



ESL Podcast 495 – Describing Winds and Storms

GLOSSARY

it's just (one's) luck – a phrase used when one is complaining about having bad luck, used to introduce an example of how one has bad luck

* It's just our luck that housing prices fell by almost 20% right after we bought a house.

island vacation – a trip to an island (land surrounded by water) for a short period of time when one is not working

* Shane wants to go to Alaska, but his wife would prefer an island vacation to someplace warm, like Puerto Rico.

hurricane – a storm that forms over the ocean and has very strong, dangerous winds that blow in circles

* Hurricane Katrina was very damaging for New Orleans, Louisiana.

uncanny – very difficult to explain or understand; very unusual, uncommon, or strange, often used to talk about coincidences

* It seems uncanny that we would meet here. Are you sure nobody told you where to find me?

to cross paths with (someone or something) – to meet someone or something; to be in the same place at the same time as someone or something else

* We're not great friends, but we stop and say 'hi' whenever we cross paths.

tornado – a dangerous storm that forms over land and has very strong, dangerous winds that blow in circles

* They hid in the basement during the tornado.

windstorm – a storm with very strong wind

* Several trees lost their branches in the windstorm.

gust – a sudden, strong movement of air

* A gust of wind tore the papers out of her hand.

to rattle – to make a noise when something is blown or moved against another object

* She was so cold that you could hear her teeth rattling.

to blow down – for a strong wind or air to make something fall over

* The store's sign always blows down on windy days.



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to uproot – to tear a tree or plant out of the ground so that its roots can be seen
* The new homeowners uprooted a lot of grass so that they could plant a vegetable garden.

breeze – a soft, gentle wind, especially one that comes from over an ocean or lake

* The cool breeze felt refreshing on such a hot day.

to make landfall – to come to the land after having been over water, especially when talking about storms or wind

* The storm is supposed to make landfall tonight. Are we prepared?

gale – a very strong wind

* The boat was having difficulty moving forward against the strong gale.

to buckle down – to hold still or stay in one place, usually while waiting for something else to happen

* You filled out the application and did well in the interview. Now all you can do is buckle down and wait for them to offer you the job.

to wait (something) out – to wait for something to finish or end

* It's supposed to rain all week. We'll just have to wait it out before we can go camping.

altogether – completely; entirely; totally

* Altogether, there were more than 300 people at the concert.

likelihood – probability; chance; odds

* There is a very low likelihood that we'll be hit by lightning.



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COMPREHENSION QUESTIONS

1. Which of these is the gentlest type of wind?
 - a) A gust.
 - b) A breeze.
 - c) A gale.

 2. Why did the windows, doors, and walls rattle?
 - a) Because they weren't built very well.
 - b) Because they were too old.
 - c) Because they were moved by the wind.
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WHAT ELSE DOES IT MEAN?

to blow down

The phrase “to blow down,” in this podcast, means for a strong wind or air to make something fall over: “Last night’s windstorm blew down their fence.” The phrase “To blow up” means to explode: “Why do movies always show cars blowing up in accidents?” The phrase “to blow up” can also mean to lose one’s patience and begin to yell: “Meg felt really bad after she blew up at her kids for making a mess.” If a tire “blows out,” it bursts open so that the air comes out: “They almost got in a accident when their tire blew out on the freeway.” Finally, the phrase “to blow out a candle” means to push air out of one’s mouth so that a flame (fire) stops burning: “Don’t forget to blow out the candles before you go to bed.”

breeze

In this podcast, a “breeze” is a soft, gentle wind, especially one that comes from over an ocean or lake: “She looked beautiful as her hair moved gently in the breeze.” The phrase “to be a breeze” means to be very easy or simple: “He said that learning to ski would be a breeze, but I don’t think so.” The phrase “to shoot the breeze” means to chat or have an informal conversation: “They spent hours at the coffee shop, just shooting the breeze.” Finally, as a verb, “to breeze” means to walk somewhere with a lot of confidence, without being scared or hesitant: “I can’t believe you just breezed into his office and asked for a raise. Weren’t you worried about what he would say?”



