



---

**ESL Podcast 556 – Scheduling an Appointment**

---

**GLOSSARY**

**to make an appointment** – to schedule a time when one will be able to do something

\* Don't forget to make an appointment with the doctor for your son's shots.

**appointment schedule** – a calendar showing when one is committed to doing certain things and meeting with certain people

\* His appointment schedule is full this week, but he could see you next Tuesday in the afternoon.

**tied up** – busy; unavailable

\* Lately, she has been really tied up at work, staying at the office until late at night.

**to shuffle around** – to move or change things; to reorganize things so that they are in different positions in space or time

\* Why are all these articles due on the same day? Unless we can shuffle around the deadlines, we'll never get them all finished on time.

**commitment** – obligation; something that one has promised to do; something that one has agreed to do and therefore should do

\* As a married couple, they made a commitment to donate 10% of their income to their church.

**to free (someone or something) up** – to make someone or something available for a particular purpose at a particular time

\* Can you please try to free up the conference room for tomorrow's meeting?

**to be out** – to not be an option; to not be available for use; to not be able to participate

\* I've been looking for a place where we can have the wedding reception, but all the nice hotels are out, because other events have been planned there for months.

**to bump** – to change when something will happen, so that something else can happen at that time

\* Our client meeting was bumped because there was an emergency company meeting scheduled at the last minute for that same time.



---

## ESL Podcast 556 – Scheduling an Appointment

---

**to last** – to happen for a certain period of time; to not end until a certain amount of time has passed

\* I have only one class today, but it lasts nearly three hours.

**to run late** – to be behind schedule; to be doing things later than one had planned because each thing is taking longer than expected

\* Jay called from his cell phone to say that he's running late because there's a lot of traffic, but he'll be here as soon as he can.

**better yet** – an expression used to introduce a better idea or another solution that might work better than the one that was being discussed previously

\* We could celebrate by cooking a nice meal at home or, better yet, we could go out to eat at a nice restaurant.

**to finagle** – to behave in a clever, tricky or secretive way to get something that one wants or needs

\* How did you finagle front-row tickets for the concert?

**to push back** – to move something to a later time or date

\* Can we push back your interview until 3:00? That should give us enough time to review and discuss your résumé before you get here.

**to pencil (someone) in** – to write someone's name on a calendar showing when one plans to meet with that person, but while waiting to receive final confirmation

\* Let's pencil in the conference for March 9<sup>th</sup>, but that might need to change depending on whether the facility is available then.

**to confirm** – to verify that something is true or correct

\* A good reporter always confirms information before writing about it in a news article.

**heads up** – information shared in advance; a warning

\* If you think you might get here late, please call to give us a heads up.

**to spin (one's) wheels** – to be involved in a lot of activities or to be very busy, but without having results to show for it

\* Mojtaba was spinning his wheels all day at work, but he didn't really get anything finished.

**every single day** – every day; each day, used to stress that something happens every day, without it missing a day

\* Every single day, Bettina brings the same food to the office for lunch.



---

## ESL Podcast 556 – Scheduling an Appointment

---

### COMPREHENSION QUESTIONS

1. According to Serge, what is LeeAnn doing on Tuesday?
  - a) She'll be learning how to tie knots.
  - b) She'll be in meetings all day.
  - c) She'll be out of the office.
2. Why does Ann think they're spinning their wheels?
  - a) Because they spend too much time undoing their work.
  - b) Because they weren't able to find a time for a new appointment.
  - c) Because they spend too much time driving between appointments.

---

### WHAT ELSE DOES IT MEAN?

#### **bump**

The verb “to bump,” in this podcast, means to change when something will happen, so that something else can happen at that time: “The performance was bumped to next week, because there was flooding in the theater.” The verb “to bump” also means to make an airplane passenger take another flight, usually because the first flight didn't have enough seats for everyone: “The airline bumped us to a later flight, giving us a \$300 travel voucher for the inconvenience.” The verb “to bump” can mean to hit something by accident: “Quincy bumped his head against the table as he bent down to pick up his keys.” Finally, the phrase “to bump (something) up” means to increase something a little bit: “Do you think the company will bump up your salary next year?”

