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**ESL Podcast 570 – Guessing a Number**

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**GLOSSARY**

**contest** – a competition; an event where many people participate to try to win something

\* The contest's first-place winner will win a new car, and the second-place winner will win a new bicycle.

**guess** – an answer that one provides even though one doesn't know whether it will be correct, especially if it probably will not be correct

\* Go ahead and make a guess. How old do you think I am?

**marble** – a small, round piece of colored glass, rolled on the floor or ground as part of a children's game

\* Some glass marbles have become collectors' items and are worth a lot of money.

**to take a stab at (something)** – to make a guess or try to do something, especially if one probably will not be correct or will not succeed

\* Francine had never run a marathon before, but when her friends invited her to join them, she decided to take a stab at it.

**calculation** – computation; a combination of addition, subtraction, multiplication, and/or division to find out how much of something there is, or to find the answer to a mathematical problem

\* The diners made a quick calculation to determine how much money they should leave as a tip for their waiter.

**percent** – one-hundredth; an amount equal to one part out of 100 parts

\* Is it true that 75 percent of the human body is made of water?

**by** – times; a word used to indicate multiplication or to talk about length versus width versus height

\* This bedroom is 12 feet by 16 feet.

$\frac{3}{4}$  – three-quarters or three-fourths, where "quarter" or "fourth" is used to talk about one-fourth or 25% of something

\* This recipe calls for  $\frac{3}{4}$  cup of sugar.

**diameter** – the straight distance across a circle, cutting a circle in half

\* If you know the radius, you can find the diameter by multiplying the radius by two.



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**capacity** – the amount of available space, the amount of something that can be held, or the amount of work a machine can do

\* This auditorium has capacity for 1,300 people.

**to crunch the numbers** – to make a mathematical calculation

\* The students were silent, crunching the numbers during their math test.

**to increase (one's) chances** – to increase the likelihood that one will win or be successful

\* Getting a college degree is a great way to increase your chances of getting a good job.

**educated guess** – an answer that one provides even though one doesn't know whether it will be correct, but that is based on some facts, experience, knowledge, or other information

\* I've never bought anything like that, but if I had to make an educated guess, I'd say it costs between \$1,200 and \$1,600.

**to use what God gave (someone)** – to take advantage of the talents and intelligence that one was born with, especially when many people do not have those talents and that intelligence

\* Sandra has always been good in the sciences, so she has decided to use what God gave her to become a doctor and help people who are sick and injured.

**to beat (someone) out of (something)** – to win a contest or competition against another person, getting the prize and not letting the other person win it

\* Shane has been running every day, training for the race because he wants to beat us out of the prize.

**bring it on** – an informal phrase used to show that one is ready for something to happen or is ready for another person to do something, often used for friendly competition

\* - Are you ready to start?  
- Bring it on!

**to pit (something) against (something)** – to test one thing against another thing; to test how well one person can do something against how well another person can do the same thing

\* If you pitted a bear against a tiger in a fight, which animal would win?



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**random guess** – an answer that one provides even though one doesn't know whether it will be correct, and that probably will not be correct, because it is not based on any facts, experience, knowledge, or other information

\* If you don't know the answer to one of the test questions, at least make a random guess. Don't leave it unanswered.

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### COMPREHENSION QUESTIONS

1. What does Dwight mean when he says, "I'll take a stab at it"?
    - a) He thinks the contest is silly and stupid.
    - b) He would love to have a free meal every day for one year.
    - c) He'll try to guess how many marbles are in the bowl.
  2. What's the best way to make a calculation?
    - a) Crunch the numbers.
    - b) Make an educated guess.
    - c) Make a random guess.
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### WHAT ELSE DOES IT MEAN?

#### **guess**

The word "guess," in this podcast, means an answer that one provides even though one doesn't know whether it will be correct, especially if it probably will not be correct: "Is that your best guess? I'm surprised. I thought you'd know the answer." A "lucky guess" is a guess that was correct, surprising the person who made the guess: "I can't believe I was right about the year that this building was built! Talk about a lucky guess!" A "wild guess" is a guess that is made without much consideration or thought: "One person made a wild guess that there were one billion marbles in the bowl, but of course that's impossible." Finally, the phrase "to be anybody's guess" means to be unknown, or to be something that nobody knows: "What happens next is anybody's guess."

#### **pit**

In this podcast, the phrase "to pit (something) against (something)" means to test one thing against another thing, or to test how well one person can do something against how well another person can do the same thing: "Their soccer team is being pitted against one of the best teams in the state." In the kitchen, the verb



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“to pit” means to take the large, hard seed out of the middle of a piece of fruit: “Do you have a machine to pit cherries, or do you do it by hand?” Finally, the phrase “to be pitted” means to have many small holes or lower areas: “His face is pitted with acne scars.” Or, “The streets are pitted with potholes, but the city doesn’t have enough money to fix them.”

