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**ESL Podcast 358 – Surfing the Internet**

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**GLOSSARY**

**to surf the web** – to browse or navigate the internet; to spend time visiting websites

\* How many hours do you spend surfing the web each day?

**Big Brother** – the idea that the government, large companies, or individuals are watching what people do when they think they are alone

\* At work, I often feel like Big Brother is watching my every move.

**blog** – a website that has information written on a single topic, often by one author or one group of authors, so that each time they make a new entry, it is listed at the top of the page

\* Julie started a blog so that all her friends and family members can read about her international travels.

**forum** – a website where many people who are interested in the same topic can exchange ideas, questions, and answers, posting their text on the same site

\* Do you know if there is a forum for professional musicians in this city?

**history** – a record of all the websites that one has visited in a certain period of time, stored in an Internet browser

\* I found a great website last week, but now I can't remember the URL. Let me check to see if it's still in the history.

**cache** – temporary computer memory; a place on a computer where data is stored temporarily

\* Don't forget to delete the cache after you finish working on a public computer.

**to check up on (someone)** – to monitor someone's behavior, often without his or her knowledge, especially to find out whether he or she is doing what he or she is supposed to be doing

\* Marybeth put a hidden camera in the living room to check up on the babysitter while she was at work.

**to install** – to put a software program on a computer so that it can be used at any time

\* Have you installed the latest version of Skype?

**plug-in** – a part of a software program that makes the program work better or in a new way

\* These plug-ins let you record macros within the browser you're using.



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**to download** – to save something from the Internet onto one's computer

\* How often do you download music files from the Internet?

**scare tactic** – a way to make someone afraid of doing something; a way to make other people do (or not do) something by making them scared or frightened

\* Paolo told his daughter that if she ever died her hair pink or blue, he would cut it off, but it was just a scare tactic.

**to mess around** – to spend time doing something that is silly or not productive, especially when one should be doing other things

\* Mike thinks that if he doesn't keep his children busy in classes and camps, they will spend their whole summer messing around, not doing anything useful.

**to dig (one's) own grave** – to do something that will create future problems for oneself

\* If you tell your wife a lie about where you were last night, you'll be digging your own grave.

**questionable** – probably not good, truthful, useful, or helpful; of doubtful quality or truthfulness

\* The medical value of those herbal teas is questionable. Ask your doctor before you start drinking them.

**pop-up** – pop-up window; a small window that opens in one's Internet browser when one opens other pages, usually when one doesn't want them to

\* When she visited the news website, a pop-up appeared, asking her to complete a short customer survey.

**tab** – the area in which one of several websites opens within a single browser window

\* This browser lets users open websites in several tabs, instead of needing to open multiple windows.

**in hot water** – in trouble; in a difficult situation

\* Brianna knew she was in hot water when she lost her aunt's credit card.

**to cover (one's) tracks** – to hide what one has done; to do something so that other people cannot see what one has done

\* The accountant was stealing money from the company and tried to cover her tracks, but eventually the business owner found out what she was doing.



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**COMPREHENSION QUESTIONS**

1. Who is Big Brother?
    - a) The government.
    - b) The employer.
    - c) Nancy's older brother.
  
  2. How can Nancy cover her tracks?
    - a) By clearing the cache.
    - b) By messing around.
    - c) By digging her own grave.
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**WHAT ELSE DOES IT MEAN?**

**forum**

The word “forum,” in this podcast, means a website where many people who are interested in the same topic can exchange ideas, questions, and answers, posting their text on the same site: “Which online forums do you subscribe to?” Or, “This forum needs a better moderator, because too many people are posting irrelevant information on the site.” A “forum” is also a meeting where people can discuss something in public: “The university invited famous scientists to participate in an interesting forum about global warming.” Or, “The mayor’s office is organizing a special forum where local business owners can discuss the city’s business development plans.” Finally, in ancient Rome, a “forum” was an outdoor place that was used for public discussions: “What would it have been like to be in a Roman forum with Julius Caesar?”

**tab**

In this podcast, the word “tab” means the area in which one of several websites opens within a single browser window: “Kiran always has at least three tabs open at once: one for email, one for the news, and one for his favorite sports team.” A “tab” is also the amount of money that one owes, especially at a restaurant or bar: “I don’t have enough cash to pay you today, so can you please put this on my tab?” The phrase “to pick up the tab” means to pay for something, especially something that someone else has used: “Bill picked up the tab for the morning coffee for all of his employees.” Finally, a “tab” can be the small metal ring that has to be lifted up to open a can of soda or another kind of can: “Cheryl broke her nail while lifting the tab on her soda.”



