it. “Partially” means partly, not completely. So, seats that have a partially obstructed view are seats from which you can see the stage, but there might be something blocking your view. There might be a pole or there might be, I don’t know, part of a wall that is blocking your view. Often in large theaters there are what are called “pillars” (pillars) that are used to support the roof, to hold the roof up, but if the seat is behind the pillar or next to the pillar, it may obstruct or block your view.

Susie says, “Well, we’ll take those” – we’ll take the partially obstructed view seats. David says, “But we won’t be able to see the entire stage.” “Entire” here means the whole thing, completely. He then says, “These tickets,” referring to a different set of tickets, “in the loge or mezzanine, or even the balcony, will give us a better view of the play.” Theaters are divided into different sections. We talked



## ESL Podcast 1049 – Buying Theater Tickets

---

about the “orchestra section,” which would be right next to the stage. The “loge” (loge) section of a theater is located in the front of the balcony in a theater.

A “balcony” (balcony) is a second level in the theater. You have seats on the ground floor, the first floor of the theater, and then you may have some seats on a second level. That second level is called the “balcony.” The “loge,” then, is the front section of the balcony. The word “mezzanine” (mezzanine) usually refers to the middle of something. “Mezzanine,” in the theater, would be the section in a balcony where there is more than one balcony.

So, if you have two balconies, which would be three total levels of seats, the middle or lowest balcony would be the “mezzanine level.” Sometimes you’ll see that word “mezzanine” refer to a level in a building that’s in between, say, the ground floor and the floor above it. It’s actually a floor in between two other floors that are numbered either 1 and 2, or 0 and 1. Here it refers to a balcony in the theater – the lowest balcony.

Notice, however, that David talks about the balcony seats. Mezzanine seats are in the balcony, in a balcony. But when we talk about balcony seats, especially if the theater is a big one and it has more than one balcony, you often are referring to the upper levels, the upper balconies, not the lower one, not the mezzanine. It’s a little confusing because they’re all called “balconies,” but in this case it means seats that are above the mezzanine level, on a balcony above the mezzanine.

Susie then says, “I don’t need to see every part of the play. I just want to get as close to him as possible.” We were talking about obstructed views, but Susie says something here a little confusing. She says, “I don’t need to see every part of the play.” Normally when we talk about a part of the play, we’re talking about a section of it, not seeing just part of the stage. Perhaps that’s what she means here. She says she just wants to get as close to her favorite actor as possible. David says, “Wait one second,” meaning stop talking; wait for me to do something or tell you something.

Then he says, “I see two seats in the second row still available for the matinee performance.” The “second row” would be the row behind the front row. A “matinee (matinee) performance” is a performance during the day. Typically, plays are performed at night, but sometimes they perform them during the day, say at two o’clock in the afternoon. That would be a matinee performance. You can also talk about a “matinee movie,” a movie that is shown in a movie theater in the afternoon in addition to the evening.



---

## ESL Podcast 1049 – Buying Theater Tickets

---

David has found a couple of seats, but then he realizes there's a problem. He says, "Oh no, those seats are for wheelchair access." A "wheelchair" is a seat with round wheels on them (I guess most wheels would be round, right?) that allow the person in the chair to move back and forward. Wheelchairs are for those who are not able to walk, or walk very easily. "Wheelchair access" refers to a place where wheelchairs can be put in a theater, in this case, in order to watch the play.

Susie says, "That's a great! We'll take those." She wants David to buy these wheelchair access seats. David says, "But neither of us needs wheelchair access." Susie responds, "I'll break a leg if I have to, to get that close to him." Susie says she's going to go out and break her leg in order to get a wheelchair so she can sit in the seats. David says, "Do the words 'obsessed fan' mean anything to you?"

A "fan" (fan) is someone who enjoys a particular kind of entertainment or a particular person. "Obsessed" (obsessed) is when you are only able to think about one thing. You can't think about anything else. An "obsessed fan" would be a fan who will do anything to get close to the person or the object of which he or she is a fan, I guess. The expression "Do the words (blank) mean anything to you?" is sort of a funny way of saying that you are this thing – you are whatever I have described.

So, in this case, David is saying that Susie is an obsessed fan. Susie says, "You can call it obsession, but I call it devotion!" "Devotion" (devotion) is love or loyalty towards someone, something, or to God. We can talk about devotion in a religious sense. Susie is devoted to her favorite actor – hopelessly devoted to him, you might say.

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

[start of dialogue]

Susie: I can't believe I'm going to get to see my favorite actor in a play. I want front row seats!

David: I'm looking at the venue's seating plan right now, and all front row seats are taken for the entire run. I'm guessing that season ticket holders got those.

Susie: Damn! All right. Let's try to get seats as close to the stage as possible, preferably in the orchestra.



---

**ESL Podcast 1049 – Buying Theater Tickets**

---

David: The only orchestra tickets still available have partially obstructed views.

Susie: Okay, we'll take those.

David: But we won't be able to see the entire stage. These tickets in the loge or mezzanine, or even the balcony, will give us a better view of the play.

Susie: I don't need to see every part of the play. I just want to get as close to him as possible.

David: Wait one second. I see two seats in the second row still available for the matinee performance. Oh no, those are seats for wheelchair access.

Susie: That's great! We'll take those.

David: But neither of us needs wheelchair access.

Susie: I'll break a leg if I have to, to get that close to him.

David: Do the words "obsessed fan" mean anything to you?

Susie: You can call it obsession, but I call it devotion!

[end of dialogue]

We hope you've enjoyed your front row seats to this podcast episode. We'd like to thank Dr. Lucy Tse for writing the wonderful script.

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

English as a Second Language Podcast was written and produced by Dr. Lucy Tse, hosted by Dr. Jeff McQuillan. Copyright 2014 by the Center for Educational Development.