



ESL Podcast 384 – Accepting Credit Cards

GLOSSARY

cash-only business – a company that lets its customers pay only with cash, not with credit cards or checks

* The store decided to become a cash-only business, because too many customers were writing checks without having enough money in the bank.

nuisance – annoyance; frustration; something that is unpleasant, annoying, and/or frustrating

* It's such a nuisance to have to go to the power company to pay my bill! I wish I could pay by mail instead, even when I'm late with my payment.

cash register – a small machine in a business that calculates the total amount of a sale and stores the money that is received from the customer

* We should never have more than \$400 in the cash register, so that if the store is robbed, the thief won't get away with very much money.

merchant – seller; a company that sells something, especially when the customer uses a credit card

* Merchants have to pay a percentage of the sale amount every time a customer uses a credit card.

cardholder – the person who owns a credit card; the person whose name is printed on a credit card

* When you buy something online, you have to enter the cardholder's name exactly as it appears on the card.

point of sale – the place within a store, restaurant, or other business where a sales transaction takes place; the place where a customer gives money and receives his or her purchase

* Many grocery stores display candies and magazines at their point of sale, hoping to get customers to buy more things while they are waiting in line.

magnetic strip – the long, rectangular, dark-colored stripe on the back of one's credit card that contains information about the credit card and can be read by machines

* The magnetic strip on my debit card isn't working anymore, so I need to ask the bank to send me a new card.

to face – to be turned in a specific direction; to be turned toward something or someone

* The photographer told the students to face the camera and smile.



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expiration date – the date after which something is no longer valid or no longer can or should be used

* This milk tastes horrible! I didn't realize that it is already one week after its expiration date when I tried it.

security code – the three numbers that are printed on the back of one's credit card to make it more difficult for people to use one's credit card dishonestly

* Every credit card has a 16-digit account number on the front and a three-digit security code on the back.

credit limit – the maximum amount of money that a person is allowed to borrow on his or her credit card; the maximum amount of money that a credit card company will lend to someone

* When Jake got a better-paying job, he asked his credit card company to increase his credit limit.

to decline – to refuse; to deny; to reject; to say that something cannot happen or cannot be used

* Kelly wrote a very nice letter, politely declining the invitation to Clay's party.

issuing bank – the bank that gives a customer a credit card

* We need to call the issuing bank to request a duplicate credit card.

to dispute – to argue; to not agree; to say that something is incorrect

* The employee is filing an official dispute against her employer, saying that the company treated her unfairly.

to double-charge – to collect money for something twice; to collect twice as much money as one was supposed to

* When I opened my credit card bill, I saw that I was double-charged for the sweater I had bought. Now I need to call the store to get my money back.

chargeback – refund; money that is sent back to a customer by a company, usually because there was a mistake in the original sale or because the customer has returned the thing that was purchased

* If you return your purchase within 30 days, the store will give you a 100% chargeback.

to break down – to stop working correctly; to break; to become inoperable

* Giovanni came to work late because his car broke down on Main Street.



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timesaver – something that lets one do something faster, so that one has more time for other activities

* Washing machines are great timesavers because you can wash clothes much more quickly in the machine than by hand.

We'll see about that – a phrase used to show that one does not believe what another person has said, and believes that the truth will be seen in the future

* When Jeb said that he wants to become the President of the United States, his friend laughed and said, "We'll see about that!"

COMPREHENSION QUESTIONS

1. What must be done when swiping a credit card?
 - a) The magnetic stripe must be put on the cashier's face.
 - b) The magnetic stripe must be turned toward the cashier.
 - c) The magnetic strip must be turned away from the cashier.
2. Why might a customer dispute a charge?
 - a) Because it is over his or her credit limit.
 - b) Because he or she was double-charged.
 - c) Because he or she received a chargeback.

WHAT ELSE DOES IT MEAN?

to face

The verb "to face," in this podcast, means to be turned in a specific direction, toward something or someone: "Please face the front of the classroom and pay attention to what the teacher is saying." The verb "to face" also means to confront or to deal with something, especially a difficult situation: "The criminal is facing 20 years in prison." The phrase "to face the facts" means to accept the truth, especially when it is unpleasant and one would rather ignore it: "Lloyd, it's time for you to face the facts: if you don't find a new job soon, you'll have to sell your home." Finally, the phrase "can't face (something)" means that one doesn't want to do something, or cannot do something, because it is very difficult, painful, or unpleasant: "He can't face the thought of working in that boring job for another 10 years."

decline

In this podcast, the verb "to decline" means to refuse, deny, or reject, or to say that something cannot happen or cannot be used: "We offered him a glass of



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wine, but he declined, saying that he doesn't drink alcohol." The verb "to decline" also means to decrease, or to become less or fewer: "The company president is worried that sales will continue to decline." Another meaning of the verb "to decline" is to become worse: "This neighborhood is declining rapidly because most of the families are out of work." Finally, "declining years" are the last years of one's life, when one's health is not very good and rapidly worsens: "They want to spend their declining years near their children and grandchildren."