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**CULTURE NOTE**

The “notion” (idea or concept) of “Big Brother” comes from Nineteen Eighty-Four, a novel written by George Orwell in 1948. It is about the future year 1984 and a man who works for the Ministry of Truth in a “totalitarian” (very controlling) government. People are surrounded by posters of Big Brother with “captions” (the words that describe a photograph) saying, “Big Brother is watching you.” The man’s job is to rewrite history so that it “matches” (is the same as, or goes along with) the government’s policies, so that the government always appears to be correct.

The Thought Police monitor what people are thinking, saying, and doing. Any anti-government thoughts must be hidden. If they are “discovered” (found), the people will be “arrested” (put into jail). The man is very good at hiding his “rebellious” (anti-authority) thoughts, but one day he falls in love with a woman, which is not allowed. Their relationship is eventually discovered and they are both “brainwashed” (made to think a certain way) into loving Big Brother.

The book made the idea of Big Brother and constant “surveillance” (being watched) very “commonplace” (well known). In fact, a television show called Big Brother began in 1999. In the show, a group of “strangers” (people who do not know each other) live in a house together and are not allowed to have any contact with the outside world. They are filmed all the time and their actions are shown on TV. In most of the versions, the “housemates” (people who live together in a home) vote each week to decide who should be “evicted” (not allowed to live in a place anymore). The person who is left at the end wins money and other prizes.

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



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**COMPLETE TRANSCRIPT**

Welcome to English as a Second Language Podcast number 358: Surfing the Internet.

This is ESL Podcast episode 358. 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). You can download the Learning Guide for this episode, an 8 to 10 page guide we provide for all of our current episodes that gives you a complete list of the vocabulary words, definitions, new sentences using these words that you will learn on this episode, comprehension questions, cultural notes, and a complete transcript of this episode.

This episode is called "Surfing the Internet." It's a dialogue between Isaiah and Nancy about surfing the web. Let's get started.

[start of dialogue]

Isaiah: Aren't you supposed to be working?

Nancy: I just thought I would take a break and surf the web a little.

Isaiah: You'd better be careful which sites you visit. You know that Big Brother is watching.

Nancy: The boss told us that, but I don't believe it. They're not going to care if I read a blog or check out a forum once in a while.

Isaiah: That may be, but I would suggest clearing your history and your cache after you do that. You never know when someone is going to be checking up on you.

Nancy: Listen, I've installed plug-ins and downloaded programs I'm not supposed to onto this computer, and I've never gotten into trouble. I think the boss is just using scare tactics to keep us from messing around when we're supposed to be working.

Isaiah: Like I said, you can dig your own grave if you want to. Vivian was shopping on the Internet on her work computer a couple of weeks ago, and some questionable pop-ups opened when she moved to a new tab. She didn't notice



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it, and when the boss went onto her computer to get a document while she was at lunch, he saw it. She was in hot water.

Nancy: Don't worry. I know what I'm doing. I know how to cover *my* tracks.

[end of dialogue]

Our conversation between Isaiah and Nancy begins by Isaiah asking, "Aren't you supposed to be working?" Isaiah's saying, "You should be working Nancy, why aren't you?" Nancy says, "I just thought I would take a break and surf the web a little." "To take a break" means to stop working for a short period of time. "To surf the web" means to browse or navigate the Internet, to spend time visiting different websites. Usually we use that expression to describe activity that we're doing for fun.

Isaiah says, "You'd better be careful which sites you visit. You know that Big Brother is watching." "Big Brother" is the idea that the government or large corporations are watching what people do when they think they're alone. The phrase comes from a novel by George Orwell called 1984, a famous novel about a totalitarian society – a dictatorship in the future. Nowadays, we use the expression to mean that someone could be spying on you or someone could be watching you when you don't realize it.

Nancy says, "The boss told us that (told us that we should not be surfing the web), but I don't believe it. They're not going to care," she says, "if I read a blog or check out a forum once in a while." A "blog" is short for "weblog." It's a website that has information usually on a single topic, usually with one person, and each time the person wants to add something new to their web page, they can "post" to their blog about it. A "forum" is a website where many people who are interested in the same topic can exchange ideas. Another word for "forum" is "discussion group," many years ago, we called these "bulletin boards," it was the same idea.

Isaiah says, "That may be (meaning that may be true, you may be correct), but I would suggest clearing your history and your cache after you do that (after you surf the web)." "To clear your history" means to eliminate a record of all the websites that you have visited. Your "cache" is your temporary computer memory, a place where the computer "stores" data, or keeps data temporarily. Isaiah says, "You never know when someone is going to be checking up on you." "To check up on someone" means to watch someone, to monitor their behavior, to look to see what they're doing, usually to find out if they're doing something wrong – if they're doing something they should not be doing. A parent might



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check up on their son or daughter to make sure that they are doing their homework instead of watching music videos or surfing the Internet – like their parents do at work!

