



ESL Podcast 218 – Getting a Driver’s License

GLOSSARY

driver’s manual – a handbook of rules and laws that tells drivers what they can and cannot do while driving on public roads

* All of the answers to questions on written driver’s test can be found in a driver’s manual.

traffic laws – rules made by the government about what drivers can and cannot do while driving on public roads

* Not following traffic laws is a sure way to get a ticket from the police.

with flying colors – easily; without difficulty

* Having studied all week, she passed the test with flying colors.

to miss – to be incorrect; to make an error; to be wrong, usually on a test

* How many questions did you miss on the final exam?

vision test – a test taken when applying for a driver’s license to check how well a person can see

* There is little chance that she’ll pass the vision test if she doesn’t wear her glasses.

road test – a test taken when applying for a driver’s license where drivers drive with the examiner in the car to make sure that the person can drive properly and follow the rules

* She had no problems getting her driver’s license after getting a perfect score on the road test.

driver’s ed – short for driver’s education; this is a class available in many high schools that teaches students to drive and about the rules for driving

* Driver’s ed seems to be the only class that teenagers don’t mind taking.

behind the wheel – driving a car; being in control of a car

* Truck drivers spend most of their day behind the wheel.

to signal – to let someone or something know what you’re going to do; to get someone’s attention

* When our plane crash-landed on an island, we tried to build a fire to signal for help.



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to yield – to make way for someone or something; to allow someone else to go before you

* When people are rushing home after work, many of them forget to yield to the people trying to cross the street.

pedestrian – any person walking on a sidewalk, street, or road

* Since pedestrians are harder to see at night, it’s a good idea to wear bright-colored clothes if you plan to walk home.

to screw up – to make a mistake

* Every time I try to help my wife in the kitchen, I screw it up and ruin our meal.

parallel parking – parking a car next to the sidewalk in between two cars, with one in front and one in back

* Parallel parking is not easy, and even good drivers try to avoid it if they can.

intersection – where two roads from different directions meet and form a cross

* Drivers have to worry about other cars and pedestrians at all intersections.

appointment – a specific date and time for a meeting

* She called to tell me that she’s running late for our lunchtime appointment.

DMV – short for the Department of Motor Vehicles; a place where drivers get permission to drive and also where they let the state know what cars they are driving

* Instead of waiting in line at the DMV, I decided to fill out the forms and send them in to their office instead.

walk-in – to go into a business or an office without an appointment where you usually need an appointment to be served

* I missed my appointment and tried to see my hair stylist as a walk-in.



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COMPREHENSION QUESTIONS

1. Why is Henry worried about taking the DMV road test?
 - a) He gets nervous behind the wheel.
 - b) He doesn’t yield to pedestrians.
 - c) He forgets to wear his glasses.

2. Jane tells Henry not to worry about the tests because:
 - a) The DMV is usually not too busy on Tuesdays.
 - b) He’s very good at parallel parking.
 - c) He can miss a few of the questions and still pass.

WHAT ELSE DOES IT MEAN?

to miss

The verb “to miss,” in this podcast, means to be wrong, usually on a test: “If he doesn’t miss the last question then he will get a perfect score.” But this word, as a verb, has other meanings. It can also mean to not recognize or see something: “I told him exactly where the keys were, but he still missed them.” “To miss” can mean to not attend or participate in something that is worthwhile: “Try not to miss the concert tonight. Who knows when they’ll perform here again!” “To miss” can mean to feel a sense of loss, usually when someone goes away: “It’s normal for parents to miss their kids when they leave home for college.” The word “miss” can also be used as a noun. “Miss” can be used as a formal title for an unmarried girl or woman: “Before Mrs. Sanders got married, she was known as Miss Jones.” However, these days, most people use the title “Ms.” for both married and unmarried women.

to yield

In this podcast, the word “yield” means to make way for someone or something: “Many car accidents could be avoided if drivers learned to yield and not always insist on going first.” The word also means to produce something or to cause something to happen: “She is hoping that hard work in the garden will yield a nice selection of vegetables in the spring.” It is also a term used in finance that means to earn or make money: “Stocks are a good investment because they usually yields more money than bonds.” Or, “Sales went up a lot this year which means we’ll yield a bigger profit than last year.”



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CULTURE NOTE

In many states in the U.S., driving is the way most people get from one place to another. Because of this, Americans want to learn how to drive and get permission to drive as early as possible. Many teenagers take driver’s education when they are 15-years-old so that they can get their driver’s licenses as soon as they turn 16, which is the minimum age in most states when someone can legally drive on their own. In driver’s ed, drivers are taught rules of the road and how to drive safely. They also learn the “consequences” or what happens when they don’t “obey” or follow traffic laws.

