



ESL Podcast 267 – Getting a Traffic Ticket

GLOSSARY

police car – a car used by police officers, usually painted black and white

* People often feel safer when there are a lot of police cars driving on the streets at night.

siren – a loud noise made by police cars, ambulances, and fire trucks when they are moving toward an emergency

* When you hear a siren, move your car toward the side of the road so that the emergency vehicle can drive by.

to be pulled over – to be asked by a police officer to move one's vehicle to the side of the road and stop it there so that one can speak to the police officer

* Have you ever been pulled over for speeding on the freeway?

driver's license – a small piece of identification given to a person by a US state that allows that person to drive

* I know you're impatient and want to drive now, but you'll have to wait until you're 16 years old to get your driver's license.

registration – a piece of paper that shows who owns the car and that it was registered with the state government

* Dan keeps the car registration in the glove compartment in his car.

proof of insurance – a piece of paper that shows that one has automobile insurance, meaning that a company will pay money if one's car is stolen or in an accident

* If you don't have proof of insurance, you can't register your car with the state.

to speed – to drive one's car faster than allowed in a certain area

* We're doing a study to find out why so many teenage boys like to speed.

(a number) miles an hour zone – an area where the maximum speed of cars is a certain number of miles per hour (1 mile = 1.6 km)

* Are you crazy? You're driving 90 in a 65 miles per hour zone!

to run a red light – to drive through an intersection when it is not allowed because the stoplight is red, without waiting for the light to become green

* The driver ran a red light because he was in a hurry and he almost hit a little boy.



ESL Podcast 267 – Getting a Traffic Ticket

brake light – a red light at the back of a car or truck that turns on when the driver uses the brakes to make the car move more slowly or stop

* When you see brake lights on the car in front of you, you know that it's slowing down or is ready to stop.

tag – a sticker that is put on license plates (the metal pieces of identification on the front and back of a car) and has dates to show how long the car's registration will last

* Melissa had to pay a fine of \$80 because she forgot to put her new tags on her license plates.

to expire – to no longer be valid; to be past the last date of something

* The Brock family's rental agreement for the apartment will expire next month, so they have to either sign a new rental agreement or find a new place to live.

to cite – to give someone a piece of paper stating that he or she did something against the law

* Francisco was cited for not stopping at a stop sign this morning.

to get away with (something) – to not be punished (or to be punished only a little bit) when one does something wrong or against the law

* Sara thought she would be able to get away with parking illegally for a few minutes, but when she came back to her car, she had a parking ticket.

warning – a written or oral statement that one must stop doing something and that he or she will be punished the next time it happens, but not this time

* When the teacher saw Dwayne copy answers from another student's test, she gave him a warning and said that the next time she sees him do it he will get a bad grade.

fine – an amount of money that is paid as a punishment for having done something wrong or against the law

* If you return a book late, this library charges a \$1.00 fine for each day past the date that you were supposed to return it.

violation – something that one does that is against a rule or law

* Drinking alcohol in the dormitories is a violation of the university's rules.

citation – a ticket; a piece of paper that makes one pay money or go to court as punishment for doing something wrong or against the law

* In many states, you can get a citation for not wearing your seat belt when driving a car.



ESL Podcast 267 – Getting a Traffic Ticket

COMPREHENSION QUESTIONS

1. What did Ray do when he realized that he was being pulled over?
 - a) He stopped his car and began talking to the police officer.
 - b) He increased his speed to 70 in a 55 miles per hour zone.
 - c) He turned on the siren for the police car.

 2. Why doesn't the police officer tell Ray how much the fine is?
 - a) Because he wants Ray to have a nice day.
 - b) Because Ray is waiting for his tags to arrive in the mail.
 - c) Because the fines are written on the back of the ticket.
-

WHAT ELSE DOES IT MEAN?

tag

The word “tag,” in this podcast, means a sticker that is put on license plates (the metal pieces of identification on the front and back of a car) and has dates to show how long the car’s registration will last: “Most people receive new tags for their cars every year in the mail.” A tag is also a small piece of fabric inside clothing that shows the size and the manufacturer’s name: “The tag on this shirt shows that it’s a medium.” Tag is also a game that children play, where one person runs after and tries to catch the others: “The children are playing a game of tag in the backyard.” A “gift tag” is a small piece of paper that shows who a present is for and whom it is from: “The gift tag fell off, so they don’t know who gave them the painting as a wedding present.” A “price tag” is a small piece of paper that lets shoppers know how much something costs: “This dress has a \$100 price tag, but that seems too expensive.”

fine

In this podcast, the word “fine” means an amount of money that is paid as a punishment for having done something wrong or against the law: “How much is the fine for throwing garbage in the street?” The word “fine” also means good or very well, especially when asking about how someone is doing: “How are you today?” “Fine thanks.” The word “fine” can mean very good quality. For example, we talk about fine wines, fine art, and fine dining. “Fine” can also mean okay and it’s used to show that something is acceptable: “Yes, that’s fine, I’ll come to your office at 3:00 to get the papers.” We also use the word “fine” to talk about things that are very thin or narrow: “The baby has very fine hair.”



