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**ESL Podcast 575 – Being an Early or Late Riser**

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**GLOSSARY**

**watch out** – be careful; a phrase used to warn someone of danger

\* Watch out! Don't step into that hole in the sidewalk!

**up at the crack of dawn** – awake and out of bed very early in the morning

\* Shelby wakes up at the crack of dawn each morning to go running.

**stoop** – the area outside the front door of some homes in the city, usually at the top of several steps leading to the sidewalk

\* On a warm summer evening, the kids like to play on the stoop with their friends.

**ungodly hour** – a time very early in the morning when most people want to be asleep

\* How could you schedule a meeting at such an ungodly hour? It might be mid-day where our clients are, but it's 3:30 a.m. here!

**to turn over a new leaf** – to begin a new phase in one's life by changing one's behavior in some way

\* Beginning tomorrow, I'm going to turn over a new leaf: no smoking, no drinking, no coffee, and no sweets!

**in the habit of** – accustomed to doing something; used to doing something

\* Many Americans are in the habit of eating a small breakfast, a medium-sized lunch, and a large dinner.

**to stay up** – to delay one's bedtime; to remain awake late at night, when most other people are asleep

\* Did you stay up late studying for the test?

**all hours of the night** – throughout the night; during the very early morning

\* Why do so many college students choose to study all hours of the night and then sleep in until noon?

**sleep-deprived** – very tired because one has not had enough sleep

\* Ever since their baby was born, they have been very sleep-deprived.

**to make the switch** – to begin doing something differently; to change to something else

\* When did you make the switch from regular soda to diet soda?



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**ESL Podcast 575 – Being an Early or Late Riser**

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**night owl** – a person who enjoys being awake late at night and feels that he or she has more energy at night than during the day

\* Juliet is a night owl who loves to stay out late, even on weeknights.

**early riser** – a person who enjoys waking up early in the morning and feels that he or she has more energy early in the morning than at night

\* Xavier has always been an early riser, waking up at 5:00 to read the newspaper and get ready for the day.

**a changed man/woman** – a person who has undergone a major transformation and changed in some important way, usually becoming a better person

\* Once he became a father, he was a changed man. He stopped wasting his time and spent more of it working or playing with the kids.

**commendable** – praiseworthy; admirable; something that other people think is good and impressive

\* Your interest in helping me is commendable, but I'd prefer to do this on my own.

**the early bird gets the worm** – a phrase used to mean that people who wake up early are more successful because they are able to take advantage of opportunities that are not available to people who sleep later

\* This bakery gives away free pastries to its first 15 customers each morning. The early bird gets the worm!

**dose** – the amount of a drug or medicine that one should take

\* The doctor said that Francine should take a dose of antibiotics twice a day for one week.

**caffeine** – a chemical in coffee, soda, tea, and chocolate that gives one energy and makes one feel more awake

\* Does green tea have less caffeine than black tea?



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**COMPREHENSION QUESTIONS**

1. Who would be most likely to wake up at the crack of dawn?
  - a) A night owl.
  - b) An early riser.
  - c) A changed man.
  
2. What does Spiro mean when he says, “the early bird gets the worm”?
  - a) He’s looking forward to eating breakfast.
  - b) He’s enjoying watching the birds outside.
  - c) He’ll be the coffee shop’s first customer.

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**WHAT ELSE DOES IT MEAN?**

**stoop**

The word “stoop,” in this podcast, means the area outside the front door of some homes in the city, usually at the top of several steps leading to the sidewalk: “In the past, neighbors used to sit on their stoop in the evening, talking to each other until it got dark.” A “stoop” is also a way of walking with poor posture, when one’s shoulders bend forward: “Why does Ulysses always walk with a stoop?” The phrase “to stoop down” means to bend one’s upper body downward, usually so that one can go under something or reach down to get something: “Brady is really tall, so he has to stoop down to go through most doorways.” Finally, the phrase “to stoop to (something)” means to do something wrong or immoral when one would not normally do it: “Piper never thought she’d stoop to stealing food, but her children were hungry and she was desperate.”

**to stay up**

In this podcast, the phrase “to stay up” means to delay one’s bedtime, or to remain awake late at night, when most other people are asleep: “Last night we stayed up late to watch an old movie on TV.” The phrase “to stay out” means to be away from the place where one lives: “Why did you stay out so late?” The phrase “to stay out of (something)” means to not become involved in an argument or discussion: “Whenever her brothers start discussing politics or religion, Ellyn tries to stay out of it by leaving the room.” Finally, the phrase “to stay on” means to continue doing something after one is expected to stop doing



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it: “When Mrs. Pebley retired as a teacher, she decided to stay on as a volunteer in the classroom.”