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### CULTURE NOTE

Usually, Americans use “Arabic numerals” (0, 1, 2, 3...) when they write down numbers and numerical “concepts” (ideas; ways of understanding something). However, in some cases they use “Roman numerals” (I, II, III, IV, V...). Roman numerals are most often seen in the “introductory” (beginning part of a novel, before the actual story begins) section of books, or in “appendices” (the sections that follow the main part of a book or report). Roman numerals are sometimes seen on buildings to show the year when they were built. Many “clock faces” (the front of a clock, where numbers are) “display” (show) Roman numerals.

Roman numerals are often used to talk about “monarchs” (people with royal blood; kings and queens). For example, we would write “George III” and “Ivan IV.” In these cases, the Roman numerals are “pronounced” (spoken) as “ordinal” (showing order) numerals, and not “cardinal” (not showing order, just stating the number) numbers. For example, Ivan IV is pronounced as “Ivan the Fourth,” but never “Ivan Four.”

Sometimes Americans use Roman numerals to “refer to” (talk about) “centuries” (groups of 100 years), although this isn’t very common. Americans could talk about the 1900s as the 20<sup>th</sup> century, for example. As with the monarchs, centuries are pronounced with ordinal numbers, and not cardinal numbers, so “XX century” would be pronounced as “the twentieth century.”

We also use Roman numerals to “indicate” (show) sections in legal contracts and written “policies” (rules and regulations). For example, you might hear a lawyer talk about Section IV, Paragraph III. In this case, the section headings are pronounced as ordinal numbers, but not cardinal numbers. The lawyer would say “Section Four, Paragraph Three,” not “Section the Fourth, Paragraph the Third.”

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



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**COMPLETE TRANSCRIPT**

Welcome to English as a Second Language Podcast episode 570: Guessing a Number.

This is English as a Second Language Podcast episode 570. 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. To do that, you need to be member of ESL Podcast. Become a member and help support this podcast to keep it going.

This episode is called "Guessing a Number." It's a dialogue between Angela and Dwight. It's also going to be using some vocabulary not just about guessing, but – well, about numbers. Let's get started.

[start of dialogue]

Angela: Hey, look at this. This restaurant is holding a contest. If you can guess the number of marbles in this bowl, you'll get a free meal every day for one year!

Dwight: I'll take a stab at it.

Angela: So will I. Let's see, I think there must be close to 1,000 or 1,200 marbles in there. What are you doing?

Dwight: I'm doing some calculations in my head. The bowl is about 75 percent full, and it's 15 inches by 12 inches by 6 inches (15"x12"x6"). The marbles are about  $\frac{3}{4}$  of an inch in diameter...

Angela: Are you actually trying to figure out the capacity by crunching the numbers? This is a game. You're supposed to guess.

Dwight: I know it's a game, but I want to increase my chances by making an educated guess. Hold on, I just need to do one more calculation and I'll have the magic number.

Angela: That's cheating.



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Dwight: No way! I'm just using what God gave me to beat you out of a year's worth of meals.

Angela: Bring it on. I'll pit my random guess against your educated guess any day!

[end of dialogue]

Angela says to Dwight, "Hey, look at this. This restaurant is holding a contest." A "contest" is a competition where different people participate to try to win something. We often use the verb "hold": "I'm going to hold a contest," I'm going to have a competition. "If you can guess the number of marbles in this bowl, you'll get a free meal every day for one year!" "To guess" means to provide an answer even though you're not sure if it is correct. "Guess" actually has several meanings in English; you'll find those in this episode's Learning Guide. "Marbles" are small, round pieces of colored glass. You often find them with children; they play a game where they roll the marbles on the floor. This is, at one time, a popular contest in restaurants; they would have a big glass bowl full of these little marbles and you had to try to guess the number of marbles in there. Many different people would guess, and then if you guessed it correctly you got some prize.

Dwight says, "I'll take a stab (stab) at it." "To take a stab at (something)" means to either make a guess or try to do something even though you will probably not be right, even though you may not succeed or be successful. "To take a stab at" means to attempt to do something. Angela says, "So will I (meaning I will try to guess, too). Let's see, I think there must be close to 1,000 or 1,200 marbles in there. What are you doing?"

