



ESL Podcast 456 – Sending Business Packages

GLOSSARY

package – a small box or large envelope that is filled with papers or other things and sent to a person in another location

* Each year, Shawna sends a birthday package filled with home-baked cookies to her grandson.

ground service – a category of mail that is sent by using truck or trains, not planes or boats, and is usually slower than other services

* If you want to save money, ask the company to use ground service to send your order.

overnight service – a category of mail that delivers packages very quickly, making sure that they arrive the day after they are sent

* The job opening closes tomorrow, so he'll have to use overnight service to send in his application.

to track – to follow; to know where something is and where it is going

* The company has a computer program that tracks sales for each associate and for each city and state.

to mark – to write, stamp, or otherwise make a small change to something so that it looks physically different and can be identified

* They marked their house with orange balloons so that people coming to their Halloween party could find it more easily.

commercial – related to a business, not a home; not residential

* The city's commercial district is very busy during the day, but no one is there at night.

contract – a legal agreement between two or more companies or people

* We had to sign a two-year contract when we got new cell phones.

residential – related to a home, not a business; not commercial

* We want to live on a quiet, residential street, not downtown where there are lots of small businesses and is very noisy.

breakable – fragile; something that can break easily

* Please be careful moving those boxes! They're filled with breakable glass vases.



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to pack – to put something into a large container, suitcase, box, or envelope and then close it, usually to send it somewhere

* How were you able to pack enough clothes for the whole week in such a small suitcase?

insured – having financial protection from an insurance company, so that if something bad happens, the company will give one enough money to fix it or to pay for a replacement

* Is your home insured against flooding?

declared value – the amount of money that someone says something is worth, especially when sending it through the mail

* The post office lost a package with a declared value of \$2,300, so it had to pay that much money to the sender.

delivery confirmation – a service where the sender can use the phone or Internet to find out exactly when and where a package was delivered

* When she sold some used books online, she used delivery confirmation so that the buyer couldn't lie and say that she hadn't sent them.

customs declaration form – a small piece of paper that one writes on to describe what is in a package that is being sent to another country

* We have to write down exactly what we're sending and how much it is worth on the customs declaration form.

contents – the things that are inside a box, envelope, or another package

* The security guard searched the contents of our bags before he let us enter the embassy.



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COMPREHENSION QUESTIONS

1. Which of these could be breakable?
 - a) Ground service.
 - b) Contracts.
 - c) The contents of a package.

 2. Which of these people would need to fill out a customs declaration form?
 - a) Someone who is receiving a package.
 - b) Someone who is sending a package to another country.
 - c) Someone who is packing the contents of a package.
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WHAT ELSE DOES IT MEAN?

pack

The verb “to pack,” in this podcast, means to put something into a large container, suitcase, box, or envelope and then close it, usually to send it somewhere: “When moving, it’s a good idea to wrap glasses in newspaper before packing them into a box.” If something is “jam-packed,” it is as full as it can be, or it has as many things or people as possible: “The stadium was jam-packed for the concert.” A “packrat” is a person who has a lot of unnecessary things and cannot or does not want to throw them away: “You’re such a packrat! I can’t believe you have clothes that you haven’t worn in more than 20 years.” Finally, a “pack animal” is a large animal like a horse or a donkey that is used to carry heavy things: “Two pack animals carried our things when we walked into the Grand Canyon.”

content

In this podcast, the word “contents” means the things that are inside a box, envelope, or another package: “Her father always tries to guess the contents of the package before opening a present.” When talking about food, the word “content” means the percentage of an ingredient: “What is the alcohol content of this beer?” In a book or report, a “table of contents” is a list of all the different sections in a document and the page numbers where each one begins: “Why don’t you use the table of contents to find what you’re looking for?” Finally, the word “content,” when used to describe a person, means happy, satisfied, and calm: “Salam never feels content unless his house is clean and well organized.”



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CULTURE NOTE

The United States Postal Service has a long list of “hazardous” (dangerous) items that cannot be sent through the mail. Many of the items are not hazardous in daily life, but they become hazardous if they are sent through the mail, especially since much mail is sent by plane, where there are different temperatures, air pressure, and “vibrations” (small, repetitive movements).

