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**ESL Podcast 496 – Driving a Company Car**

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**GLOSSARY**

**Shall we?** – a polite, formal phrase used to ask someone whether he or she would like to join one in what one is doing; used to ask someone to do something with oneself

\* This is one of my favorite songs! Shall we dance?

**company car** – a car owned by a business, but that is used mostly or only by one employee, and is usually driven to that employee's home each night

\* I'd let you borrow my car, but it's a company car and I'm the only person who's supposed to drive it.

**perk** – something that one receives from one's job in addition to money

\* This company offers some nice perks, including free parking, free coffee, and free gym memberships.

**to call for** – to need; to require

\* Her new job calls for a lot of evening and weekend meetings.

**regional** – covering a large area

\* The company used to have a regional office in the Pacific Northwest, but it was closed last year.

**to cover (an area or place)** – to be responsible for a certain area; to affect a particular area

\* He's a police officer who covers downtown and the northern part of the city.

**territory** – an area that is assigned to one person or group; an area that is the responsibility of one person or group

\* If you do your job well, we'll consider giving you a larger territory next year.

**affiliate** – a person, business, or organization that is connected with another person, business, or organization in some way, but not necessarily part of it

\* The company's Alaskan affiliate is opening a new office next month.

**official business** – something that is required by one's job and directly connected to one's work; not personal

\* The company pays all our expenses when we're traveling on official business.



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**standard mileage allowance** – the amount of money that is paid to a person for each mile that he or she drives

\* In the second half of 2008, the standard mileage allowance for calculating U.S. taxes was \$0.585 per mile.

**to account for** – to explain; to have an explanation for something

\* What accounts for the fact that women, on average, make less money than men do, even if they're working in the same job?

**to log** – to write down something as it happens over time; to create a written journal of something

\* Some people who are trying to lose weight log everything they eat and drink each day.

**to fudge** – to change a number slightly, especially in a dishonest way

\* The accountant was arrested for fudging the organization's expenses and stealing the extra money.

**or so I've heard** – a phrase used to show that the thing one just said is simply being repeated, and isn't known first-hand (on one's own)

\* Owning your own business is the best path to financial independence, or so I've heard.

**accessory** – a person who helps someone break the law; a person who helps a criminal

\* Claire became an accessory to her brother's crime when she lied to the police and said she didn't know where he had been the night of the robbery.



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**COMPREHENSION QUESTIONS**

1. Which of these would be a perk?
  - a) Driving a company car.
  - b) Performing official business.
  - c) Being an affiliate.
  
2. Why doesn't Robin want to go to San Diego with Michael?
  - a) Because she doesn't want to help him break the rules.
  - b) Because she has to buy some new accessories that weekend.
  - c) Because she thinks they might ruin the company car.

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**WHAT ELSE DOES IT MEAN?**

**to call for**

The phrase “to call for,” in this podcast, means to need or require: “Having a big yard calls for spending a lot of time cutting the grass and pulling weeds.” Or, “Congratulations on your new job! This calls for a celebration.” The phrase “to be uncalled for” is used to describe something that is not wanted and/or is inappropriate: “That kind of behavior is uncalled for!” The phrase “to call (something) off” means to cancel an event: “Carlisle and Maggie got into a big fight, and they’ve called off the wedding.” Finally, the phrase “to call on (someone) to (do something)” means to ask someone to do something: “I’m going to call on you to help people find their seats at the conference.”

**accessory**

In this podcast, the word “accessory” means a person who helps someone break the law, or a person who helps a criminal: “If you hide information from the police, you’re an accessory to the crime.” An “accessory” is also something that is nice to have, but isn’t necessary to make something work: “The car company sells many accessories, like cup holders, fancy radios and CD players, and special rugs for the floor.” The word “accessory” can also refer to jewelry or something else that one uses, usually for fashion: “That dress would look great with some silver accessories.” As a verb, “to accessorize” means to wear jewelry and other things with one’s clothing: “She likes to accessorize with interesting necklaces, bracelets, watches, and scarves.”



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**CULTURE NOTE**

Some American companies offer their employees a “per diem rate,” or an amount of money given to an employee for each day he or she is traveling “on business” (related to one’s job). Other companies “reimburse” (give someone money equal to the amount that he or she has spent) their employees for their “actual” (real), “eligible” (allowed) expenses. Employees need to “file” (submit; present) an “expense report” (a description of how much money was spent on different items) with “receipts” (a small piece of paper from a store or restaurant showing how much money one spent at one time) when they return from their trip.