Dwight says, "I'm doing some calculations in my head." "Calculations" are when you combine numbers: you add them, you subtract them, you multiply them, or you divide them to find out how much of something there is. In general, calculations are what you do to solve some sort of mathematical problem. Dwight is doing them "in his head," meaning mentally, not with a machine. He says, "The bowl is about 75 percent full." "Percent (%)" is 100<sup>th</sup>; it's the amount of something out of 100 parts. So, 75 percent would be 75 out of 100. So, the bowl is 75 percent, or  $\frac{3}{4}$  full; it's about 15 inches by 12 inches by 6 inches (15"x12"x6"). We talk about or use the word "by" when we are describing the length, the width, and the height of something. If we say it's 15 inches by 12 inches by 6 inches, we mean it is 15 inches long, 12 inches wide, and 6 inches high. Dwight says, "The marbles are about  $\frac{3}{4}$  of an inch in diameter." "Three



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quarters ( $\frac{3}{4}$ )” or “three fourths” is used also when talking about part of something. Three fourths is written three over four ( $\frac{3}{4}$ ), there’s a diagonal line that divides them. It’s the same, of course, as 75 percent, that’s three fourths of 100. The marbles are  $\frac{3}{4}$  of an inch in diameter. “Diameter” (diameter) is the distance across a circle. If you take a circle and you cut it in half, that length is the diameter.

Angela then says, “Are you actually trying to figure out the capacity by crunching the numbers?” “To figure out” means to understand, to get an answer. Dwight is trying to figure out the capacity of this jar where the marbles are. “Capacity” is the amount of space available. “To crunch the numbers” is an idiom which means to make a mathematical calculation. Often we talk about that when, for example, we have a new project but we’re not sure if we have enough money. We need to find out exactly how much it’s going to cost, I may say, “I need to crunch the numbers.”

Angela says, “This is a game. You’re supposed to guess.” Dwight says, “I know it’s a game, but I want to increase my chances by making an educated guess.” “To increase your chances” means to increase the likelihood – the possibilities for you to win, to be successful. If you are interviewing for a new job and you go to the interview in your swimming outfit – your swimming trunks, which is what we call what a man wears, or your swimming suit for a woman – well, that’s not really a very good strategy. You could increase your chances by wearing a suit instead of a bikini – although I look pretty good in a bikini! Dwight says that he’s trying to make an educated guess. An “educated guess” is still a guess – you still don’t know, but you have some facts or experience or knowledge that will help you make your guess. Dwight says, “Hold on (wait one second), I just need to do one more calculation and I’ll have the magic number.” “The magic number” just means the correct number here.

Angela says, “That’s cheating.” “Cheating” is when you do something against the rules, especially in a game, and this is contest – a kind of game. Dwight says, “No way (meaning that is completely wrong)! I’m just using what God gave me to beat you out of a year’s worth of meals.” The expression “to use what God gave you (or someone)” means that you take advantage – you use the intelligence and talent that you were born with. This is especially true when many people do not have those talents. So, if you are a very good skier, you could use what God gave you to go to the Olympics, for example. Dwight says that he’s going to use what God gave him – presumably, we’re guessing, the mathematical ability he has – he’s going to use that to beat Angela out of a year’s worth of meals. “To beat (someone) out of (something)” means to win a game, a contest, or a





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competition against another person. You win the price; you take first place – you beat someone out of. You can also say that, for example, about a job: “He beat me out for that job at Berkeley.” You could, I suppose, say it about a woman or a man: “I beat my friend out for the affections and love of this particular woman.” Hopefully, you are not in a competition!

Angela says to Dwight, “Bring it on.” This is an informal expression that’s used to show when you’re ready to do something; you’re ready for a friendly competition. “Bring it on” means I’m ready; I’m ready to enter into this game and beat you. Angela says, “I’ll pit my random guess against your educated guess any day!” “To pit (pit) (something) against (something else)” means to test one thing against another, to see how well one person can do something compared to another person. Angela says that she’s going to make a “random” guess, meaning she’s not going to try to calculate, she’s not going to crunch the numbers; she’s just going to take a random – we might say a “wild” – guess. She’s going to pit – she’s going to basically say my random guess is as good as – really better than your educated guess. “Pit” Has a couple of different meanings in English; of course, those are found in the Learning Guide.

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

[start of dialogue]

Angela: Hey, look at this. This restaurant is holding a contest. If you can guess the number of marbles in this bowl, you’ll get a free meal every day for one year!

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Angela: So will I. Let’s see, I think there must be close to 1,000 or 1,200 marbles in there. What are you doing?

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Angela: That's cheating.

Dwight: No way! I'm just using what God gave me to beat you out of a year's worth of meals.

Angela: Bring it on. I'll pit my random guess against your educated guess any day!

[end of dialogue]

Guess who wrote today's script? That's right, Dr. Lucy Tse. Your prize? To listen to even more ESL Podcast!

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

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