



ESL Podcast 393 – Trash and Recycling

GLOSSARY

garbage can – a large container used to collect and store one’s garbage (trash), or the things that one wants to throw away

* Please put the dirty paper napkins into the garbage can and then wash the dishes.

to recycle – to save one’s used plastic, glass, paper, metal, and other items so that they can be given to a company that will use them to make new items, instead of throwing them away

* We can recycle plastic containers, but not the lids.

recyclables – things that can no longer be used, but can be destroyed and made into new things, such as plastic, glass, paper, and metal

* What percentage of your garbage is actually recyclables?

bin – a large plastic container used to collect and store things, especially recyclables

* Please put glass into the green bin and plastic into the blue bin.

trash – garbage; waste; things that can no longer be used and need to be thrown away

* After the party, they collected four large bags of trash.

dump – a large outdoor area that is used to store all the garbage made by people in a certain area

* Very poor people often go to the dump to look for things that other people have thrown away, but that they might want to use.

container – an object used to hold and/or store smaller things, especially food and drinks

* Bercal has a rectangular, plastic container that he uses to bring sandwiches to work for his lunch.

biodegradable – able to be changed into smaller pieces that do not hurt the natural environment through a combination of sunlight, air, and bacteria

* Things like apple skin and eggshells are biodegradable, but plastic bags are not.



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to blow (something) out of proportion – to make a problem seem bigger than it really is

* When Gerald lost his keys, he blew it out of proportion, acting as if he would never be able to get into his house again, when all he really needed to do was call his wife and ask to use her keys.

environment – the natural world; the part of the world that is not made by people

* What do you think is a bigger problem for the environment: air pollution or water pollution?

to use up – to use all of something; to use so much of something that there is nothing left

* They used up all their money buying the new house, and now they barely have enough money for food!

natural resources – things that people use from the natural world, like oil, gas, minerals, and trees

* Russia has many natural resources, especially trees and oil.

ecologist – environmentalist; a person who cares about the natural world and does things to protect it; a scientist who does research about the natural world

* He is a leading ecologist who studies gorillas in Africa.

to conserve – to use as little of something as possible; to use very little of something so that it can be saved for the future or for other people

* We can conserve gas by driving more slowly.

energy-efficient – using little energy; using less energy than normal

* An energy-efficient refrigerator costs more than a regular refrigerator, but it also means having lower electricity bills while you use it.

recycling center – a place where one can take one's recyclables so that they are later picked up by a recycling company and made into new things

* They go to the recycling center every two weeks to get rid of their used glass, plastic, and paper.

thermostat – a tool used to control the temperature in a building or home

* Do you set your thermostat at 68° or 70°?

to put (one's) money where (one's) mouth is – to do what one is saying that other people should do; to make one's actions consistent with one's words



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* Our doctor is always telling us to exercise more, but now she's putting her money where her mouth is, running five days each week.

COMPREHENSION QUESTIONS

1. Which of these might be recyclable?
 - a) Food containers.
 - b) Energy-efficient bulbs.
 - c) Thermostat.
 2. Which of these is an example of conserving energy?
 - a) Separating out your recyclables.
 - b) Turning down your thermostat.
 - c) Putting your money where your mouth is.
-

WHAT ELSE DOES IT MEAN?

dump

The word “dump,” in this podcast, means a large outdoor area that is used to store all the garbage made by people in a certain area: “If a dump is too close to a lake or river, it makes the water very dirty.” A “dump” is also an apartment or home that is old and in very poor condition: “What a dump! I can't believe you live here. Why don't you get a nicer apartment?” The phrase “to feel down in the dumps” means to be depressed, or to feel sad or disappointed: “He was down in the dumps for weeks after his dog died.” As a verb, “to dump (someone)” can mean to end a romantic relationship: “Why did you decide to dump your girlfriend?”

to use up

In this podcast, the phrase “to use up” means to use all of something so that nothing is left: “If you use up all the milk, please tell me so that I'll know I need to buy more at the grocery store.” The verb “to use” means to do something with something, especially a tool: “Do you know how to use this software program?” Or, “Use a can opener instead of a knife the next time you want to open a can of soup.” Finally, the phrase “to use (someone)” means to treat someone unfairly to get what one wants: “Shelly was using a man who was 20 years older than she was, dating him to get his money, but telling him that she loved him.”