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**CULTURE NOTE**

Normally, American schools are “in session” (holding classes) from September to June. Children have the summers “off” (not needing to go to class; on vacation). In the past, this was because children needed to work on their family’s farm. Over time, having a long summer vacation became an “expectation” (something that people think should happen and assume will happen).

Sometimes, however, schools choose to have an “extended” (longer than normal) school year. This might happen because there were too many “snow days” (days when a school is closed because there is too much snow on the ground for children and teachers to go to school safely) and the children need to “make up for them” (recover those days) in the summer. Other schools have an extended school year because they don’t think the “typical” (normal) 180-day school year provides enough education. In these schools, the summer break might last only one or two months.

Some schools offer “year-round” (all year) education. Year-round schools are not very common in the United States, but they do offer several “advantages” (benefits). Some people believe that children forget too much of what they have learned during a long three-month summer vacation. Year-round schools, which have shorter vacations, are able to teach more because they don’t have to re-teach things that are normally forgotten each summer at schools following a traditional calendar. Year-round schools also offer advantages for the parents, who have to work all year round and have difficulty finding “childcare” (someone to take care of their children) during a three-month summer “break” (vacation).

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



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**COMPLETE TRANSCRIPT**

Welcome to English as a Second Language Podcast number 575: Being an Early or Late Riser.

This is English as a Second Language Podcast episode 575. I'm your host, Dr. Jeff McQuillan, coming to you from the Center for Educational Development in beautiful Los Angeles, California.

Support this podcast by becoming an ESL Podcast member. If you do, you'll get the Learning Guide for each episode, an 8- to 10-page guide that will help you improve your English even faster. Or if you don't want to become a member, you can make a donation by going to our website at [eslpod.com](http://eslpod.com).

This episode is dialogue between Spiro and Nancy. They're going to be talking about whether they get up early in the morning or late in the morning, and vocabulary related to that topic. Let's get started.

[start of dialogue]

Spiro: Hey, watch out!

Nancy: Oh, I'm sorry. I didn't see you there. I thought I would be the only person up at the crack of dawn. What are you doing sitting on the stoop at this ungodly hour?

Spiro: I'm trying to turn over a new leaf.

Nancy: What do you mean?

Spiro: I'm in the habit of staying up until all hours of the night. I hardly ever get enough sleep and walk around all day sleep-deprived. I'm trying to see if I can make the switch from being a night owl to an early riser. I'm hoping the new hours will make me a changed man.

Nancy: That sounds very commendable, but that still doesn't answer my question. What are you doing sitting out here?

Spiro: I'm waiting for the coffee shop to open.

Nancy: Can you eat breakfast this early in the morning?



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**ESL Podcast 575 – Being an Early or Late Riser**

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Spiro: No, but I can drink coffee, lots and lots of coffee.

Nancy: You'll definitely be the first one in line.

Spiro: I guess what they say is true: the early bird gets the worm.

Nancy: I don't know about worms, but the early bird will definitely get the first dose of caffeine!

[end of dialogue]

Spiro begins by saying, "Hey, watch out!" "Watch out" means be careful; it's a phrase we use to warn someone who is in danger, to tell someone when something bad might happen to them. We're telling them to be careful – watch out. Nancy says, "Oh, I'm sorry. I didn't see you there. I thought I would be the only person up at the crack of dawn." "To be up at the crack (crack) of dawn (dawn)" means to be awake and out of your bed at a very early hour, very early in the morning. The "dawn" is the beginning of the day, the beginning of the morning.

"What are you doing sitting on the stoop at this ungodly hour?" Nancy is asking Spiro why he is sitting on the stoop (stoop). A "stoop" is an area outside the front door of some homes or some apartment buildings in the city, usually with several steps that lead down to the sidewalk. We often associate this with buildings – apartment buildings, especially in older cities on the East Coast, but you can have a stoop anywhere. "Stoop" has, believe it or not, other meanings as well, and those can be found in the Learning Guide.

Nancy wants to know what Spiro is doing sitting on the stoop at this ungodly hour. The expression "an ungodly hour" means very early in the morning when most people are asleep. It's sometimes used either to be funny or to express the idea that it is too early for people to be up and awake and sitting on stoops.

Spiro says, "I'm trying to turn over a new leaf (leaf)." The expression "to turn over a new leaf" means to begin a new phase – a new part of your life by changing your behavior in some way. "I used to always eat McDonald hamburgers for lunch. But today I'm going to turn over a new leaf, I'm going to have Burger King hamburgers instead!" See, I've changed my behavior. I'm joking, of course; that's not a changing your behavior if you're going from one restaurant to another eating the same thing. "To turn a new leaf" would be to



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## ESL Podcast 575 – Being an Early or Late Riser

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start eating something different – something healthy. “To turn over a new leaf” means to go from doing something usually not good to doing something good.