CULTURE NOTE

In the United States, most companies accept many different "payment methods" (ways of paying for something), such as cash, checks, and credit cards. But some businesses, especially small businesses, accept only cash. They do this "primarily" (mainly, most importantly) for two reasons. First, they do not want to accept the "risk" (the possibility that something bad will happen) of having customers write "bad checks" (a check written for more money than one has in the bank). Second, these small businesses do not want to pay a percentage of the sale amount each time their customers pay with a credit card.

"Street vendors" are people who sell things, usually food, out of "carts" (small tables or rooms that can be pushed on wheels) in the street. Street vendors are usually cash-only businesses. For example, if you want to eat a hot dog on the street in New York City, you will have to pay for it with cash. The hot dog "vendor" (seller) probably will not accept any other type of payment. Other cash-only businesses include very "casual" (informal and relaxed) restaurants. Likewise, "newspaper stands" (small areas, usually on the open street, where newspapers, magazines, cigarettes, and candies are sold) are another type of cash-only business.

Most customers today like the "convenience" (easiness and comfort) of using credit cards and many of them will shop only at businesses that accept that payment method. Many people do not carry very much cash in their "wallets" (folded pieces of leather or cloth used to carry cash, credit cards, and identification), so they do not consider buying anything from a cash-only business. "Consequently" (as a result), many cash-only businesses are changing their "policies" (an official way of doing something) and beginning to accept credit cards so that they can have more customers.

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



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COMPLETE TRANSCRIPT

Welcome to English as a Second Language Podcast number 384: Accepting Credit Cards.

This is English as a Second Language Podcast episode 384. I'm your host, Dr. Jeff McQuillan, coming to you from the Center for Educational Development in beautiful Los Angeles, California.

Our website is eslpod.com – that's www.eslpod.com. You can download a Learning Guide for this episode on our website that will give you all of the vocabulary, definitions, sample sentences, additional definitions, comprehension checks, cultural notes, and a complete transcript of everything we say on this episode.

Our episode today is called "Accepting Credit Cards." It's a dialogue between Danny and Katy using a lot of vocabulary that we use in business to talk about credit cards and accepting them in a store. Let's get started.

[start of dialogue]

Danny: Are you sure we should start accepting credit cards from our customers? We've always been a cash-only business.

Katy: I think we need to for the convenience of our customers. It won't be as big a nuisance as you think, with this new cash register.

Danny: The instructions say the merchant has to swipe the cardholder's card at the POS. What's that?

Katy: That stands for point of sale. For us, that's the cash register. All you have to do is take the credit card and swipe it through here, making sure that the magnetic strip is facing you. It's simple.

Danny: Do I have to write down the credit card number, the expiration date, and the security code on the back?

Katy: No, the cash register does that for you automatically. It will save you a lot of time.

Danny: What if the customer goes over his or her credit limit?



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Katy: In that case, their card is declined and we tell the customer to call the issuing bank.

Danny: What if a customer disputes the charges?

Katy: The credit card company will investigate, and if we have double-charged a customer or made a mistake, we'll have to do a chargeback. We can do it easily with the cash register. Everything can be done with this machine. It's great.

Danny: What if it doesn't work?

Katy: What if what doesn't work?

Danny: What if the cash register breaks down?

Katy: Um...I guess you'll have to write down all of the information and process it when the machine is working again.

Danny: Not such a timesaver, huh?

Katy: But you only have to do that if it breaks down, and it won't break down...very often.

Danny: We'll see about that!

[end of dialogue]

Danny and Katy, in our dialogue, are business owners. Danny begins by saying, "Are you sure we should start accepting credit cards from our customers? We've always been a cash-only business." A "cash-only business" is a business that lets its customers pay only with cash; they don't take checks from a bank or they don't take credit cards. There are still many businesses that are cash-only; there are a lot of small restaurants in Los Angeles, for example, where you can only pay cash.

Katy says, "I think we need to (we need to accept these cards) for the convenience of our customers. It won't be as big a nuisance as you think, with this new cash register." A "nuisance" (nuisance) is something that is annoying or frustrating; something that is unpleasant would be a nuisance. You might say that to a child who is making too much noise, for example – I don't know – your neighbor's child. You may say, "She's a nuisance. She screams every day." Katy says, "It will be as big a nuisance as you think, with this new cash register."



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A “cash register” is a small machine that you see in stores that calculates (or gives you) the total amount that you are buying, and is used to receive the money. Cash registers usually have what’s called a “cash drawer,” where you can put the dollar bills and five-dollar bills and 10-dollar bills and 20-dollar bills, along with coins.

