



ESL Podcast 250 – Cheating on a Test

GLOSSARY

cheat sheet – a secret piece of paper with information written on it that will help a student do well on a test

* Michelle is selling cheat sheets to the other students for the chemistry exam. If the teacher finds out, she'll be in a lot of trouble.

to get away with (something) – to be able to do something bad without getting in trouble

* She got away with having a big party last weekend, but only because she cleaned the house really well before her parents came home.

to flunk – to fail a class; to not pass a class; to receive a failing grade

* Fyodor flunked his biology class because he received only 20 points on the final exam.

risk – the possibility of something bad happening

* There's always a risk of death with any surgery, even if it's a very common surgery.

to suspend (someone) – not to allow someone go to classes or work for a period of time as punishment for something that he or she did

* When Fernando hit Sun-Yee at school, he was suspended for a week.

to expel (someone) – to not allow someone go to classes or work ever again as punishment for something that he or she did

* The principal told us that we could be expelled for bringing a gun to school.

final grade – a letter of A (the best), B, C, D, or F (the worst) that shows how well one did in a course

* I got a D on the first assignment, but if I do well on the rest of the assignments and exams, I can still get a good final grade.

on the line – at risk; in danger

* Johanna's job is on the line if she doesn't make at least \$100,000 in sales this month.

an automatic F – a failing grade received as punishment for something that one did

* In Mr. Haftl's class, students get an automatic F if they don't give him their assignments on the day that he asks for them.



ESL Podcast 250 – Cheating on a Test

to steal – to secretly take something that is not one’s own

* When Peter was a little boy, he once stole money from his mother’s purse to buy candy.

to plagiarize – to copy another person’s writing and say that it is one’s own

* If you want to use someone else’s words in your essay, you have to put them in quotation marks (“ ”). Otherwise, you’re plagiarizing.

there’s no telling – a phrase meaning, “nobody knows,” or “it’s impossible to know”

* There’s no telling what her parents will do when they find out that she didn’t go to school today.

to find out – to discover; to become aware of something; to learn something

* How did you find out that this employee was lying about her experience?

to copy off (one’s) test – to secretly write down the answers that another student has written on his or her own test

* Why do you let Jeannette copy off your test?

to keep a close eye on (someone) – to watch someone carefully, especially to see if they are doing something wrong or if they are in danger

* Please keep a close eye on Wes. He hasn’t been feeling well today, and if he gets worse, I want you to take him to the doctor.

to get caught – to have someone else discover that one is doing something bad

* Ellery and his friends got caught smoking behind the school.

summer school – classes during the summer months (June, July, and August) when most other students are on vacation

* Celina has to go to summer school because she didn’t do very well in her French class last year.



ESL Podcast 250 – Cheating on a Test

COMPREHENSION QUESTIONS

1. Why is Oscar worried about Elena cheating on the test?

- a) Because he thinks cheating is wrong.
- b) Because it isn't fair to the other students.
- c) Because she might get caught.

2. How is Elena going to cheat?

- a) She'll plagiarize an important assignment.
 - b) She'll steal a copy of the test.
 - c) She'll make a cheat sheet
-

WHAT ELSE DOES IT MEAN?

to get away with

The phrase “to get away with,” in this podcast, means to be able to do something bad or something wrong without getting in trouble: “Maribeth thought she could get away with speeding in her car because she didn't see any police officers in the area.” A similar phrase, “to get away from it all,” means to relax by taking a short vacation and forgetting about work or school: “After taking four exams in one week, the students decided to go to the beach for the weekend to get away from it all.” The phrase “to get away from (something)” means to leave a place: “I couldn't get away from the office until almost 9:00 p.m. last night.” Also, people can shout, “Get away from there!” to warn someone to move because there is danger where he or she is standing, or if he or she does not belong there and is not welcomed.

to suspend

In this podcast, the verb “to suspend (someone)” means to not let someone go to classes or work for a period of time as punishment for something that he or she did: “Brock was suspended for 14 days when he put frogs in the school's bathrooms.” The same verb can also mean to hang something above an area or above something else: “The heavy lamp is suspended from the ceiling with a very strong piece of metal.” The verb “to suspend” can mean to stop something for a period of time: “The company had to suspend its work for two weeks when all of the employees were sick at the same time.” “To suspend” can also mean to make something happen later than originally planned: “The museum's opening day has been suspended until September.”



ESL Podcast 250 – Cheating on a Test

CULTURE NOTE

In the United States, people are taught that they should not “plagiarize.” “Plagiarism” happens when someone copies another person’s writing or ideas and uses them as if they were his or her own.

People often want to use another person’s ideas or words in your own writing. In the U.S., this is okay if you “attribute” those ideas or words to the original author, meaning that you make it clear whom the ideas and words belong to. If you take another person’s ideas and put them in your essay without showing where those ideas came from, your essay has “unattributed ideas,” or plagiarism. But if you attribute those ideas to the original writer, perhaps by saying, “As Mr. Jackson wrote in his book....,” then it isn’t considered plagiarism.