“Prohibited” (not allowed) items include “perfumes” (nice-smelling liquids sprayed onto one’s body) and “nail polish” (colored liquid painted onto one’s fingernails). Anything in an “aerosol can” (a container where one pushes a button on top and liquid sprays out in very small drops) is also “forbidden” (not allowed) in the mail. “Bleach” (a liquid used to clean and to make fabric white), cleaning chemicals, paints, and gasoline cannot be mailed either.

Matches, “fireworks” (things used in celebrations that explode in the sky and create many colors), and other things that might catch on fire or explode are prohibited, as are batteries. “Firearms” (guns) can’t be sent through the mail either, for “obvious” (easy to understand) reasons.

Live animals cannot be sent through the mail, because they need special care and attention. Finally, most “alcoholic beverages” cannot be sent through the mail.

Most post offices in the United States have one or more “posters” (pieces of paper with text and/or pictures hung on a wall and used to share information) with lists and pictures of prohibited items. Sometimes the “postal worker” (a person who works for the United States Postal Service) will ask the sender whether his or her package contains any of those hazardous items.

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



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COMPLETE TRANSCRIPT

Welcome to English as a Second Language Podcast number 456: Sending Business Packages.

This is English as a Second Language Podcast number 456. I am your host, Dr. Jeff McQuillan, and I am coming to you from beautiful Los Angeles, California, at the Center for Educational Development.

Go to our website at eslpod.com to download a Learning Guide for this episode. The Learning Guides contain all of the vocabulary, definitions, sample sentences, additional definitions, cultural notes, comprehension questions, and a complete transcript of everything I say on this episode so you can follow along as you listen.

This episode is called “Sending Business Packages.” It’s a dialogue between Sam and Maria using some common vocabulary you would hear if you were going to send a package, a large box for example, for your business. Let’s get started.

[start of dialogue]

Maria: I need this package to arrive in Tulsa by next Wednesday.

Sam: Sure, I’ll send it UPS or FedEx using their ground service. It’ll be cheaper than sending it using their overnight service and we can still track it. Is it going to a business?

Maria: Yes, it is.

Sam: Okay, I’ll mark that it’s going to a commercial address.

Maria: That’s fine. I’ll also need these contracts to get to Tokyo by Friday. Send it to the home of the president of the company.

Sam: I’ll send it DHL and use the residential delivery service. This seems like a large package for just contracts.

Maria: I’m also including a gift for the president’s wife.

Sam: If it’s breakable, I’ll pack it really well and then get it insured. What’s the declared value?



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Maria: It's about \$700. Oh, and I want this box to go to Olten, Switzerland, but just send it regular mail through the post office. Make sure I get delivery confirmation, though.

Sam: No problem. I'll just need to fill out a customs declaration form. What are the contents?

Maria: They're books.

Sam: Okay, I'll take care of it.

Maria: Thanks. What would I do without you?

Sam: The real question is, what would the mail services do without you?

[end of dialogue]

Our dialogue begins with Maria saying to Sam, "I need this package to arrive in Tulsa by next Wednesday." Tulsa is a city in the state of Oklahoma, which is right in the middle (central) part of the United States. A "package" describes any sort of box or perhaps a large envelope that you are sending to someone. Sam says, "Sure, I'll send it UPS or FedEx using their ground service." UPS stands for United Parcel Service, FedEx stands for Federal Express; those are two private mail companies in the United States that you can use to send packages if you need them to get there quickly. "Ground service," or simply we often just say sending it "ground," means that it is going to go into a truck or a train in order to be delivered; it is not going on a boat or on a plane. Ground service is the slowest service, usually. If you send a package from Los Angeles ground, or UPS ground, to New York it'll probably take four days to get there, maybe five. Sam says, "It'll be cheaper than sending it using their overnight service and we can still track it." "Overnight service" means that the package will arrive the next morning or the next afternoon, taking 24 hours or so to get to where you are sending it. If you have a very important letter or document that someone needs by tomorrow, you would have to send it overnight. Sometimes that's called "express service." Both private companies such as UPS and FedEx, as well as the public mail service in the United States, the U.S. Postal Service, all of them offer overnight service.