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CULTURE NOTE

Most Americans who live in “urban areas” (areas in or near a city) participate in “curbside recycling programs,” where they put their recyclables in containers in front of their house once or twice a week and special trucks come to pick them up and take them to recycling centers. Americans who live in areas that do not have curbside recycling programs need to take their recyclables to recycling centers. There are also many other ways to recycle in the United States.

For example, when Americans have the oil changed in their cars, there are usually programs to recycle the used oil. Similarly, when Americans buy a new computer, they often take the old one to a recycling center that recycles some of the computer parts. Americans can also recycle old cell phones and other types of technology.

Of course, it is better to “reuse” (use again) things as many times as possible before they are recycled or thrown away. Websites like www.freecycle.org help people get rid of their old things by finding people who want them and can use them, instead of having them be sent to “landfills” (dumps).

As recycling has become more popular, many artists have started using trash in their artwork. For example, famous shoe designers have put old “ticket stubs” (the part of a ticket that a person is allowed to keep) and “receipts” (small pieces of paper showing that one has paid for something) inside their shoes. Some “sculptors” (people who design three-dimensional objects for art) use garbage instead of new “materials” (things used to make something). And many children are encouraged to make art projects out of things that would otherwise be thrown away.

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



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COMPLETE TRANSCRIPT

Welcome to English as a Second Language Podcast number 393: Trash and Recycling.

This is English as a Second Language Podcast episode 393. 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. You can download a Learning Guide for this episode that contains all of the vocabulary, definitions, sample sentences, additional explanations, cultural notes, comprehension questions, and a complete transcript of everything we say on this episode.

This episode is called "Trash and Recycling." It has become popular in many countries, including the United States, to try to reuse certain things – to recycle certain things – to help protect the environment. We'll listen to a dialogue between Rajid and Nicole talking about recycling. Let's get started.

[start of dialogue]

Rajid: What are you doing?

Nicole: I'm putting my garbage into the garbage can. Why?

Rajid: Don't you recycle? You're supposed to separate out your recyclables and put them in a separate bin.

Nicole: I know, I know, but who has the time? I don't have that much trash anyway.

Rajid: Oh, yeah? The dump is full of food containers that aren't biodegradable from people who didn't have the time.

Nicole: Come on. Don't blow things out of proportion. It's not like I'm going to save the environment all by myself.

Rajid: No, you're not, but if everybody thinks the same way you do, we're going to use up all of our natural resources.

Nicole: When did you turn into an ecologist? I don't see you conserving energy. You have your lights on all night. I can see them through your window.



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Rajid: I use energy-efficient bulbs. Besides, I take my recyclables to the recycling center, I have energy-efficient appliances, and I turn down my thermostat.

Nicole: I'm just saying that you're not doing everything you can to save the environment. Okay, okay. Put your money where your mouth is and help me separate out my recyclables.

Rajid: Me? You want me to help you sort through your garbage?

Nicole: Since you're the expert, I need you to show me how.

[end of dialogue]

Rajid asks Nicole, "What are you doing?" Nicole says, "I'm putting my garbage into the garbage can. Why?" The "garbage can" is that thing that we use to hold waste, to keep things that we don't want that we want to throw out. But, we have a garbage can usually inside of the house; you put things inside a bag, then you take the bag and you put it outside to get rid of it.

Nicole says, "Why?" Rajid says, "Don't you recycle?" meaning don't you take your used plastic, glass, paper, and other things that can be used again. Recycling is something that is popular in most Americans cities. Here in Los Angeles, for example, we have different containers for newspapers, plastic, and glass; we have a separate container for trash that is not recyclable – that you can't use again, like you can paper. Then we have a third container for leaves and grass. The city then comes by once a week and it picks up the trash, and it picks up the recycling material. It then brings it to someone who then takes that and "recycles" it – who tries to reuse it.

Rajid says, "You're supposed to separate out your recyclables and put them in a separate bin." "Recyclables" are, of course, things that you can recycle, things that can be made into new things. A "bin" (bin) is a large plastic container used to store things in. We often use this word in talking about the container you use for recycling.

Nicole says, "I know, I know, but who has the time?" She's saying she doesn't have time to separate her trash into recyclables and non-recyclables. She says, "I don't have that much trash (that much garbage) anyway." Rajid says, "Oh, yeah?" We use this expression "Oh yeah?" meaning I think you're wrong. It's a way of disagreeing with someone. Rajid says, "The dump is full of food



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containers that aren't biodegradable from people who didn't have the time." The "dump" (dump) is a large usually outdoor area that the city or companies use to put the garbage in to get rid of the trash and the garbage. Sometimes it's called the "garbage dump." "Dump" has a couple of different meanings; take a look at the Learning Guide for some additional meanings of that word.

