



## GLOSSARY

**letter** – written correspondence sent through the mail

\* Email is faster, but it's more fun and interesting to receive a letter in the mail.

**package** – a box that contains items, especially sent through the mail

\* In the weeks before Christmas, the Post Office delivers a lot of packages with gifts.

**envelope** – a folded piece of paper that creates a pocket and has an end that glues down to close the pocket, used to hold a letter or other papers when they are sent through the mail

\* Place the stamp in the upper right-hand corner of the envelope.

**postmark** – an ink mark placed over the stamp on an envelope, used to show which branch of the post office processed the mail and when, so that the stamp no longer has value

\* There's no return address, but the postmark shows that the card was sent from Hawaii.

**overdue** – past the deadline; something that should have been submitted or completed earlier

\* The car already has 11,500 miles on the odometer and the 10,000-mile car maintenance is overdue.

**to deliver** – to bring and give something to the buyer or recipient

\* Does the restaurant across the street deliver to our office building at lunchtime?

**postage** – money paid to have a letter or package delivered through the mail

\* Let's weigh the envelope to find out how much postage is required.

**misdelivered** – given to the wrong person; delivered to an address that is different from the one written on the envelope or package

\* The neighbor brought over a bill of ours that was misdelivered to her home.

**overnight delivery** – arriving within 24 hours of being sent; sent through a delivery service so that something arrives the next day

\* They need these papers right away, so please send them using overnight delivery.



English as a Second Language Podcast  
www.eslpod.com  
**ESL Podcast 1079 – Receiving Letters and  
Packages in the Mail**

---

**expedited** – rushed; completed more quickly than usual; sped up

\* Normally, it takes a few weeks to get a new passport, but if you need it right away, you can pay more for expedited service.

**perishable** – decaying, rotting, or going bad very quickly

\* The milk and meats are perishable, so please put them in the fridge as soon as possible.

**time-sensitive** – required at a particular time, or with a very short period of time in which something can be used

\* These enrollment forms are time-sensitive and must be submitted by March 23.

**to be forwarded** – to be resent to someone else after an initial delivery, usually done when a person or business has moved to a new address

\* Please make sure that these documents are forwarded to the correct department.

**delivery confirmation** – a service that provides a code to the sender, who can enter that code on a website to determine whether and when a letter or package was delivered

\* When sending merchandise through the mail, it's a good idea to pay a little more for delivery confirmation, so you can prove that it was delivered.

**mystery** – something that is unknown, but that one wants to know; the unknown answer to a riddle or question

\* In this novel, the identity of the murderer is a mystery until the very last page.

**to speculate** – to wonder or guess about something without clear evidence or proof

\* They spent hours speculating about the existence of ghosts.



## COMPREHENSION QUESTIONS

1. What does Celeste mean when she says, “Those photos are overdue”?
    - a) The photos should have been received earlier.
    - b) The photos are too fragile to send in the mail.
    - c) The photos are overdeveloped and have poor coloring.
  2. What information is on the postmark?
    - a) The location from where the letter or package was sent.
    - b) The type of delivery service that was used.
    - c) The sender’s name and address.
- 

## WHAT ELSE DOES IT MEAN?

### **letter**

The word “letter,” in this podcast, means written correspondence sent through the mail: “Historians are reading old letters to learn more about life in the 18<sup>th</sup> century.” Or, “The bank sent us a letter to let us know that the interest rate will increase next month.” A “letter” is also one of the 26 written symbols that represent sounds in the English language: “How old was your daughter when you started teaching her the letters and numbers?” The phrase “the letter of the law” means adhering to or following exactly how a law was written, even if that isn’t exactly what was meant: “Prepare the tax documents to the letter of the law, or we might have problems with the government.” Finally, the phrase “to the letter” means exactly or precisely: “We followed the driving directions to the letter, but we still got lost.”

### **to be forwarded**

In this podcast, the phrase “to be forwarded” means to be resent to someone else after an initial delivery: “Any mail sent to our old address will be forwarded automatically to our new address.” The phrase “to look forward to something” means to anticipate something, or think about something that will happen, and be pleased and excited about it: “We are all looking forward to your visit next month.” The phrase “from that time forward” means beginning at that time and continuing to the present: “From that time forward, he never questioned her expertise again.” Finally, “forward-thinking” means thinking about the future and planning for the future: “We have a forward-thinking management team that’s always planning the company’s next steps.”



## **CULTURE NOTE**

### **Suspicious Packages**

A “suspicious package” is an envelope or package sent through the mail that “raises suspicion” (makes people feel uncomfortable because there seems to be a problem), specifically because it might contain a dangerous chemical or a “bomb” (something that can explode, causing injury or death).