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CULTURE NOTE

When an area is going to “experience” (have) “severe” (very strong and dangerous) weather conditions, the “local residents” (people who live in a particular area) need to be “warned” (told that there might be a problem or danger). Americans receive weather warnings in many different ways.

Newspapers report on the weather every day, so they might warn residents about the “potential for” (possibility of) severe weather conditions. As the “severity” (seriousness) of the “approaching” (coming nearer) storm increases, radio stations might also start to “issue” (give) warnings. Television stations might put a line of text at the bottom of the “screen” (the part of the television that produces images) warning residents, or they might begin to “cover” (make a news story out of) the storm.

The National Weather Service is part of a U.S. government agency called the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration. It has maps with weather “advisories” (warnings). Individuals can find the information online, and news programs often use those maps and warnings in their own reports.

If the weather is expected to be very severe, “as in the case of” (for example) a hurricane or tornado, the local “authorities” (people and organizations with power, such as the police) may decide to “evacuate” (make people leave a place) the local residents. Although they cannot force people to leave their homes, they will strongly recommend that they leave. They might drive large trucks through the city, using a “megaphone” (an electronic device that is held in front of one’s mouth to make one’s voice very loud) to warn the residents about the approaching danger and the need to evacuate.

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



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COMPLETE TRANSCRIPT

Welcome to English as a Second Language Podcast number 495: Describing Winds and Storms.

This is English as a Second Language Podcast episode 495. 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. There, you can download a Learning Guide for this episode, which will help you improve your English even faster. You can also take a look at our ESL Podcast Store, which has additional courses in daily and business English you might enjoy.

This episode is a dialogue between Ali and Mariela about describing weather that has a lot of wind or where there are storms, where there is rain and clouds, that sort of thing. It will use a lot of vocabulary related to the weather. Let's get started.

[start of dialogue]

Ali: It's just our luck that as soon as we arrive here for our island vacation, there's a hurricane warning!

Mariela: It's uncanny, isn't it? On last year's vacation, we crossed paths with a tornado and now this.

Ali: Yeah, that tornado was something. I had experienced windstorms before with really strong gusts of wind, but it was nothing like that tornado. Do you remember the way all of the windows, doors, and even walls rattled? The tornado blew down power lines and uprooted trees!

Mariela: That was terrifying. Do you think we'll have another experience like that this time?

Ali: I really hope not. We came for ocean breezes, but if the hurricane makes landfall, we'll have gale winds of up to 50 miles per hour!

Mariela: And we're trapped here! What should we do?

Ali: We'll just buckle down and wait it out. With any luck, the hurricane will miss the island altogether.



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Mariela: With our luck, what's the likelihood of that happening?!

[end of dialogue]

Ali begins by saying, "It's just our luck that as soon as we arrive here for our island vacation, there's a hurricane warning!" The expression "it's just our luck" or "it's just my luck" is a phrase we use when you are complaining about having bad luck, using it to introduce an example of how bad your luck is. For example: "It's just my luck that when I got to the store – to the grocery store, there were no more bananas." I wanted to buy some bananas, but they didn't have any, that was just my luck.

Ali says that it's just their luck that as soon as they arrive for their island vacation there's a hurricane warning. An "island" is land surrounded on all sides by water. An "island vacation" is where you would go for a relaxing, warm vacation, Hawaii for example, or the Caribbean. If you are living in the United States those are two popular places to go on an island vacation. Unfortunately, on this island there is a hurricane warning. A "hurricane" is a large storm that forms over the ocean – it begins over the ocean, and it has very strong and dangerous winds. Here in the United States a few years ago, we experienced Hurricane Katrina, which destroyed a large part of the city of New Orleans in the state of Louisiana in the south central part of the U.S. Hurricanes are given names; they used to always be names of women, but a few years ago they changed so that sometimes it's a woman's name, sometimes it's a man's name. They alternate – they change: first a man, then a woman, then a man, then a woman. Not sure there's been a Hurricane Jeff; I think that would be good to have!