ESL Podcast 267 – Getting a Traffic Ticket

CULTURE NOTE

In the United States, police officers give drivers traffic tickets for many different kinds of “traffic offenses” or violations of driving rules. Before you begin driving in the States, it is very important to learn the “rules of the road,” or the rules and laws that tell people what is and what is not allowed while driving.

Getting traffic tickets is very expensive because you have to pay fines. Also, when you get a traffic ticket, your “auto insurance” (the service that pays you money if your car is stolen or in an accident) usually becomes more expensive. If you get many traffic tickets, you might even “lose your license,” meaning that the government takes away your driver’s license.

Probably the most common traffic tickets are for speeding, running red lights, and not stopping at a stop sign. But there are many other types of traffic offenses. For example, you can get a ticket for “failing” (not doing something) to “yield (to let pass) to a pedestrian (a person who is walking),” which means that you should have stopped your car so that someone could walk, but you didn’t.

You can get a ticket for driving without your license, registration, or proof of insurance. In many states, drivers can get traffic tickets for driving without wearing their seat belts, or for letting “passengers” (other people who are in the car but not driving) ride in the car without wearing their seat belts. People also get tickets for “driving under the influence,” meaning that they were drinking alcohol before or while they were driving, which impaired their “judgment,” or their ability to make decisions.

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



ESL Podcast 267 – Getting a Traffic Ticket

COMPLETE TRANSCRIPT

Welcome to English as a Second Language Podcast number 267: Getting a Traffic Ticket.

This is English as a Second Language Podcast episode 267. 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. Check out some of the new things on our website, including our ESL Podcast Store. You can also download the Learning Guide for this episode.

This episode is called "Getting a Traffic Ticket." It will be a conversation between a police officer and a person who was driving too fast. Let's get started.

[start of story]

I was driving down the street when I saw a police car behind me. Suddenly, it turned on its siren. I realized that I was being pulled over.

Officer: Can I see your driver's license, registration, and proof of insurance?

Ray: Sure. Here you are, officer.

Officer: Did you know that you were speeding? You were going 70 in a 55 mile an hour zone.

Ray: I was? No, I didn't know.

Officer: You also ran a red light and your brake light is out. I see that your tags have also expired. I'm going to have to cite you for all of that.

Ray: I'm sure I didn't run a red light, and I didn't know my brake light wasn't working. I just renewed my registration and I'm still waiting for my new tags to arrive in the mail. Is there any way I can get away with just a warning?

Officer: I'm afraid not.

Ray: What's the fine for all of those violations?



ESL Podcast 267 – Getting a Traffic Ticket

Officer: That information is on the back of the citation. Here you are. Have a nice day.

Ray: Thanks. Thanks a lot!

[end of story]

Our story begins with Ray saying that he “was driving down the street” – driving on the street – when he “saw a police car behind” him. A “police car” is a car used by police officers. In the United States, they’re often painted black and white.

Ray saw this police car, and “Suddenly, it turned on its siren.” A “siren” (siren) is a loud noise made by police cars, or ambulances from hospitals, or fire trucks, and the noise is telling people that there is an emergency and to stop driving or to slow down so that the emergency vehicle – the police car or the fire truck – can drive around them to get to the place where the emergency is taking place. In the US, it usually sounds like this [recording of siren].

Well, the police car “turned on its siren,” and Ray realized that he “was being pulled over.” The expression “to be pulled (pulled) over” means that the police officer is telling you to stop your car and go to the side of the road so that he or she can talk to you, usually because you did something wrong. You don’t want to be pulled over by the police; it means that you are probably in trouble.

Well, poor Ray was pulled over. The police officer came up to the window of Ray’s car and asked him for three things, and these are three things that everyone knows the police are going to ask for when you get pulled over. The three things are your “drivers license,” your “registration,” and your “proof of insurance.”

Your “driver’s license” is a piece of identification, usually with your picture on it, that is given to you by the state where you are living. Each state in the US has its own driver’s license. So, when I moved from Minnesota to California, I had to get a new license, and I had to take a new test. So, the driver’s license is one thing. “Registration” is a piece of paper that shows who owns the car, and that it is officially registered with the state government.

The third thing the officer asks for it is “proof of insurance.” “Proof” (proof) is evidence of – something that demonstrates that you have, in this case, insurance, which is protection that you buy a company in case you get in an accident or you have a problem with your car. Your car gets stolen, if you have



ESL Podcast 267 – Getting a Traffic Ticket

insurance, the company will give you money to pay for the problem. Proof of insurance is required in most states of the United States; it's a piece of paper that says you have insurance on your car.