People who work in “mail rooms” (departments that sort a large amount of mail and send letters and packages to the appropriate recipients) are trained to “spot” (find and identify) suspicious packages. They look for oil “stains” (marks) or “discoloration” (spots of a different color) on the envelope, or the use of large amount of tape or string. They also look for packages that smell strange or that have an unusual shape. Other signs of suspicious packages are addresses that have “handwritten” (not typed) with strange, misspelled addresses, no “return address” (the name and address of the sender), and envelopes with “excessive postage” (far too many stamps). Often the suspicious packages are marked with phrases like “confidential,” “private,” or “for (a certain person’s) eyes only,” meaning that the sender wants only the recipient to open the envelope or package.

People who receive a suspicious package are advised to stop “handling” (touching and moving) the package immediately. They should leave the room or building and call “9-1-1” (the emergency phone number that puts people in touch with the police and other emergency services) as soon as possible. Then the police will send a “bomb squad” (people who are trained to “deactivate” (make inactive) explosive devices) to the site to further evaluate the envelope or package.

---

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



## **COMPLETE TRANSCRIPT**

Welcome to English as a Second Language Podcast number 1,079 – Receiving Letters and Packages in the Mail.

This is English as a Second Language Podcast episode 1,079. 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. All the cool kids are doing it. Go to [ESLPod.com](http://ESLPod.com) for more information.

On this episode, we have a dialogue between the Celeste and Anwar about getting things in the mail – the old kind of mail, you know, not email. Let's get started.

[start of dialogue]

Celeste: Did the mail come?

Anwar: Yes, you got some letters and a package.

Celeste: Oh, I hope that one of those envelopes has the photos Naomi promised us. Did you notice the postmark?

Anwar: No, but they're sitting in the hall.

Celeste: Those photos are overdue and should have been delivered days ago. Naomi thought she might not have put enough postage on the envelope, but I thought it must have been misdelivered.

Anwar: You can look at it yourself. The package you received was sent using overnight delivery.

Celeste: I wonder who sent it and why they sent it using expedited service.

Anwar: I don't know. Why don't you go look?

Celeste: I wonder if there's anything perishable in it or that's time-sensitive in some way.



Anwar: I have no idea. There's also a letter that's been forwarded from our old address that has delivery confirmation.

Celeste: Oh, I wonder what that could be.

Anwar: You know what?

Celeste: What?

Anwar: All of those mysteries can be solved if you just go and open your mail.

Celeste: I know, but isn't it more fun to speculate?

[end of dialogue]

Celeste begins our dialogue by asking Anwar, "Did the mail come?" Celeste is asking if the mail has arrived, if it has been delivered. Anwar says, "Yes, you got some letters and packages." A "letter" is usually a piece of paper or several pieces of paper put in an envelope and then is given to the local post office to be delivered to another location – another house or a business.

An "envelope" (envelope) is basically a folded piece of paper that is glued together so that you can put another piece of paper, your letter, inside of it. You can put other things other than letters, pieces of paper with writing on them, in an envelope. You could also put a photograph in an envelope. Anwar says that Celeste got some letters and a package. The word "package" (package) is usually used to describe a box (it could be a small box, it could be a very large box) that is sent, again, through the mail – given to the post office or some other delivery service.

Here in the United States, in addition to the post office, we also have other private companies that will deliver your packages and letters. You have to pay more money, of course, for that to happen. Celeste says, "Oh, I hope one of those envelopes has the photos Naomi promised us." Here we see the word "envelope" again, and in this case, the envelope has photos in it – or at least, that's what Celeste hopes is in the envelope. Celeste says, "Did you notice the postmark?"

A "postmark" (postmark) is a little mark, usually made with ink, that is put on the package or the envelope when it is mailed. You put a little piece of paper called a "stamp" on the envelope or the package, and then the post office puts ink on that



English as a Second Language Podcast  
www.eslpod.com  
**ESL Podcast 1079 – Receiving Letters and  
Packages in the Mail**

---

stamp so that you don't use the stamp again and so that you know what day the letter or the envelope was processed by the post office in order to be delivered.

In the United States, many times official documents have to be mailed by a certain date, especially things you're sending to the government. The government doesn't require that the envelope arrive by a certain date, but rather that it be postmarked by a certain date. So, to pay your income taxes each year, you have to make sure that the envelope is given to the post office and that the post office puts a postmark on it no later than April 15th. We would say the envelope has to be "postmarked" by the 15th of April. So, "postmark" can be used as a verb, or as a noun to refer to the actual mark of ink on the envelope or package.

Celeste is asking Anwar if he noticed the postmark, meaning if he looked at it. Anwar says, "No, but they're sitting in the hall." I should mention also that a postmark also usually contains the location of where the letter or package was mailed from – the location of the post office. Celeste says, "Those photos are overdue and should have been delivered days ago." If something is "overdue" (overdue), it is past the deadline. It is something that should have been submitted or should have arrived earlier.