When you want to use someone else’s exact words in your essay, you must place those words in quotation marks (“ ”) with information about the person who first wrote those words. For example, you could write, “According to Marie Sanclair, ‘Learning a second language is one of life’s most rewarding experiences.’” Because your essay names Marie Sanclair, this isn’t plagiarism. But if you use her words without quotation marks, it is plagiarism because the words appear to be your own when they aren’t.

In American schools and universities, students who plagiarize are “punished” and receive bad or failing grades for their work. Teachers and professors take plagiarism very seriously and consider it a major act of dishonesty. Students must be very careful to attribute other people’s work when they use it in their own writing.

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



ESL Podcast 250 – Cheating on a Test

COMPLETE TRANSCRIPT

Welcome to English as a Second Language Podcast number 250: Cheating on a Test.

This is English as a Second Language Podcast episode 250. I'm your host, Dr. Jeff McQuillan, coming to you from the Center for Educational Development in beautiful Los Angeles, California.

If you enjoy our podcast and want to improve your English even more, you can get a Learning Guide for each episode of the podcast that includes all of the vocabulary, the definitions, cultural notes and a complete transcript of this episode. Go to our website at eslpod.com for more information.

This episode is called “Cheating on a Test,” and it's going to be a conversation between two students, one of whom wants to cheat, or to do something that is not allowed, in order to get a better grade on a test in school. Let's get started.

[start of story]

Oscar: What are you doing?

Elena: I'm getting ready for the test.

Oscar: By writing the answers on a cheat sheet? You're not going to get away with that.

Elena: I got a “D” on the last test and I have to do better on this one. If I don't get at least a “B,” I'm going to flunk this class.

Oscar: You're taking a big risk. You could get suspended or expelled!

Elena: I know, but my final grade is on the line. And plus, I think that the worst that could happen is that I get an automatic “F” on the test. It's not like I'm stealing a copy of the test or plagiarizing on an important assignment.

Oscar: Still, there's no telling what Mr. McQuillan will do to you if he finds out. I'd let you copy off my test if I thought we could get away with it, but he always keeps a close eye on us during tests. That's why I think you're going to get caught.



ESL Podcast 250 – Cheating on a Test

Elena: It's not like I have any choice, do I? It's either cheating or going to summer school.

Oscar: I still think it's a bad idea.

Elena: Then, just don't think about it. Let me worry about it, okay?

[end of story]

This dialogue between Oscar and Elena begins with Oscar asking Elena, "What are you doing," and he asks that question using an intonation - using his voice - to suggest that she's doing something wrong. He says, "What are you doing?"

Elena says, "I'm getting ready for a test," and Oscar says you're getting ready "By writing the answers on a cheat sheet." To cheat, "cheat," means to do something that is against the rules, usually to improve or increase your performance at something. In school, to cheat means, for example, to look at someone else's answers and put them down as your answers - that would give you a better performance and a better grade on your test.

A cheat sheet, as a noun, is a piece of paper that students will bring with them to an examination - to a test - that has information on it that will help them do better on the test. Of course, the teacher doesn't see the piece of paper - the cheat sheet.

Oscar says to Elena, "You're not going to get away with that" - with cheating. To get away with something means to be able to do something bad without getting in trouble. So, you do something that is wrong, but nobody knows it. Oscar is saying that Elena is not going to get away with cheating.

Elena then tries to give a reason why she is doing this - why she is trying to cheat. She says, "I got a 'D' on the last test and I have to do better on this one." The grading scale in the United States and in some other countries begins with "A," that's the best score you can get on an exam, "B," "C," "D," and then finally "F" if you fail the exam, that's the worst score. That's the score I usually got in school!

Elena says that she got a "D," which is not a good score, on her last test - on her previous test - and she has to do better on this test. If she doesn't "get at least a 'B,'" she says. "I'm going to flunk this class." The verb to flunk, "flunk," means to fail a class - not to pass the class - to get a low grade and get no credit for the



ESL Podcast 250 – Cheating on a Test

class that you have taken. That's to flunk. We would say, "I flunked the class," or, "I flunked this semester" - I did not get passing grades.

Oscar says to Elena that she's "taking a big risk." A risk, "risk," is a possibility that something bad will happen. If you like to gamble, for example, go to Las Vega or to a casino and spend money, you are risking your money. There's a possibility that you will lose your money. In fact, you will definitely lose your money at most casinos!

Oscar says, "You could get suspended or expelled!" He's saying that Elena could get suspended or expelled. To suspend, "suspend," someone means not to allow someone - a student - to go to their classes for a certain period of time as a punishment for something they did wrong. So, if a student cheats on a test and the teacher finds out about it, the teacher could have the student suspended for a week, meaning they would not be able to go back to class for one week. That doesn't seem like a punishment to me, but that is a very common thing that is done in American schools for students who either cheat or who cause problems – cause trouble in the school.