Sam says that they will be able to track the package, that can be done when you send something overnight or if you send it ground. To "track" means to know where something is, to follow something. Nowadays, you can go online and you



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can put the number of the package in there and it will tell you where that package is as it travels from your city to the place where you are sending it. Sam asks, “Is it going to a business?” You could send a package to a business or a house. Maria says, “Yes, it is.” Sam says, “Okay, I’ll mark that it’s going to a commercial address.” To “mark” something means to write or indicate on a form some piece of information, something that is different about that particular thing. For example, you could mark your house with orange balloons; you would put orange balloons to indicate – to show that it is a particular place where people would want to come for a party, for example. I don’t know why you would put orange balloons on your house – maybe you’re crazy!

In any case, Sam is going to mark or indicate on the form that it is going to a commercial address. “Commercial” is just another word for a business address. Maria says, “That’s fine. I’ll also need these contracts to get to Tokyo by Friday.” “Contracts” are legal agreements between two people. Maria wants to send these contracts to Tokyo, Japan by Friday. Maria says, “Send it to the home of the president of the company.” Sam says, “I’ll send it DHL and use the residential delivery service.” DHL is another international mail company that delivers packages. “Residential” is just another word for home, so sending something to a residential address means you are sending it to a home address.

Maria says, “I’m also including a gift for the president’s wife.” Sam says, “If it’s breakable, I’ll pack it really well and then get it insured.” If the gift is “breakable” that means that it can break easily; we might also use the word “fragile.” Sometimes if you are sending a package that has something that could break easily, you put the word “fragile” (fragile) on the outside of the package. That won’t actually make any difference, but you’ll feel better by doing it thinking that you’re doing something! Sam says he’s going to pack it real well. To “pack” something means to put something in a container – an envelope, a box – and then send it somewhere. We also use the verb “to pack” for other meanings in English, take a look at the Learning Guide for some additional explanations.

Here, Sam is packing this gift in the package, and then he’s going to get it insured. To “insure” something means to have some sort of financial protection, often offered by an insurance company, so if something bad happens the company will give you money for what was lost or damaged. Most of the private mail services have insurance that you can buy in case the package gets lost or something happens to it. Sam then asks Maria what the declared value is of the gift. The “value” is what it is worth, the amount of money. To “declare” something means to say or to state something, usually on a form or a piece of paper, something official. So, “declared value” is the amount of money that you are saying this is worth, and you put that down on the package so that you have



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enough insurance. So if the package gets lost and you declared the value, you said it was worth \$400, then you will get \$400 back. That's what declared value is.

Maria says, "It's about \$700." Wow, a pretty nice gift! Maria says, "Oh, and I want this box to go to Olten, Switzerland, but just send it regular mail through the post office," meaning through the public mail system. Maria says, "Make sure I get delivery confirmation, though." "Delivery confirmation" is a service where the sender can use his or her phone or the Internet to find out exactly when the package arrived and where it was delivered, if it was delivered to the right place. To "confirm" something means, in this case, to inform you – to make sure that something happened.

Sam says, "No problem," of course. "I'll just need to fill out a customs declaration form." "Customs" is the government office that makes sure that you are not bringing something into the country that is illegal or not allowed. A "customs declaration form" is a form – a piece of paper that says this is what is in this package. If you are sending something to another country the mail service may have to inspect what you are sending, you would put a customs declarations form to tell the customs office that this is what I am sending so they know it is nothing illegal or nothing that you have to pay a tax on.

Sam says, "What are the contents?" meaning what is inside the box or the package that she is sending to Olten, Switzerland, and Maria says, "They're books." Sam says, "Okay, I'll take care of it" – I'll handle it. Maria says, "Thanks. What would I do without you?" which is a question – an expression that people say when the person has been so helpful to them, so valuable to them: "What would I do without you?" Sam says, "The real question is, what would the mail services do without you?" because, of course, she's giving these companies so much business by sending so many packages.

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

[start of dialogue]

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[end of dialogue]

What would we do without our scriptwriter, Dr. Lucy Tse? I don't know!

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

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