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## ESL Podcast 478 – Having Plumbing Problems

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### GLOSSARY

**plumbing** – related to the water that moves through a building, and especially the long, metal tubes that the water moves through

\* The neighbors are building a new house, and today, they're working on the plumbing and electricity.

**plumber** – a person whose job is to fix problems with the way that water moves through a home or another type of building

\* Quick! Call a plumber! There's water all over the floor of our living room!

**toilet** – a large, usually white thing in the bathroom that has a large hole on top that one sits on to urinate (get rid of liquid from one's body) or defecate (get rid of solid waste from one's body)

\* There were only two toilets in the women's restroom at the stadium, so there was a long line of women waiting to use them.

**to flush** – to move water through something to clean it, especially a toilet

\* The toilet stopped flushing because someone had put too much toilet paper in it.

**to overflow** – to have water coming over the top of something and out of it, because there is no more room for it

\* After the heavy rain, the river overflowed and all the homes around it flooded.

**check** – a word used to show that one has heard and understood what another person has said, and perhaps has added it to a list

\* - Did you close the windows and lock all the doors?  
- Check.

**sink** – a large, open container that holds water and is used in bathrooms and kitchens to wash one's hands, face, dishes, and more

\* Please put your dirty dishes in the sink. We'll wash them later.

**to stop up** – to become blocked; to be clogged; to stop working properly because something else is in the way

\* Because of this cold, my nose is stopped up and I can't breathe very well.

**pipe** – a long, hard, plastic or metal tube that water, gas, or other things move through, often underground

\* What can we do to make sure our pipes don't freeze when it gets too cold outside in the winter?



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**leaky** – with water coming out of something very slowly, one drop at a time

\* They have a leaky roof, so their carpet gets wet whenever it rains.

**garbage disposal** – a small machine that is underneath one's sink and cuts food and other things into very small pieces so that they can be taken away by water as it moves through the pipes

\* He put some pieces of lemon in the garbage disposal to make the kitchen smell better.

**to drain** – to make the water move through something or away from something

\* The city drains the outdoor swimming pool every fall and doesn't fill it again until the spring.

**busted** – broken; not working

\* He hit the wall when he got angry and now he has a busted hand.

**faucet** – a piece of metal above a sink or bathtub that water flows through, with a piece that one moves with one's hand to make the water start or stop moving

\* The faucet with an "H" is for hot water, and the faucet with a "C" is for cold water.

**stuck** – not moving; not able to be moved; not able to change positions

\* The clock is stuck, so it always looks like it's 5:24.

**to shut off** – to turn something off; to stop something from continuing

\* Please shut off the lights when you leave the room.

**booked up** – unavailable because one's schedule is full and one already has appointments at a particular time

\* I'd love to meet you for dinner, but I'm booked up until next Wednesday.



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### COMPREHENSION QUESTIONS

1. Which of these things might overflow?
  - a) A sink.
  - b) A garbage disposal.
  - c) A faucet.
  
2. What does Mickey mean when he says that all the plumbers are booked up?
  - a) They are all listed in the phonebook.
  - b) They are all writing books about plumbing.
  - c) They are all busy with other appointments.

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### WHAT ELSE DOES IT MEAN?

#### **flush**

The verb “to flush,” in this podcast, means for water to move through something to clean it, especially a toilet: “The sound of the toilet flushing scared the cat.” The verb “to flush (the toilet)” means for one to push on a small piece of metal that makes water move through the toilet: “Her little boy always forgets to flush the toilet.” When talking about people, the verb “to flush” means to turn red, often because one is embarrassed about something or is very hot: “She flushed when she heard people talking about her.” Or, “His face is flushed because he just finished exercising.” Finally, the phrase “to flush (someone or something) out of hiding” means to make someone or something leave a hidden place so that it is seen: “The dog ran into the bushes, flushing the birds out of hiding.”

#### **sink**

In this podcast, the word “sink” means a large, open container that holds water and is used in bathrooms and kitchens to wash one’s hands, face, dishes, and more: “If you aren’t going to finish your juice, please pour it down the sink.” As a verb, “to sink” means to fall below the surface of the water: “The boat sank after it hit a rock.” The verb “to sink” can also mean to move lower: “Her shoulders sank, showing her disappointment.” The phrase “to sink into (something)” means to sit heavily on something when one is very tired: “At the end of a long day, she sank onto the couch to relax.” Finally, the phrase “a sinking feeling” is used to talk about the bad feeling one has when one knows that something bad is going to happen: “I had a sinking feeling that someone was going to get hurt.”