Ray says, “Sure,” meaning yes, I have these three things, and gives them to the police officer. “Here you are, officer,” he says. The police officer says do “you know that you were speeding?” “To be speeding” (speeding), or, “to speed,” means to drive your car faster than is allowed by the law. Different streets have different what we would call “speed limits,” which is the fastest you can drive. In most freeways in the United States, the speed limit is 65 or 70 miles per hour. In most streets in the city, the speed limit is in between 25 and 35 miles an hour, in most cities.

The police officer says to Ray that he was “going,” meaning driving, “70 in a 55 mile an hour zone.” This means he was going 70 miles an hour in a place where the speed limit was 55 miles an hour. “Miles an hour” is how we measure the speed of cars in the United States. It's equal to 1.6 kilometers – one mile is 1.6 kilometers. Most cars in the US have both kilometers and miles on the car that you can see, but Americans don't look at the kilometers, they just look at the miles. So, no American really knows the kilometers per hour; they just know miles per hour.

Ray is surprised that he was going so fast. The officer then tells him of some other problems he has. She tells him that he “ran a red light.” “To run a red light” means to drive through what we would call an “intersection,” where two streets cross each other, when it is not allowed because the stoplight is red. Of course, when it's red, you have to stop, and in United States, that means that you really do have to stop. If you don't, you could get a ticket if the police are there. “To run a red light” means to go through the red light illegally.

The officer says to Ray that his “brake light,” or brake lights, is, or, are out. A “brake (brake) light” is a light in the back of your car that becomes red – turns on because you are slowing or stopping your car. We would say you are “hitting the brakes.” The “brakes” are the part of the car that slows it down. So, the “brake light” “indicates,” or shows, that you are slowing down so the people behind you know that you are slowing down.

The officer also says that Ray has “tags” that “have expired.” A “tag” (tag) is a small piece of plastic, what we would call a “sticker” that you “stick,” or put, on your license plate, which is in the back, and sometimes in the front and back of your car. And that little sticker – that little tag – that little piece of plastic has a year and a month on it that indicates when the registration for your car will



ESL Podcast 267 – Getting a Traffic Ticket

“expire,” when it will end. If you don't register your car, you won't get a new sticker, your tags will expire (expire). “To expire” here means they are no longer valid. The word “tag” has several different meanings in English. Take a look at the Learning Guide today for some additional definitions.

The police officer says finally, “I'm going to have to cite you for all of that.” “To cite” (cite) here means to give someone a piece of paper, what we would call a “ticket,” that says that they did something wrong – they did something against the law. “To cite” is also used in the university to mean that you mention where you got a certain piece of information. But here, it means to get a ticket – to get something telling you that you did something wrong, and usually it tells you that you have to pay money because you did something wrong.

Ray says that he was “sure” he “didn't run a red light, and” he “didn't know” that his “brake light wasn't working.” He “just renewed” his “registration,” he says, and he is “new tags” have not arrived “in the mail” yet.

He then asks the officer, “Is there any way I can get away with just a warning?” “To get away with” something means not to be punished for something when you do something wrong. “The children were cheating on their test, but the teacher did not see them. They got away with cheating.” They were not punished because they did not get caught – they weren't found out by the teacher.

A “warning” (warning) is a written or spoken statement that says you did something wrong, next time, if you do it wrong, you will get a ticket, but this time we're just warning you – we're just saying don't do it again.

Ray asks what the “fine” is “for all of those violations?” The “fine” (fine) is the amount of money you have to pay as a punishment; it's the amount of the ticket – the amount of money you have to give the government for breaking the law. There are several meanings of the word “fine.” Again, take a look at the Learning Guide for additional explanations. “Violations” (violations) are things that you do against the law or that break a rule.

The officer says the information Ray wants about the fine “is on the back of the citation.” The “citation” is the piece of paper that the police officer gives you that tells you what you did wrong and that you have to pay some money for it. It's another word for a ticket.

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



ESL Podcast 267 – Getting a Traffic Ticket

[start of story]

I was driving down the street when I saw a police car behind me. Suddenly, it turned on its siren. I realized that I was being pulled over.

Officer: Can I see your driver's license, registration, and proof of insurance?

Ray: Sure. Here you are, officer.

Officer: Did you know that you were speeding? You were going 70 in a 55 mile an hour zone.

Ray: I was? No, I didn't know.

Officer: You also ran a red light and your brake light is out. I see that your tags have also expired. I'm going to have to cite you for all of that.

Ray: I'm sure I didn't run a red light, and I didn't know my brake light wasn't working. I just renewed my registration and I'm still waiting for my new tags to arrive in the mail. Is there any way I can get away with just a warning?

Officer: I'm afraid not.

Ray: What's the fine for all of those violations?

Officer: That information is on the back of the citation. Here you are. Have a nice day.

Ray: Thanks. Thanks a lot!

[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.