Nancy says, “What do you mean?” and Spiro says, “I’m in the habit of staying up until all hours of the night.” “To be in the habit of (something)” means to be accustomed to or used to doing something: “Many Americans are in the habit of eating a small breakfast.” That’s something they usually do. “To stay up” is a two-word phrasal verb meaning to not go to bed, to remain awake until it is very late at night when most people are already sleeping. “All hours of the night” is a phrase that means throughout the night, going from perhaps 10:00 at night until 5:00 in the morning or 7:00 in the morning. College students preparing for an exam may study all hours of the night. They’ll not good to sleep the day before they have their exam – which is probably not a good idea actually!

Well, Spiro says that he is in the habit of (he’s used to) staying up until all hours of the night. He says, “I hardly ever get enough sleep and walk around all day sleep-deprived.” To be “sleep-deprived” means to be very tired because you have not had enough sleep. “To deprive” (deprive) means to withhold or not give someone something. In this case, you’re not giving yourself enough sleep. He says, “I’m trying to see if I can make the switch from being a night owl to an early riser.” “To make the switch” means to begin to do something differently, to change to something else; “I used to buy all of my clothing at the store, now I’m going to make the switch and buy it online.” Spiro says that he wants to make the switch from being a night owl to an early riser. A “night owl “ (owl) is a person who enjoys being awake very late at night, someone who feels that they have more energy at night; they like staying up late. An “owl” is a bird that is often awake at night, or at least that’s what people think, so a night owl is someone who stays up late. The opposite of a night owl would be an early riser (riser). “To rise” means to get up. To be an “early riser” (with an “r” at the end) means to be a person who gets up early. So, he wants to become a person who instead of being a night owl is an early riser. He says, “I’m hoping the new hours will make me a changed man.” “To be a changed man,” or a “changed woman,” means that you have had a major or very important change in your life, a transformation, something that has made you a better person.

Nancy says, “That sounds very commendable.” Something that is “commendable” means it is admirable, it is good, it’s something that’s very impressive that people should congratulate you for. Nancy says this is commendable, “but that still doesn’t answer my question. What are you doing sitting out here (on the stoop)?” Spiro says, “I’m waiting for the coffee shop to open.” He wants to go buy some coffee, so he wants to wait until the coffee shop



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**ESL Podcast 575 – Being an Early or Late Riser**

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(the store where they sell coffee) is open. Nancy says, “Can you eat breakfast this early in the morning?” Spiro says, “No, but I can drink coffee, lots and lots of coffee.” Coffee, of course, has caffeine in it, which is a chemical that will make you stay awake.

Nancy says, “You’ll definitely be the first one in line,” meaning the first one there when the store opens. Spiro says, “I guess what they say is true: the early bird gets the worm.” This is an old expression: “The early bird gets the worm.” It means that people who wake up early are more successful because they can take advantage of opportunities that are not available to other people, or they can get to places early and get more things done. Or, if for example, a store is having a sale – a very popular sale, and you go early in the morning you’re more likely to get that thing that you want to buy. Later in the day, the store may not have any more left. So, the early bird gets the worm. A “worm” is a small, little animal that crawls on the ground; it’s something that birds – many birds eat. They go down to the ground and they pick up these worms and they eat them. The word “early bird,” or the term “early bird” also means the same as an early riser, so you could say “I’m an early bird.” That means I get up early.

Nancy says, “I don’t know about worms, but the early bird will definitely get the first dose of caffeine!” A “dose” (dose) is the amount of a drug or a medicine that you are supposed to take. Nancy is making sort of a joke here. Caffeine, she’s saying, is a drug that Spiro needs – that Spiro is going to take when he drinks his coffee.

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

[start of dialogue]

Spiro: Hey, watch out!

Nancy: Oh, I’m sorry. I didn’t see you there. I thought I would be the only person up at the crack of dawn. What are you doing sitting on the stoop at this ungodly hour?

Spiro: I’m trying to turn over a new leaf.

Nancy: What do you mean?

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Spiro: I'm waiting for the coffee shop to open.

Nancy: Can you eat breakfast this early in the morning?

Spiro: No, but I can drink coffee, lots and lots of coffee.

Nancy: You'll definitely be the first one in line.

Spiro: I guess what they say is true: the early bird gets the worm.

Nancy: I don't know about worms, but the early bird will definitely get the first dose of caffeine!

[end of dialogue]

If you're in the habit of listening to our podcast every day, you'll know that the scriptwriter for this episode was probably 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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