Mariela says, "It's uncanny, isn't it?" Something that is "uncanny" is something that is very difficult to explain or understand, something that is very unusual or not common. "It's uncanny that I always meet my friend at a local café," even though we weren't planning on seeing each other we run into each other, we would say, we meet each other unexpectedly. I can't explain it – it's uncanny. Mariela says, "On last year's vacation, we crossed paths with a tornado and now this." "To cross paths with (something or someone)" means to meet that thing or that person, to be in the same place at the same time with that person. "I crossed paths today with my old high school science teacher," I happened to be in the store while she was in the store. That's "to cross paths with."

Ali and Mariela crossed pass with a tornado. A "tornado" is a dangerous storm that forms over land and has very strong and dangerous winds that blow in a circle. Tornadoes are storms that start over the land; hurricanes are storms that



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start over the sea – over the ocean. Here in the United States, in the central – the mid-central and the midwestern part, tornadoes are quite common. When I grew up in Minnesota, we would often see tornadoes and there would be tornado warnings. They would tell people to go down into their basements to protect themselves because these strong storms were coming through – these tornadoes.

Ali says, “Yeah, that tornado was something,” meaning that was really amazing, in a good way or a bad way. Ali says, “I had experienced windstorms before with really strong gusts of wind, but nothing like that tornado.” A “windstorm” is a storm with very strong wind, though not as serious or as strong as a tornado. When you have a windstorm, you have very strong gusts of wind. A “gust” (gust) is a sudden, strong movement of air. It could be very quiet, and then suddenly you get this strong wind; that’s a “gust” of wind.

Ali has experienced really strong gusts of wind, but nothing like the tornado. He says, “Do you remember the way all of the windows, doors, and even walls rattled?” “To rattle” means to make noise when something is being blown by the wind or something is moving against another object. When we have earthquakes here in Southern California, we had one just a few weeks ago, if it’s very strong, the cups on the table will rattle. They’ll make a noise because the table is moving and the cup is on top of it, or the dish or whatever happens to be there.

Ali says, “The tornado blew down power lines and uprooted trees!” “To blow down” means that a strong wind makes something fall over. “The tornado blew down the trees,” meaning the trees fell down because the wind was so strong. The word “blow” has several different meanings in English, attached to different prepositions; take a look at our Learning Guide for some additional explanations of that phrasal expression – that phrasal verb.

These winds also uprooted trees. “To uproot a tree or a plant” means that it takes it out of the ground so that the bottom of the plant that is below the ground, what we call the “roots,” can be seen. A very powerful storm could lift the tree out of the ground, that’s how strong it is. That’s “uprooting” the tree.

Mariela says, “That was terrifying. Do you think we’ll have another experience like that this time?” Ali says, “I really hope not. We came for ocean breezes, but if the hurricane makes landfall, we’ll have gale winds of up to 50 miles per hour!” A “breeze” is a very soft, gentle wind, something that’s very nice. It’s a soft breeze – it’s a soft wind. “Breeze” has a couple of different meanings in English however, so once again, take a look at our Learning Guide for some additional explanations.



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The hurricane, however, will not just have light breezes, but if it makes landfall they'll have gale force, or gale winds. When we say a hurricane "makes landfall," we mean that the storm, which remember begins over the ocean – over the sea, comes onto the land; it arrives at the land. A "gale" is a very strong wind associated with hurricanes.

Mariela says, "we're trapped here! What should we do?" meaning we can't get out. Ali says, "We'll just buckle down and wait it out. With any luck, the hurricane will miss the island altogether." "To buckle down" is a two-word phrasal verb meaning to stay in one place, usually while you're waiting for something else to happen. "To wait (something) out" means to wait for something to finish or to end, especially something like a storm or bad weather, or simply a bad situation: "I'm going to wait it out until our boss resigns and we get a new boss."

Ali says that with any luck, if they are lucky, the hurricane will miss the island "altogether," meaning completely, totally, entirely – "altogether." Mariela says, "With our luck, what's the likelihood of that happening?!" meaning we have such bad luck. With our luck, what's the likelihood (what's the chance; the probability) that that will happen. Not very likely, since Ali and Mariela seem to have very bad luck!

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

[start of dialogue]

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Ali: We'll just buckle down and wait it out. With any luck, the hurricane will miss the island altogether.

Mariela: With our luck, what's the likelihood of that happening?!

[end of dialogue]

The likelihood of us having an excellent script is always high when it is by our scriptwriter for this episode, 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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