Traffic tickets are pieces of paper, also called “citations,” that police officers give to drivers who don’t follow the rules. There are two types of traffic tickets: moving violations and non-moving violations. “Moving violations” are things that a driver does against the law while the car is moving, such as driving faster than the posted “speed limit,” or the fastest speed a driver is allowed to drive under the law. “Non-moving violations” occur when the car is not moving, such as parking in a place where cars are not allowed. These tickets tell you what you did wrong and show “fines,” or an amount of money that the driver has to pay as punishment for doing those things.

Traffic tickets are expensive, and they should be paid on time because each time that the deadline to pay is missed, the fine goes up for that ticket. Additionally, traffic tickets appear on driving records. When someone gets a driver’s license, the DMV starts a file that will collect everything having to do with his or her driving. If too many tickets show up on this record, the DMV can “suspend” the person’s license so that he or she can’t legally drive for a period of time, or even worse, the DMV could “revoke” or take back the license, and that person loses the right to drive their car legally in that state.

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



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COMPLETE TRANSCRIPT

Welcome to English as a Second Language Podcast number 218, “Getting a Driver's License.”

This is English as a Second Language Podcast episode 218. 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. There you will find a list of all the words that we will be using in this podcast, their definitions, a(n) additional culture note as well as a complete transcript of this episode. All that is in our Learning Guide, which you can find on our website.

Our dialogue in this podcast is about someone who wants to get a license to drive. Let's go.

[Start of story]

Jane: Hey, Henry. You look busy. What's that you're reading?

Henry: Oh, hi, Jane. I'm studying the driver's manual so I can finally get my driver's license. I just hope I can remember all these traffic laws.

Jane: I'm sure you'll pass the tests with flying colors, especially since you can miss a few and still pass. Just don't forget to bring your glasses with you so you don't fail the vision test.

Henry: Yeah, I know. I think the written test will be okay, but I'm really worried about the road test. I never took driver's ed and I'm nervous behind the wheel. My brother failed his test the first time because he forgot to signal a left turn, and then he didn't yield to a pedestrian. He also screwed up on the parallel parking.

Jane: It sounds like he just got nervous. A busy intersection is always tricky. So when's your appointment at the DMV?

Henry: Next Tuesday. But I might just go in earlier and take the test as a walk-in.



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Jane: Can't wait, huh? Well, I'll let you get back to studying. Good luck!

Henry: Thanks. See you around.

[End of story]

Our podcast is called, “Getting a Driver's License.” A driver's license is permission from the state government where you live to drive. Every state has its own driver's license. We do not have a national driver's license in the United States. So, if you live in California, you have to get a California driver's license. If you move to a different state, you would have to get a different driver's license. Sometimes you have to take another test when you move to a different state, but not always.

In our dialogue, we have Jane and Henry, and Jane asks Henry what he is reading. She says, “Hey, Henry. You look busy. What's that you're reading,” meaning what are you reading? What is the thing, the book that you are reading? And Henry says he's “studying the driver's manual.” A manual, “manual,” is a book that gives you instructions that tells you how to do something, how to perform something. You can have a manual for fixing your car. There are manuals for fixing your relationships. I need to get one of those! And, there are manuals that tell you how to drive. The driver's manual is actually a list of the laws of a state that are concerned with driving, laws, rules that you have to know. Most of the rules are the same across the 50 states of the United States, but sometimes there are differences.

Henry's studying the driver's manual because he wants to get his license. Most Americans get their driver's license either when they're 16, 17 or 18 years old. Sometimes there are people, who live in big cities like New York where they don't need a driver's license; they don't need a car because they have good public transportation. But it's very common for high school students to take a special class to learn how to drive, and that class is called driver's ed. Driver's ed, “ed,” is short here for education.

Henry says that he has to study all of the traffic laws. The traffic, “traffic,” laws are the rules about how you should drive. If you don't follow the rules, you can get what we call a ticket, and you can learn more about what a ticket is and what it means in the United States by looking at the Culture Note in today's Learning Guide.



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Jane then says to Henry “I’m sure you’ll pass the tests with flying colors.” The expression with flying, “flying,” colors means that you will be very successful. You will have a very good score. Usually the idea here is that you will do it easily, with flying colors - to do very well. “Especially, “ Jane says, “since you can miss a few and still pass.” You can miss, “miss,” a few and still pass. What she means is that you can get some of the questions wrong, a few of the questions, and still pass the exam, still get your license. That word miss, “miss,” has several different meanings in English, and we talk about the other meanings of that word in our Learning Guide today.