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**CULTURE NOTE**

In the United States, many “homeowners” (people who own their own home and do not rent) like to “remodel” (to improve a home or building, changing the way that it appears) their homes. They often do this one room at a time, and bathroom remodels are very common. People who own older homes often want to “update” their bathrooms, making them bigger and more modern.

A “vanity” is the part of a bathroom that has a sink, a “cupboard” (a place to store things, like a big box with a door), a “counter” (a flat, table-like surface in a bathroom or kitchen) and a mirror. Many people “replace” (take away one thing and put in a new thing in its place) the vanity when they remodel a bathroom. Other people “install” (put in) “double sinks,” or two sinks that are “side by side” (next to each other) so that a husband and wife can “get ready” (prepare themselves for the day) at the same time in the morning.

Other people like to paint and “re-tile” their bathrooms, putting small square or rectangular pieces of colored clay or porcelain on the floors, walls, or counters of their bathroom, particularly in places that might get wet from the sink or shower. Many people also like to replace their bathroom “hardware,” such as the faucets and “drawer pulls” (small pieces of metal or wood that one holds and pulls to open a drawer or cabinet).

It is also common to replace “fixtures” (the lights that are attached to the ceiling or walls) when remodeling bathrooms. Many people want to have brighter bathrooms, so they install extra fixtures. It is also common to install “water-saving devices,” or things that help people use less water, in toilets, sinks, and showers.

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



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### COMPLETE TRANSCRIPT

Welcome to English as a Second Language Podcast number 478 – Having Plumbing Problems.

This is English as a Second Language Podcast episode 478. 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](http://eslpod.com). Go there to download a Learning Guide for this episode. The Learning Guide will help you improve your English even faster.

This episode is called "Having Plumbing Problems." It's a dialogue between Mickey and Colleen, and uses a lot of vocabulary that you would associate with plumbing. Let's get started.

[start of dialogue]

Mickey: Hello, McQuillan Plumbing.

Colleen: Hi, I'm having a lot of plumbing problems. Can you send a plumber out to my house right away?

Mickey: Yes, we can. But first, let's find out what the problems are.

Colleen: Well, to start, my toilet won't flush and it's overflowing.

Mickey: An overflowing toilet – check. What else?

Colleen: The sink in the bathroom is stopped up and the pipes underneath the sink are leaking.

Mickey: A stopped up sink and leaking pipes – check. What else?

Colleen: The garbage disposal in the kitchen is making funny noises and the water won't drain.

Mickey: A busted garbage disposal – check. Is that all?

Colleen: No, the faucet in the shower is stuck and I can't shut off the water.

Mickey: A stuck faucet – got it. What else?



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Colleen: That's it.

Mickey: You've got some really big problems there.

Colleen: Yes, I know. That's what I've been trying to tell you. Can you send someone out right away?

Mickey: Sure, no problem. How about next Tuesday?

Colleen: Next Tuesday?! Didn't you hear me? These are emergencies!

Mickey: Yes, but all of our plumbers are booked up until next Tuesday. Should I put you down for a morning appointment?

Colleen: Forget it! By next Tuesday, I'll be under 10 feet of water!

[end of dialogue]

Our dialogue begins with Mickey answering the phone: "Hello, McQuillan Plumbing." Colleen says, "Hi, I'm having a lot of plumbing problems." "Plumbing" is a general term we use to talk about the water that moves through a building, especially in long metal tubes. Sometimes the water is moving into the building – the clean water, the dirty water is moving out of the building. Both of these are part of your plumbing. Colleen says, "Can you send a plumber out to my house right away?" A "plumber" is the person who fixes problems with your plumbing. She is asking Mickey to send a plumber out to her house, meaning to send the plumber to where she lives. Mickey says, "Yes, we can. But first, let me find out what the problems are." Colleen says, "Well, to start (meaning the first thing is), my toilet won't flush and it's overflowing." Your "toilet" is a large, usually white thing in the bathroom that has a large hole on the top of it where you sit to get rid of things that are inside your body – I think you understand! "Flush" is to move water through something to clean it, especially a toilet. So after you finish using the toilet, you flush the toilet – you use water to take that out of the pipes and out of your building or house. "Flush" actually has a couple of different meanings in English, so be sure to take a look at our Learning Guide for some additional explanations.

Colleen says the toilet is overflowing. "To overflow" means to have water coming over the top of something and out of it because there's too much water. If you have a toilet or a sink that is overflowing when you turn the water on, that usually means that there is something blocking or preventing the water from escaping.