Nancy says, “Listen (meaning pay attention – listen to me), I’ve installed plug-ins and downloaded programs I’m not supposed to onto this computer.” “To install” means to put a software program on your computer. A “plug-in” is a part of a software program that makes the program work better or work in a new way. “Download,” you may know, means to save something from the Internet onto your computer.

I should point out that the pronunciation of the word “Internet” depends on how quickly you hear someone saying it. Many people just say “innernet,” as if there were no “t”. If they’re pronouncing it more carefully, they may say “Internet,” but in normal conversation, many people say “the innernet,” without a “t” sound.

Nancy says, “I’ve never gotten into trouble. I think the boss is just using scare tactics to keep us from messing around when we’re supposed to be working.” A “scare tactic” is a way of doing something that makes someone afraid to do a certain thing; it makes them scared or frightened. A “tactic” is a method, a strategy, an approach to something. So, a “scare tactic” is something that someone does so that you, for example, will not drink while you are driving; they’ll tell you that you will go to jail. Actually, that’s not a scare tactic; that will happen in the United States if the police officer sees you. We don’t recommend that!

Nancy says, “the boss is using scare tactics to keep us (to prevent us) from messing around.” “To mess around” means spend time doing something that is not work, not productive, something that is silly, especially when you are supposed to be doing something else. So, “The kids were not doing their homework. They were messing around and playing games.” They were doing something that was not what they were not supposed to do – not productive. Nancy is, of course, correct, probably. She is surfing the Internet when she’s supposed to be working, so the boss, I think, was right.

Isaiah says, “Like I said, you can dig your own grave if you want to.” The expression “to dig your own grave” means to do something that will create future problems for you. The “grave” (grave) is the place where they put a body after a person has died. “To dig” means to remove the dirt from the hole, so that you have a hole for a grave. “To dig your own grave,” then, is to cause something that will make you die or that will cause you problems.



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Isaiah says that Vivian had “some questionable pop-ups open when she moved to a new tab.” “Questionable” means probably not good, something that is not helpful. It’s not true, for example. “He has questionable tactics,” meaning what he does – his strategies are, perhaps, dishonest or not ethical. Vivian had “some questionable pop-ups.” A “pop-up” is short for a “pop-up window.” To “pop-up” means to rise up quickly – to come up quickly. On the Internet, it means having a small window open when you open another page, usually something that you didn’t want. These are often advertisements, as you probably know. Vivian’s pop-up opened “when she moved to a new tab” (tab). A “tab” is when you have more than one web page open on your web browser. You can switch between pages by creating these tabs. “Tab” has a couple of different meanings in English, as does the word “forum.” Take a look at our Learning Guide for some additional explanations.

Isaiah says that the boss went to her computer – to Vivian’s computer, and he saw these questionable pop-ups. Later, Vivian “was in hot water.” “To be in hot water” means to be in trouble, to be in a difficult situation, usually because you did something wrong. If you came home late last night after staying with your friends until 1:00 in the morning, you would be in hot water with your wife, meaning your wife would not be very happy.

Nancy says, “Don’t worry. I know what I’m doing. I know how to cover my tracks.” “To cover your tracks” means to hide what you have done, to make it so that no one can see what you did. Usually, it’s something that you did wrong; something that you were not supposed to do, like surfing the Internet on your computer at work instead of working. You wouldn’t do that, I know!

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

[start of dialogue]

Isaiah: Aren’t you supposed to be working?

Nancy: I just thought I would take a break and surf the web a little.

Isaiah: You’d better be careful which sites you visit. You know that Big Brother is watching.

Nancy: The boss told us that, but I don’t believe it. They’re not going to care if I read a blog or check out a forum once in a while.





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Isaiah: That may be, but I would suggest clearing your history and your cache after you do that. You never know when someone is going to be checking up on you.

Nancy: Listen, I've installed plug-ins and downloaded programs I'm not supposed to onto this computer, and I've never gotten into trouble. I think the boss is just using scare tactics to keep us from messing around when we're supposed to be working.

Isaiah: Like I said, you can dig your own grave if you want to. Vivian was shopping on the Internet on her work computer a couple of weeks ago, and some questionable pop-ups opened when she moved to a new tab. She didn't notice it, and when the boss went onto her computer to get a document while she was at lunch, he saw it. She was in hot water.

Nancy: Don't worry. I know what I'm doing. I know how to cover *my* tracks.

[end of dialogue]

The script for this episode was written by the never questionable Dr. Lucy Tse.

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

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