Companies typically reimburse employees for all of their “travel expenses,” such as airplane tickets and “ground transportation” (buses, cars, and taxis). If an employee uses his or her own car, the company will reimburse the employee for the “mileage” (the number of miles traveled). Companies also “cover” (pay for) “accommodations” (lodging, hotel rooms).

Companies also pay for “meals” (food), including “tips” (a percentage of the bill, usually 15%, that one leaves at the restaurant for the server). However, they usually do not cover the cost of alcohol.

Employees who need to “wine and dine” (entertain; show someone a good time) their clients usually have an “expense account,” meaning that they have a credit card that they can use for all of the related expenses. They might take a client to a ball game or to a concert, and those expenses will be reimbursed if they are job-related.

Companies have long lists of the types of expenses that cannot be reimbursed. These usually include “laundry services” (having one’s clothes cleaned, dried, and ironed), “room service” (food brought to one’s hotel room), “pay-per-view TV” (shows that one pays to see on one’s hotel room television), “salon services” (haircuts, massages, etc.), and personal phone calls.

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



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**COMPLETE TRANSCRIPT**

Welcome to English as a Second Language Podcast number 496: Driving a Company Car.

This is English as a Second Language Podcast episode 496. 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, which will help you improve your English even faster.

This episode is called "Driving a Company Car." It's a dialogue between Michael and Robin that uses a lot of vocabulary related to driving a car for your work – for the company you work for. Let's get started.

[start of dialogue]

Michael: Shall we?

Robin: Oh, this is nice. Did you get a new car?

Michael: No, this is a company car. Getting to drive one is one of the perks of my new job.

Robin: Does your new position call for a lot of driving?

Michael: It does. As the regional supervisor, I have to cover a large territory. I'll be visiting all of the affiliates across the state.

Robin: Does that mean you can drive the company car anytime, anywhere?

Michael: Well, I'm only supposed to use it for official business since the company deducts the standard mileage allowance on their taxes, but there are ways to account for any extra miles I log.

Robin: You mean you fudge the mileage numbers?

Michael: You could say that. It's no big deal. Everybody does it, or so I've heard. You know, I've been meaning to ask you. Do you want to go with me to San Diego this weekend?



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Robin: That depends. Are you taking your company car?

Michael: I was thinking about it.

Robin: In that case, no, thanks. I don't want to be an accessory to whatever rules you're breaking.

Michael: Suit yourself, but what's a company perk if you can't take full advantage of it?

[end of dialogue]

Michael and Robin are inside of a car, and Michael says, "Shall we?" This is a rather formal, polite way of asking someone whether he or she would like to join you in whatever you are doing; it's used to ask someone to do something with you. Among friends or family to say "shall we" is sort of a joke because, of course, the language would be too formal.

Michael says, "Shall we," and Robin says, "Oh, this is nice. Did you get a new car?" Michael says, "No, this is a company car," a car owned by a business but that is used usually by one employee, sometimes perhaps more than one, but usually one. Michael says, "Getting to drive one (one of these cars) is one of the perks of my new job." A "perk" (perk) is something that you get from your job in addition to money. One of the perks of working at ESL Podcast is getting to know people from all over the world who email us, and some of whom actually have visited us here in Los Angeles.

Robin says, "Does your new position call for a lot of driving?" "To call for" is a two-word – you guessed it – phrasal verb meaning to require, to need. "Call," as a verb, has many different meanings in English; take a look at our Learning Guide for some additional explanations. Michael responds that his new position does call for a lot of driving. He says, "As the regional supervisor, I have to cover a large territory." "Regional" is related to the word "region," which is a larger area – a large area. Here in the United States you have, for example, the region of the Pacific Northwest, which would be the states of Washington and Oregon. So, "region" is a larger area. In many countries, you have different provinces or states, but you also have regions that usually have more than one province or state in them.

Michael is the regional supervisor (the regional boss), which means he has to cover a large territory. To "cover" a place or an area means that you are responsible for a certain area; you have to usually go to and visit places in this



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larger area. Many large companies that have stores have different regions and regional managers that go around and travel to each store and talk with the local boss – the local supervisor of that store. Michael says he has to cover a large territory. A “territory” is, in this case, an area that is assigned to one person or to one group; it’s an area that one person or one group is responsible for. At least that’s one meaning of the word “territory,” especially if we’re talking about businesses. You may have salesmen and women who work for the same company, but they have different territories; they don’t sell to the same people, they sell to people who live in different areas. Michael says, “I’ll be visiting all of the affiliates across the state.” An “affiliate” (affiliate) is a person, business, or organization that is connected with some other business, person, or organization, but not necessarily a part of it, not necessarily in the same place or with the same leader.