#### **to last**

In this podcast, the verb “to last” means to happen for a certain period of time, or to not end until a certain amount of time has passed: “The concert lasted all evening.” Or, “The conference will last four days.” The phrase “to last (someone)” for a period of time means to be enough for a person for a particular period of time: “They bought enough food to last them all winter.” The phrase “the last of (something)” means the small amount that remains, or what is left of something: “Who ate the last of the chocolate cake?” Finally, the phrase “last but not least” is used to mean that even if something is the final thing mentioned in a list, it is not the least important: “We need to thank our friends, our family members, and last but not least, our co-workers for the success on this project.”



---

## ESL Podcast 556 – Scheduling an Appointment

---

### CULTURE NOTE

The “etiquette” (good, appropriate, polite behavior) for making appointments is “pretty” (mostly) “straightforward” (easy to understand). When making an appointment, it’s important to be “courteous” (polite) and clearly state why the appointment is needed, as well as how long it will last. The person requesting the appointment should try to offer maximum “flexibility” (willingness to change) in his or her schedule, suggesting at least a few times when he or she is available for the meeting.

Once the meeting time has been “established” (set, created), it’s a good idea to send an email confirming the appointment and, if the appointment is far in the future, another email as a reminder one or two days before the meeting will “occur” (happen).

Because businesspeople “tend to be” (are often) busy, they often need to change and cancel appointments. This might happen because the appointment is no longer needed, because something more “urgent” (important and not able to wait) has “come up” (appeared), or because they have “double-booked” (agreed to do two things or attend two appointments at the same time). It’s important to give the other person as much “advance notice” (extra time to know something) as possible. It is rude to cancel a meeting a few minutes before it starts. Canceling a meeting a week ahead of time is better, because it allows the other person to plan how he or she will use the time that had been “set aside” (intended for) the appointment.

It’s also important to “apologize” (say that one is sorry) for the “inconvenience” (difficulties or trouble) created by changing or canceling the appointment, and then try to suggest several “alternative” (other) times when one is available to meet. And, of course, once the new appointment is scheduled, try not to change it again!

---

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



---

## ESL Podcast 556 – Scheduling an Appointment

---

### COMPLETE TRANSCRIPT

Welcome to English as a Second Language Podcast number 556: Scheduling an Appointment.

This is English as a Second Language Podcast episode 556. 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 that contains all of the vocabulary, definitions, sample sentences, additional definitions, cultural notes, comprehension quiz, and a complete transcript of everything we say on this episode.

This episode is called "Scheduling an Appointment." It's going to be a conversation between Ann and Serge about setting up a meeting – arranging a meeting between two people. Let's get started.

[start of dialogue]

Ann: Hello.

Serge: Hi, Ann. It's Serge. I'm calling to make an appointment for LeeAnn. She wants to meet with Miles next week sometime.

Ann: Let me take a look at his appointment schedule. Let's see, can LeeAnn be here on Tuesday at 2:00?

Serge: No, she's tied up all Tuesday afternoon, but I could shuffle around some of her commitments to free her up on Tuesday morning, if that helps.

Ann: Unfortunately, Tuesday morning is out. I could bump someone on Wednesday afternoon at 3:00. Can LeeAnn be here at that time?

Serge: She has an appointment at 2:30 in this office, but it shouldn't last more than a half hour. She should be able to make it by 3:00 if she's not running late. Better yet, I may be able to finagle something, maybe push back that appointment until she gets back to the office. Why don't you pencil her in for now?

Ann: Okay, I'll do that, but can you confirm with me by Monday?



---

**ESL Podcast 556 – Scheduling an Appointment**

---

Serge: Sure, I'll give you a heads up no later than noon on Monday if I can't push back her other appointment.

Ann: Okay, sounds good. Tell me, do you ever feel like we're spinning our wheels, spending our days making, changing, and canceling appointments?