Jane says, “Just don't forget to bring your glasses with you so you don't fail the vision test.” To fail a test is the opposite of to pass a test. You do not get your license if you fail the driver's test. You will also not get a license if you fail the vision test. Vision, “vision,” test is a test that you have to take to see that you can see correctly, that you have good, what we would call good vision. You're able to see the other cars. You're able to see the stop sign. This is a test that every state, I think, gives you, and it's just an eye test to see if you can see. If you need glasses in order to pass the test, they put that on your license. Your license says that you must drive with your glasses or some contacts. Contacts are the little pieces of plastic, what we would call lenses, “lenses,” that work like glasses, so that they're on top of your eye. “Contacts,” contacts. So, you have to pass the vision test.

Well, Henry says, “I think the written test will be okay.” There are two tests that you have to take; one is a written test. The other is a road test, and this is what Henry is worried about. He's concerned about the road test. And, the road test means that you have to get into the car with the examiner, that's the person who is giving you the exam, and demonstrate, show that you can drive correctly. Henry says he “never took driver's ed,” which we know is driver's education, and he's “nervous behind the wheel.” The expression to be behind the wheel means that you are driving the car. The thing that you turn the car with, right and left and to go straight, that you control the car with is called the wheel. We actually call it the steering wheel. To steer, “steer,” means to direct or control a car or a boat

“My brother,” Henry says, “failed his test the first time because he forgot to signal a left turn.” To signal, “signal,” means to indicate, and you do that in a car by turning on the blinker, “blinker.” The blinker is the light that shows people you are going left or going right. There is a law that you are supposed to signal your



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turn, meaning if you are going to turn left or turn right, you have to put your blinkers on that indicate that to the other drivers behind you.

Well, Henry's brother was not a very good driver, it seems. He also failed to “yield to a pedestrian,” and “screwed up on parallel parking.” To yield, “yield,” means to let someone go in front of you, to let someone else go first. The word actually has several different meanings both as a noun and as a verb, and we talk about those in our Learning Guide today. So, to yield to a pedestrian is to stop and let a person who is crossing the street go first. A pedestrian, “pedestrian,” is a person who is walking, not driving - so a person who is walking on the road or walking down the street.

Henry's brother also “screwed up on parallel parking. To screw, “screw,” up, “up,” two words, means to make a mistake, to do it wrong. Very important, the word “up” here. To screw up means to get something wrong. Parallel parking is when you have to park the car in between two other cars, and that, of course, can be somewhat difficult. That is part of most driving tests. You have to parallel park, to park the car in between two other cars.

Jane then says that Henry's brother probably “just got nervous. A busy intersection is always tricky,” she says. An intersection, “intersection,” is where two streets cross each other. The intersections can be tricky, Jane says, and then she asks Henry when his “appointment at the DMV” is. An appointment is like a meeting or a date. It's a time that you have to go somewhere to do something. DMV stands for Department of Motors Vehicles. The DMV is the government office in a state that gives the driver's license, that is responsible for giving people driver's licenses. Some states call it something different. Here in California it's called the DMV, the Department of Motors Vehicles.

Henry says it's “Next Tuesday,” his appointment, but he might “take the test as a walk-in.” When we say you're going take the test as a walk-in, “walk-in,” we mean that you will not have an appointment, that you will just go and wait in line to take your test. And, if you go to the DMV in California, you will wait a very long time because there are many people who try to take their test every day.

Now let's listen to the dialogue, this time at a native rate of speech.

[Start of story]



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Jane: Hey, Henry. You look busy. What's that you're reading?

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Jane: I'm sure you'll pass the tests with flying colors, especially since you can miss a few and still pass. Just don't forget to bring your glasses with you so you don't fail the vision test.

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Jane: It sounds like he just got nervous. A busy intersection is always tricky. So when's your appointment at the DMV?

Henry: Next Tuesday. But I might just go in earlier and take the test as a walk-in.

Jane: Can't wait, huh? Well, I'll let you get back to studying. Good luck!

Henry: Thanks. See you around.

[End of story]

The script for this podcast episode was written by Annalea Manalili.

That's all we have time today. We appreciate you listening. From Los Angeles, California, I'm Jeff McQuillan. We'll see you next time on ESL Podcast.

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