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Colleen says that her toilet is overflowing; Mickey says, “An overflowing toilet – check.” The word “check” here is used to show that you heard and understood what the other person has said, often because you are making a list of something. It’s a little informal, but Mickey is trying to indicate to Colleen that he’s taking notes and he’s making a list of her problems. Colleen says, “The sink in the bathroom is stopped up and the pipes underneath the sink are leaking.” The “sink” (sink) is a large open container that holds water. It’s used in bathrooms and in kitchens to clean things. In the bathroom, it is used to clean your face and your hands; in the kitchen, it’s used for cleaning dishes and so on. “Sink” has a couple of meanings in English, however, so again, take a look at the Learning Guide for some additional explanations.

“The sink in the bathroom is stopped up,” Colleen says. “To stop up” is a two-word phrasal verb meaning to become blocked, to stop working properly, especially something like a pipe or a tube that water or liquid is going through. Another word we use for this is “clog” (clog). If someone says the pipes that are below the sink, the tubes that come from the sink and lead the water out of your house, are “clogged,” they mean that they are stopped up, there is something in them that is preventing the water from moving and flowing, we would say, freely. “Pipes,” as I just mentioned, are long, hard, either plastic or metal tubes that you use to move a liquid or a gas through. In this case, it’s for the water. Colleen says that the pipes underneath (below) the sink are leaking. Something that is “leaking” is something that has water coming out of it, usually very slowly. If you have a roof on your house that is leaking, that means that there is water coming through it. Another word we use is “leaky” (leaky), which is the adjective.

Mickey then repeats back to Colleen what she said to indicate that he has understood. He says, “A stopped up sink and leaking pipes – check. What else?” Colleen says, “The garbage disposal in the kitchen is making funny noises and the water won’t drain.” The “garbage disposal” is a small machine that is underneath, or below, your sink that cuts up food into very small pieces so that it will fit in the pipes and be washed away with the water down the pipe. “Garbage” is another general word meaning the same as “trash,” things that you don’t want anymore and are throwing out. Here, the garbage is going to be food that you don’t want anymore. “To dispose of (something)” means to get rid of something, so the garbage disposal is the machine that helps you get rid of the unwanted food that you didn’t eat or simply didn’t want. Colleen says the garbage disposal is making “funny noises,” meaning it’s making a noise that is not usual. She also says the water won’t drain. “To drain” means to make the water go through something or away from something. In this case, the water is going to go from the sink into the pipes and then out of your house. Mickey then



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says, “A busted garbage disposal – check.” “Busted” is an informal word indicating broken, not working properly.

Colleen says that the faucet in the shower is stuck and she can’t shut off the water. The “faucet” is a little piece of metal above the sink or the bathtub that water flows through. It’s a place where you can turn the water on and off – you can start the water moving out of the pipe or stop it from moving out of the pipe. So, faucets are for the water coming into your house. This faucet is “stuck,” meaning it won’t move. When something is stuck you can’t change its position, you can’t move it. “To shut off” is a phrasal verb meaning to turn something off, to stop something from continuing. A parent might say to his son or daughter, “Turn off the television,” meaning stop watching the TV – unplug it or turn off the switch. A wife may say that to her husband, who’s watching baseball instead of paying attention to her, “Shut off the TV.” Colleen wants to shut off the water, meaning she wants to stop the water from flowing out of the faucet.

Mickey says, “A stuck faucet – got it,” which is the same as “I understand it,” or as we said earlier, “check.” “What else?” he asks. Colleen says, “That’s it (that’s all, there are no more problems).” Mickey says, “You’ve got some really big problems there.” Colleen says, “Yes, I know.” She says, “Can you send someone out right away (can you have someone come to my house immediately)?” Mickey says, “Sure, no problem. How about next Tuesday?” Colleen says, “Next Tuesday?! Didn’t you hear me? These are emergencies (these are things that I need to have fixed today)!” Mickey says, “Yes, but all of our plumbers are booked up until next Tuesday.” To be “booked up” means to be unavailable because your schedule is full; you already have other appointments. If you’re sick and you call your doctor, the secretary may tell you that the doctor is booked up today. This happens a lot on Mondays, so you should try not to be sick on Monday!

In this case, Mickey’s plumbers are booked up until next Tuesday; they don’t have any free time to go over to Colleen’s house. Colleen says, “Forget it! By next Tuesday, I’ll be under 10 feet of water!” “I’ll be under 10 feet of water” means that because of the plumbing being broken, her house will be filled with water if she waits to fix it until next Tuesday.

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

[start of dialogue]

Mickey: Hello, McQuillan Plumbing.





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[end of dialogue]



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The script for this episode was written by someone who is overflowing with good ideas, Dr. Lucy Tse.

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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