Serge: Yeah, every single day!

[end of dialogue]

Ann begins by saying, "Hello," answering the phone. Serge says, "Hi, Ann. It's Serge. I'm calling to make an appointment for LeeAnn." "To make an appointment" is to schedule a time to do something, usually to meet with someone. Serge says that LeeAnn wants to meet with Miles next week sometime. Ann says, "Let me take a look at his appointment schedule." Your "appointment schedule" is a calendar showing when you have meetings. Ann says, "Let's see, can LeeAnn be here on Tuesday at 2:00?" meaning 2:00 in the afternoon.

Serge says, "No, she's tied up all Tuesday afternoon." When we say we are "tied up" we mean we are busy, we are not available. "I meant to answer his email this afternoon, but then I got all tied up with other things." I was busy; I was occupied. Serge says that he could shuffle around some of LeeAnn's commitments to free her up on Tuesday morning. "To shuffle around" is a phrasal verb meaning to move or change things, to reorganize things in a different position, either physically (in space) or temporally (in time). People often use this when talking about their schedule: "I'm going to shuffle around my schedule so that I can see you tomorrow morning." Serge says he can shuffle around some of LeeAnn's commitments (some of her obligations; some of her other meetings, most likely) to free her up. "To free (someone or something) up" means to make someone or something available; to change things so that they are no longer tied up; they're no longer busy. "Let me see if I can free up some time to see you this afternoon," let me see if I can move some of my meetings so that we can talk this afternoon.

Serge is offering to free up LeeAnn on Tuesday morning. Ann says, "Unfortunately, Tuesday morning is out." When we say something is "out," we mean it's not possible; it's not an option; I cannot do it at that time or day. So Tuesday morning is not possible, then Ann says, "I could bump someone on Wednesday afternoon at 3:00." "To bump (bump) (someone)" means to change when something will happen so that something else can happen. For example: "My friend was supposed to sing at the performance, but she was bumped by



---

## ESL Podcast 556 – Scheduling an Appointment

---

another singer.” They decided that they wanted someone else to sing. We often use this expression when, for example, you are flying and the airline sold too many tickets, which happens frequently. They sold more tickets than they had seats for, and so they had to force some people to take a different plane. You would say they were bumped. That’s the meaning here, Ann is going to try to move someone on Wednesday afternoon.

Serge says that unfortunately LeeAnn has an appointment at 2:30 in this office, but it shouldn’t last more than a half hour. “To last,” as a verb, means to go on for a certain amount of time, not to end until a certain amount of time has passed. So for example someone might ask, “How long is this rain going to last?” meaning how long will it be raining. You might say, “Well, until probably 5:00 this afternoon,” it will last until 5:00. Both “bump” and “last” have additional meanings in English; taking look at our Learning Guide for those explanations.

Serge says that LeeAnn should be able to make it (meaning arrive to the meeting) by 3:00 if she’s not running late. “To run late” means to be behind your schedule, to be doing things later than you had planned because things took longer than expected. If you tell someone you are going to meet them at a café at 8:00 and you see that you are not going to arrive on time, you would want to call them, or text them, and tell them that you are running late, that you will be there at whatever time you will be there, hopefully not too late.

So, Serge says that she should be there by 3:00 if she’s not running late. “Better yet,” he says, “I may be able to finagle something.” “Better yet” is an expression used to introduce another idea or another solution that you thought of that would work better than the one you were talking about previously. So I give you plan A, and then I think: “Oh, no. Plan B is better.” So I’ll say, “Better yet, let’s do plan B.” It’s always supposed to be a better idea. “Better yet,” Serge says, “I may be able to finagle (finagle) something.” “To finagle” means to be, perhaps, very smart about something, very clever. It could also mean that you’re being tricky; you’re doing something that you would not normally do in order to get what you want. We use this somewhat informal verb in situations that are difficult, but we think we can, somehow, arrange it so that it will be possible. Serge is going to try to finagle something, try to figure something out: “maybe push back that appointment until she gets back to the office.” To “push back” an appointment or a meeting is to move it to a later time or even to a later day. You were going to meet someone Tuesday, but then they were going to busy, so they asked to push back the meeting until Friday – to change it to a later date or time.