Rajid is saying that the garbage dump is full of "food containers," which are things that you use to store or put other things, in this case, food. "Food containers that aren't biodegradable from people who didn't have the time," he says. "Biodegradable" means that it is able to change into smaller pieces that will not damage, or hurt, the natural environment. Something that is biodegradable will eventually to be part of the environment again. Something that is not biodegradable will be there 100 or 1,000 or 2,000 years. So Rajid, here, is clearly complaining to Nicole that she is not doing what she should be doing.

Nicole says, "Come on," which could mean a couple of things. "Come on" is something you may say to someone who you are trying to get to move or to leave in a hurry. A mother might say to her son, "Come on, we're late for school. You have to run to get into the car." But here, Nicole is saying "come on" to mean that she doesn't believe what Rajid is saying, or she disagrees with what he's saying.

Nicole says, "Don't blow things out of proportion." To "blow something out of proportion" means to make a problem seem bigger than it really is. Nicole says, "It's not like I'm going to save the environment all by myself." The "environment" is a general term for the natural world, everything that is not made by humans. That's the general use of that term. She's saying, "It's not like I'm going to save the environment," meaning I'm not going to save the environment all by myself.

Rajid says, "No, you're not, but if everybody thinks the same way you do, we're going to use up all of our natural resources." To "use up" is a two-word phrasal verb meaning to use all of something – to use everything of something. There are couple of different meanings of this verb; take a look at our Learning Guide for some additional explanations. Rajid is afraid that we are going to use up our "natural resources." These are things that people use from the environment, such as oil, gas, the wood from trees, minerals – all of these are natural resources. Usually we describe the things that we need for energy or things that we use in our society as natural resources.

Nicole says, "When did you turn into an ecologist?" An "ecologist" (ecologist) is a person who cares about, and perhaps studies, the natural world – the



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environment. It could be a scientist or it could just be someone who is concerned about the environment. Another word we might use for that sort of person is an “environmentalist.” So, an ecologist could be a scientist or, more generally, someone who cares about the environment and protecting the environment.

Nicole says to Rajid, “I don’t see you conserving energy.” To “conserve” means to use as little of something as possible, to use very little so that you will have more in the future. You can conserve energy by not using a lot of electricity by turning your lights off, by not driving as much, and so forth. Nicole says to Rajid, “You have your lights on all night. I can see them through your window.” Obviously, Nicole and Rajid live close to each other.

Rajid says, however, “I use energy-efficient bulbs,” or light bulbs. “Energy-efficient” means the light bulbs don’t use very much energy. A “light bulb” is the thing you put in a lamp so that it gives off light when you plug it in – when you connect it to electricity. Rajid says, “Besides, I take my recyclables to the recycling center, I have energy-efficient appliances, and I turn down my thermostat.” A “recycling center” is a place where you can take things, usually larger things or things that the city doesn’t pick up, to have them recycled. Sometimes recycling centers will give you money if, for example, you bring in a lot of bottles or plastic bottles that can be recycled. Here in Los Angeles, it’s very common in almost every part of the city to see people, often people who don’t have a lot of money – people who are poor, go around and try to find recyclables. They’ll even look in the recycling bins of other people to try to take out the plastic, or the recycling material – the bottles – in order to bring them to a recycling center and get a little money for them. Rajid also says he turns down his thermostat. Your “thermostat” is a tool that’s used to control the temperature in a building – how hot or how warm it is in your home or in your office. To “turn down” the thermostat means to lower the temperature of the thermostat so that you don’t use as much energy.

Nicole says, “I’m just saying that you’re not doing everything you can to save the environment.” Then she says, “Okay, okay. Put your money where your mouth is and help me separate out my recyclables.” The expression “to put your money where your mouth is” means to do what you are telling other people to do; to make your own actions consistent with, or agreeing with, your words – to do what you are telling others to do. Nicole is saying, well, help me now; separate my recyclables.

Rajid says, “Me? You want me to help you sort through your garbage?” Nicole then says jokingly, “Since you’re the expert, I need you to show me how.”



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

[start of dialogue]

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[end of dialogue]

The script for this episode was written by Dr. Lucy Tse, who never recycles her scripts!



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From Los Angeles, California, I'm Jeff McQuillan. Thanks for listening. Come back and listen to us next time on ESL Podcast.

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