"To be delivered" means to be given to the person for whom the envelope or the package is intended. Celeste says, "Naomi thought she might not have put enough postage on the envelope, but I thought it must have been misdelivered." "Postage" (postage) is the amount of money that you have to pay in order to send an envelope or a package. Usually this is done with what are called "postage stamps" (stamps) which are those little pieces of paper, with usually a picture on them of a famous person or of a famous place in your country, that are then placed on the envelope or the package.

Celeste thought the package might have been "misdelivered," meaning it might have been given to the wrong person by the post office. That happens of course sometimes. Anwar says, "You can look at it yourself. The package you received was sent using overnight delivery." "Overnight delivery" is when you give a letter or a package to the post office or to another private delivery service, and that package or envelope is delivered the next day. In fact, another word for or term for "overnight delivery" is "next-day delivery," which is now the more common term.

Celeste says, "I wonder who sent it and why they sent it using expedited service." The word "expedite" (expedite) means to make something go faster. So, "expedited service" would be delivery service that is faster than normal, faster



than usual. Anwar is clearly not interested in answering all of Celeste's questions. He says, "I don't know" – I don't know why they sent it using expedited service. "Why don't you go look?" meaning stop bothering me and go look at the package yourself. It's almost certain that Anwar and Celeste are married.

Celeste says, "I wonder if there is anything perishable in it or that's time-sensitive in some way." Sometimes you'll use "expedited service" or "overnight delivery" because you're sending food that is "perishable" (perishable). Perishable food is food that has to be put in a refrigerator or a freezer, otherwise, it will go bad. It will rot.

Some people send food that is perishable in special packages that have ice in them or some other material that keeps them cold. But, of course, they need to be placed in a refrigerator or freezer as soon as possible. That's "perishable food" – anything that has to be refrigerated or frozen. The opposite would be "nonperishable food" – food that comes in cans, for example.

Celeste also wonders whether the contents of the package is something that is "time-sensitive." If something is "time-sensitive," it is required to be acted upon or to arrive within a very short period of time. Something that's time-sensitive is something that has to be done right away, or very soon, or by a certain deadline. Again, Anwar isn't interested in answering Celeste's questions. He says, "I have no idea. There is also a letter that's been forwarded from our old address that has delivery confirmation."

When mail is "forwarded" (forwarded), it is sent to a different address, usually because someone has moved. If you move from one house or apartment to another house or apartment, usually the post office will forward your mail to your new address even though the address on the envelope or package is to your old address, to the house where you used to live. Usually they'll do that for three or six months. After that, they may or may not, depending on how nice of a post office you have.

"Delivery confirmation" is a special service that the post office provides, as well as other private delivery companies, where the person who is sending the package can check to see if the package has in fact arrived – if it has been delivered. Celeste says, "Oh, I wonder what that could be?" meaning the other letter that had been forwarded. Anwar says, "You know what?" And Celeste responds, "What?" Anwar says, "All of those mysteries can be solved if you just go and open your mail."



English as a Second Language Podcast  
www.eslpod.com  
**ESL Podcast 1079 – Receiving Letters and  
Packages in the Mail**

---

Anwar is getting impatient now with Celeste. He's telling her to just go and open the mail so she doesn't have to keep asking questions wondering what's in the package and the letter. A "mystery" (mystery) is something that you don't know – something that you want to know, but you don't have an answer for. We can talk about a "murder mystery," where you don't know who killed a certain person.

Celeste says, "I know, but isn't it more fun to speculate?" She realizes she can have her questions answered by just going and opening these letters and packages, but she thinks it's "fun to speculate." "To speculate" (speculate) means to wonder or guess about something without having any real evidence or proof. The noun form would be "speculation."

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

[start of dialogue]

Celeste: Did the mail come?

Anwar: Yes, you got some letters and a package.

Celeste: Oh, I hope that one of those envelopes has the photos Naomi promised us. Did you notice the postmark?

Anwar: No, but they're sitting in the hall.

Celeste: Those photos are overdue and should have been delivered days ago. Naomi thought she might not have put enough postage on the envelope, but I thought it must have been misdelivered.

Anwar: You can look at it yourself. The package you received was sent using overnight delivery.

Celeste: I wonder who sent it and why they sent it using expedited service.

Anwar: I don't know. Why don't you go look?

Celeste: I wonder if there's anything perishable in it or that's time-sensitive in some way.

Anwar: I have no idea. There's also a letter that's been forwarded from our old address that has delivery confirmation.



English as a Second Language Podcast  
www.eslpod.com  
**ESL Podcast 1079 – Receiving Letters and  
Packages in the Mail**

---

Celeste: Oh, I wonder what that could be.

Anwar: You know what?

Celeste: What?

Anwar: All of those mysteries can be solved if you just go and open your mail.

Celeste: I know, but isn't it more fun to speculate?

[end of dialogue]

It's no mystery who writes the wonderful scripts here at ESL Podcast. It's 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.

English as a Second Language Podcast was written and produced by Dr. Lucy Tse, hosted by Dr. Jeff McQuillan. Copyright 2015 by the Center for Educational Development.