Serge is suggesting that he push back LeeAnn’s appointment – her 2:30 appointment, so that she can make a 3:00 meeting. Serge says, “Why don’t you



---

## ESL Podcast 556 – Scheduling an Appointment

---

pencil her in for now?” This expression, “to pencil (pencil) (someone) in,” means to write someone’s name on a calendar, showing when they plan on meeting that person, but still waiting for final confirmation. The reason we say “pencil” is because a pencil is something you write with that you can erase if you make a mistake. A pen, of course, cannot be easily erased – most pens. So that’s why we use the word “pencil,” and we actually make it a verb: “to pencil (someone) in.” It means to put their name down for a certain time, but knowing that you have to wait until the person says, “I can definitely do it.” So, it’s when you’re not definite, when you’re not certain about something.

Ann says, “Okay, I’ll do that (I’ll pencil her in), but can you confirm with me by Monday?” “To confirm” is to verify that something is true or correct. So Serge is going to have to call Ann back sometime before Monday to say definitely – certainly – yes or no, LeeAnn will be at the appointment. Serge says, “Sure, I’ll give you a heads up no later than noon on Monday if I can’t push back her other appointment.” “Heads up” means I’m giving you information in advance. Sometimes “heads up” means a warning. If you are out playing baseball and you throw a ball and it goes towards someone who doesn’t see it coming, you would yell “Heads up!” You’re warning them that they might get hit in the head with a baseball. Well, it doesn’t always have to be related to your head; it can be a warning about anything. Or, it can be information about something that will happen in the future: “I’ll give you a heads up when I am about to leave my office.” That means I will call you or communicate with you before I leave my office, or when I know what time I will be leaving my office.

So, Serge is going to give Ann a heads up no later than Monday at noon. Ann says, “Okay, sounds good. Tell me, do you ever feel like we’re spinning our wheels.” “To spin your wheels” means to be involved in a lot of activities that keep you very busy, but that don’t accomplish very much; you don’t seem to get very much done, but you are constantly busy. That would be spinning your wheels. Serge says, “Yeah, every single day!” meaning, simply, every day. “Single” is just used to emphasize – to stress something happens every day, without missing a single day.

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

[start of dialogue]

Ann: Hello.

Serge: Hi, Ann. It’s Serge. I’m calling to make an appointment for LeeAnn. She wants to meet with Miles next week sometime.





---

**ESL Podcast 556 – Scheduling an Appointment**

---

Ann: Let me take a look at his appointment schedule. Let's see, can LeeAnn be here on Tuesday at 2:00?

Serge: No, she's tied up all Tuesday afternoon, but I could shuffle around some of her commitments to free her up on Tuesday morning, if that helps.

Ann: Unfortunately, Tuesday morning is out. I could bump someone on Wednesday afternoon at 3:00. Can LeeAnn be here at that time?

Serge: She has an appointment at 2:30 in this office, but it shouldn't last more than a half hour. She should be able to make it by 3:00 if she's not running late. Better yet, I may be able to finagle something, maybe push back that appointment until she gets back to the office. Why don't you pencil her in for now?

Ann: Okay, I'll do that, but can you confirm with me by Monday?

Serge: Sure, I'll give you a heads up no later than noon on Monday if I can't push back her other appointment.

Ann: Okay, sounds good. Tell me, do you ever feel like we're spinning our wheels, spending our days making, changing, and canceling appointments?

Serge: Yeah, every single day!

[end of dialogue]

If you think that Dr. Lucy Tse wrote today's script, let me just confirm that with you, she did.

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

English as a Second Language Podcast is written and produced by Dr. Lucy Tse, hosted by Dr. Jeff McQuillan, copyright 2010 by the Center for Educational Development.