To be expelled, "expelled," (the verb is to expel, "expel") means to not allow someone to go to their classes at all, as a punishment. Usually it means to remove someone from the school so they no longer are a student at that school. If you bring a gun to your school, in most cities of the United States you will probably be expelled. And yes, students sometimes bring guns to school. It happened once at a school I was teaching at. It wasn't me who brought the gun; it was a student, of course!

I should mention that the expression to get away with and to suspend have some additional meanings, which we talk about on the Learning Guide for this episode.

Elena says that she knows she is taking a big risk, but her "final grade is on the line." Her final grade is the grade that you get at the end of course; it's what you get for the entire class. When we say something is on the line, "line," we mean that it is in danger - that it is at risk. Some people may say, "My neck is on the line," meaning my future is at risk - that I am in danger of something bad happening to me.

Elena then says, "And plus," meaning in addition, "I think that the worst that could happen" to me "is that I get an automatic "F" on the test." An automatic "F" is a failing grade that a student receives as punishment for something that they did, such as cheating. So, she would get an "F" on the test.



ESL Podcast 250 – Cheating on a Test

Elena says, “It’s not like I’m stealing a copy of the test or plagiarizing on an important assignment.” To steal, “steal,” means to secretly take something that does not belong to you - to take it from someone else. Elena says that she's not “stealing a copy of the test” - she's not getting the test from the teacher's desk before the test is given, for example; that would be one way of cheating.

Another way of cheating in school is to plagiarize, “plagiarize,” means to copy another person's writing for your paper - for your assignment - and say that it's your writing. So, you're taking someone else's writing and saying that it's yours. This is a problem in many schools, and in universities sometimes.

Oscar says that “there’s no telling what Mr. McQuillan will do to you if he finds out.” There's no telling is an expression which means nobody knows or it's impossible to know. So, “there's no telling” - no one knows - “what Mr. McQuillan will do if he finds out.” To find out (two words) means to discover - to become aware of something - to realize something or to learn about something. Well, we all know Mr. McQuillan is a very mean teacher, someone who will get very angry if he sees someone cheating.

He says, “I’d let you copy off my test if I thought we could get away with it, but he” - Mr. McQuillan - “always keeps a close eye on us during tests.” Oscar is suggesting here that he would cheat, too - he would help Elena cheat - if he could get away with it - if they could do it without anyone noticing. So, we think that Oscar is an honest person, but we find out now that he is not any more honest than Elena, apparently.

He says, “I’d let you copy off my test.” To copy off someone's test the means to secretly write down the answers that the other student has written. So, you are sitting next to someone who is really smart, say Dr. Tse, and you don't know the answers, so you look at her test and you write down what she writes down on your test. That's to copy off someone's test.

Mr. McQuillan, unfortunately for Oscar and Elena, “always keeps a close eye on” the students “during tests.” To keep a close eye on someone is an expression that means to watch someone very carefully, especially to make sure that they are not doing anything wrong - anything bad.

Oscar says that he thinks Elena is “going to get caught.” To get caught means to have someone else discover that you are doing something bad or something wrong. The verb can also be used to catch. For example, “Mr. McQuillan is going to catch you,” meaning he's going to find out that you're doing something wrong.



ESL Podcast 250 – Cheating on a Test

Elena says that she doesn't have any choice. She says, "It's not like I have any choice, do I," meaning I don't have any other option. She either has to cheat or, she says, she's "going to summer school." Summer school is when schools have classes during the summer months - June, July and August - when other students are on vacation. In the US, the schools open in September and they close, usually, in May or the first week of June. So, in the summertime students have a vacation. Well, if you don't do very well in school - if you flunk a class - you may have to take the class again during the summer, and that's what we would call summer school.

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

[start of story]

Oscar: What are you doing?

Elena: I'm getting ready for the test.

Oscar: By writing the answers on a cheat sheet? You're not going to get away with that.

Elena: I got a "D" on the last test and I have to do better on this one. If I don't get at least a "B," I'm going to flunk this class.

Oscar: You're taking a big risk. You could get suspended or expelled!

Elena: I know, but my final grade is on the line. And plus, I think that the worst that could happen is that I get an automatic "F" on the test. It's not like I'm stealing a copy of the test or plagiarizing on an important assignment.

Oscar: Still, there's no telling what Mr. McQuillan will do to you if he finds out. I'd let you copy off my test if I thought we could get away with it, but he always keeps a close eye on us during tests. That's why I think you're going to get caught.

Elena: It's not like I have any choice, do I? It's either cheating or going to summer school.

Oscar: I still think it's a bad idea.

Elena: Then, just don't think about it. Let me worry about it, okay?



English as a Second Language Podcast
www.eslpod.com

ESL Podcast 250 – Cheating on a Test

[end of story]

The script for today's podcast was written by Dr. Lucy Tse.

From Los Angeles, California, I'm Jeff McQuillan. Thanks for listening. We'll see you next time on ESL Podcast.

English as a Second Language Podcast is written and produced by Dr. Lucy Tse, hosted by Dr. Jeff McQuillan. This podcast is copyright 2007.