Danny says, “The instructions say that the merchant has to swipe the cardholder’s card at the POS. What’s that?” Danny is looking at the instructions that say that the “merchant” (or the person who is selling something – the company that is selling something) has to swipe the cardholder’s card. The “cardholder” (one word) is the person who owns the credit card (the person whose name is on the credit card). To “swipe” means to take the card and move it through a special machine very quickly.

So the instructions say that the merchant (the seller) has to swipe the cardholder’s credit card at the POS. Katy says POS “stands for” (or means) point of sale. “POS” is an abbreviation that businesses use to talk about the place where you are actually selling something. It could be a store, it could be a restaurant; any place where you are selling something, that is the “point of sale,” the place where you are selling.

Katy says, “For us, that’s the cash register. All you have to do is take the credit card,” she says, “and swipe it through here, making sure that the magnetic strip is facing you.” The “magnetic strip” is a long, usually black, rectangular space on the back of the credit card that contains all the electronic information: your name, the credit card number, and so forth. To say something is “facing you” means it is in your direction; it is something that is placed so that it is directly in front of you or in your direction. “Face” has several different meanings in English; take a look at our Learning Guide for some additional explanations

Danny then asks Katy, “Do I have to write down the credit card number, the expiration date, and the security code on the back?” The “credit card number” is the 16, usually, numbers for a Visa or a MasterCard that go with that credit card. Visa numbers always start with four; MasterCard numbers always start with five. The “expiration date” is the date that something is no longer valid, or you can no longer use it. All credit cards have expiration dates, so that after that date you have to get a new card to continue using your account. The “security code” is something a little new; it’s something that is on the back of your credit card. It’s usually three numbers that many merchants, especially online businesses, ask for. It is an additional way of making sure that you didn’t steal the credit card number, because the security code is only on the back of the physical card.



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Katy says, “No, the cash register does that for you automatically (you don’t have to write that information down). It will save you a lot of time.” Danny says, “What if the customer goes over his or her credit limit?” Your “credit limit” is the maximum amount money that you are allowed to borrow on your credit card, the maximum amount of money that the credit card company will give you to spend each month.

Danny is asking what will happen if the customer tries to use a credit card but she is, or he is, over his or her credit limit. Katy says, “In that case (in that situation), their card is declined,” meaning the company says no, you can’t use it – they reject it. Then “we tell the customer to call the issuing bank.” The “issuing bank” is the bank that issues (or gives) the customer the credit card. To “issue,” in this case, means to give formally or officially to someone.

Danny says, “What if the customer disputes the charges?” To “dispute,” in general, means to argue, not to agree, to say that someone else is wrong. In this case, the customer can “dispute the charges,” meaning that if you see something on your credit card bill and you don’t think that it’s right – you don’t think that you actually bought that – you can call the credit card company and say, “That’s not something I bought. I want to dispute the charge (the amount).”

Katy says, “The credit card company will investigate, and if we have double-charged a customer or made a mistake, we’ll have to do a chargeback.” To “double” anything means to do it twice, so to “double-charge” means that you have charged the credit card twice by mistake – we hope! If you do that, or if there is some other mistake, you will often get what is called in the business world a “chargeback.” A “chargeback” is a refund that you have to give the customer. Usually credit card companies will also charge the business (the store) money. For example, if someone steals your credit card and goes and buys something, you can dispute the charge and the business who sold the merchandise (the items) will have to give you a refund, plus they usually have to pay some additional money to the credit card company. Credit card companies and banks do not really pay for the fraud (the misuse of credit cards, for example on the Internet), it’s the businesses that pay for it when someone uses a credit card and is not the person who owns that number.

Danny asks, “What if it doesn’t work?” Katy says, “What if what doesn’t work?” She’s asking what Danny is talking about. Danny says, “What if the cash register breaks down?” To “break down” means to stop working correctly. Usually we use that phrasal verb when we are talking about a machine of some sort.



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Katy says, “Um...I guess you’ll have to write down all of the information and process it when the machine is working again.” Danny says, “Not such a timesaver, huh?” A “timesaver” is something that lets you do something faster. It saves you time; it limits the amount of time you have to spend on something. Danny is saying that the cash register will not be such a (or a very good) timesaver.

Katy says, “But you only have to do that if it breaks down, and it won’t break down...very often.” Danny has some doubt about that; he says, “We’ll see about that!” We use that phrase, “we’ll see about that,” to show someone (to indicate to someone) that you don’t believe what the other person has said. You think that the truth will be found out in the future, and it will be different from what that person says.

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

[start of dialogue]

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Katy: But you only have to do that if it breaks down, and it won't break down...very often.

Danny: We'll see about that!

[end of dialogue]

The script for this episode was written by someone who is never a nuisance, Dr. Lucy Tse.

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

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