In this case, Michael is visiting the affiliates of his company – the company he works for, I should say. Robin says, “Does that mean you can drive the company car anytime, anywhere?” Michael says, “Well, I’m only supposed to use it for official business.” “Official business” is something that is related to your job, something you are required to do for your position – for your particular work. That expression is sometimes used in talking about government workers, people such as the police for example, who are going to a place. They may say, “I’m here on official business,” meaning I’m here as part of my job, something I have to do. But it can be used more generally to mean things that are related directly to your job that you are required to do.

Michael says the company he works for “deducts the standard mileage allowance on their taxes.” “To deduct” means to take off of, to remove from, to reduce. The “standard mileage allowance,” here in the United States, is the amount of money that you can “claim” on your taxes (that you can put on your taxes) for using cars for your official company business. For example, if I work for a company and I need to drive 400 miles to talk to someone about something related to my company, I can use that driving as part of an expense; in other words, I can say this is something I had to pay for. But you can only pay a certain amount, and the U.S. government, every year, tells you how much you can “deduct” (how much you can say that you spent) per mile. I believe in 2008 it was 58½ cents per mile, so if you drive 400 miles you could “claim” (you could say on your tax forms) that you spent 234 dollars based on the standard mileage allowance. “Mileage” refers, of course, to miles; it’s the distance – it’s the amount of driving that you do, the number of miles that you drive.

Michael adds, “but there are ways to account for any extra miles I log.” “To account for (something)” means to explain something, to have an explanation for



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something: “What accounts for the fact that all the women in Los Angeles are beautiful?” The answer is that they all look like my wife, the most beautiful woman in the world. I hope you’re listening honey! Back to our dialogue: Michael says that he can account for any extra miles that he logs. “To log,” here, means to write down something as it happens over time; in this case, it means the number of miles that he drives. When he writes down the distance that he had to drive, that is “to log” your miles. Sometimes the verb can just mean to actually drive; someone may say, “I logged in a lot of miles yesterday” (I drove a lot).

Robin says, “You mean you fudge the mileage numbers?” “To fudge” (fudge), as a verb, means to change a number slightly, usually for some dishonest intent, when you are trying to lie to someone about something. Someone says, “How old are you?” and you say, “Oh, I’m...um...I’m 29.” You’re fudging your age; you’re not really 29, but you want this woman to believe you’re 29.

Anyway, so Robin is asking Michael if he is fudging his mileage numbers, if he’s putting down the wrong amounts. Michael said, “You could say that. It’s no big deal.” “You could say that” means that’s probably or possibly true. But he says, “It’s no big deal,” it’s not something to worry about. He says, “Everybody does it, or so I’ve heard.” The phrase “or so I’ve heard” is used to show that something that you just said is something you heard from other people, but you don’t necessarily know that to be true based on your own experience.

Michael says, “You know, I’ve been meaning to ask you. Do you want to go with me to San Diego this weekend?” Robin says, “That depends. Are you taking your company car?” Michael says, “I was thinking about it.” Robin says, “In that case, no, thanks. I don’t want to be an accessory to whatever rules you’re breaking.” An “accessory” here means a person who helps someone else do something wrong, break the law, someone who helps a criminal. “Accessory” has several different meanings in English however, very different from this; take a look at our Learning Guide for some additional explanations.

Michael says, “Suit yourself,” meaning if you don’t want to go, that’s fine with me. This expression, “suit yourself,” is usually used when you offer something to someone and the other person says no, and then you’re a little angry. You’re a little mad they said no, so you say, “Oh, well, suit yourself. Whatever you want to do.” Michael says, “what’s a company perk if you can’t take full advantage of it?” meaning I have this company car, I should be able to use it for my own pleasure. The government, unfortunately, doesn’t agree with that philosophy!

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





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[start of dialogue]

Michael: Shall we?

Robin: Oh, this is nice. Did you get a new car?

Michael: No, this is a company car. Getting to drive one is one of the perks of my new job.

Robin: Does your new position call for a lot of driving?

Michael: It does. As the regional supervisor, I have to cover a large territory. I'll be visiting all of the affiliates across the state.

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Robin: That depends. Are you taking your company car?

Michael: I was thinking about it.

Robin: In that case, no, thanks. I don't want to be an accessory to whatever rules you're breaking.

Michael: Suit yourself, but what's a company perk if you can't take full advantage of it?

[end of dialogue]

The script for this episode was by someone who never fudges the numbers, or so I've heard, Dr. Lucy Tse.



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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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