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**ESL Podcast 594 – Competition and Prizes**

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**GLOSSARY**

**to take (someone) on** – to compete against someone; to accept someone’s challenge

\* Why did you agree to take him on in a boxing match? He’s at least 50 pounds heavier than you are, so there’s no way you can win.

**chicken** – a coward; someone who is scared or afraid of doing something

\* Liliana is such a chicken that she’ll never ask her boss for a raise.

**bring it on** – a phrase used to show that one is ready to do or receive something and has a lot of enthusiasm or excitement for it

\* - Are you sure you’re ready for this?  
- Bring it on!

**to trounce** – to beat someone very badly; to have a very large win or victory over someone

\* Our team was trounced in the championship game, with a score of 47-3.

**to teach (someone) a thing or two** – to show one’s expertise and knowledge by showing someone how something is done, often used humorously when one believes one is much better at doing something than another person is

\* He may have an advanced degree in communications, but we can still teach him a thing or two about how to share information with co-workers.

**humiliation** – a feeling of deep embarrassment

\* How did you overcome the humiliation you must have felt after losing so badly?

**to trash-talk** – to insult a competitor while saying good things about oneself in a competitive situation; to say bad things about another person

\* Before each game, they always trash-talk the other team, even though they all know that they’re equally good players.

**to play for (something)** – to compete against someone in order to win something, usually money

\* They used to play poker for pennies, but nowadays they play for up to \$100.

**stakes** – money or other valuable things that are at risk, especially when betting or gambling

\* This game would be more interesting if we raised the stakes.



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**champion** – the winner

\* Who is the world champion in men’s figure skating?

**bragging rights** – the ability to say that one is very good at something because one has won a competition, especially when one wants to show the world that one is better than the person who lost

\* If two people invent something separately at the same time, how do they decide who gets bragging rights?

**cash prize** – money received for winning a game or competition

\* The winner of today’s race will receive a cash prize of \$18,000.

**trophy** – a large object, usually a cup, statue, or plate, that one receives for winning a competition

\* The first-place winner gets a large, gold trophy and the second-place winner gets a smaller, silver trophy.

**medal** – a round, flat piece of metal with an image and/or words engraved on it, hung from a wide ribbon around a winner’s neck

\* Monique dreams of someday winning an Olympic medal for swimming.

**thumb wrestling** – a game where two people extend their right hand and hold each other’s fingers, say, “1, 2, 3, 4, I declare a thumb war,” and then move their thumb to try to hold down the other person’s thumb

\* Thumb wrestling can be a good way to keep children entertained on long car trips.

**as far as I’m concerned** – a phrase used when introducing one’s opinion about something, meaning that one is sharing one’s own personal opinion, without considering what other people may think

\* As far as I’m concerned, Jeff McQuillan is one of the best singers ever.

**Olympic sport** – one of the sports played at the Olympics

\* When did basketball become an Olympic sport?



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**COMPREHENSION QUESTIONS**

1. Why does Apollo tell Olga to “stop trash-talking”?
  - a) Because he wants her to stop using bad words.
  - b) Because he doesn’t like her uneducated way of speaking.
  - c) Because she’s too sure that she’ll win.
  
2. What does Olga mean when she says, “Those stakes are too high”?
  - a) She doesn’t want to risk losing that much money.
  - b) She thinks playing for money is wrong.
  - c) She doesn’t have enough money to bet.

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**WHAT ELSE DOES IT MEAN?**

**to take (someone) on**

The phrase “to take (someone) on,” in this podcast, means to compete against someone, or to accept someone’s challenge: “Does anyone want to take me on in a game of ping pong?” The phrase “to take (someone) to be (something or someone)” means to assume someone is something or someone, perhaps incorrectly: “When I saw Tristan with a beautiful young woman, I took her to be his girlfriend, but later I found out she was his sister.” The phrase “to be taken by (someone)” means to like someone or someone’s idea: “I was taken by Krista’s good manners when I first met her.” Finally, the phrase “to take after (someone)” means to be or act like an older relative: “Jen takes after her father in many ways, so everyone expects her to become an engineer like him.”

**to play for**

In this podcast, the phrase “to play for (something)” means to compete against someone in order to win something, usually money: “This is the championship game, so they’re playing for the national title.” The phrase “to play (something) up” means to make something seem more important than it really is or to give something special importance: “When you go in for the interview, play up your experience more than your education.” The phrase “to play for time” means to procrastinate or to delay something: “When Hiroyuki arrived late for the presentation, the other team members had to play for time until he could get there.” Finally, the phrase “to play with fire” means to knowingly do something that could be very damaging or dangerous: “Trading in high-risk stocks is playing with fire. You could lose all your money!”



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### CULTURE NOTE

Toy stores sell many “elaborate” (fancy; with many pieces) games for children to play with, but many of the best children’s games are played with little or no special equipment.

Most American children grow up playing “tag,” which is a game where one child is “designated” (named, called) “It” and the other children try to run away. In a basic game of tag, the person who is It “chases” (runs after) the other children, and if It touches them, they have to leave the game until only It and one other child are left. In other versions, whoever is touched by It becomes the next It. In “freeze tag,” children have to “freeze” (stop moving; stay in one position) if they are touched by It.

Many children also grow up playing “hopscotch,” which requires only a piece of “chalk” (a small, colored stick that can be used to write on blackboard or pavement) and a small rock. The children draw a series of connected boxes labeled with numbers 1-9 on the ground and have to throw the rock into particular boxes and jump into those boxes in special ways on one or both feet.

Other children like to play with “jump ropes,” which are long pieces of heavy “rope” (thick thread), often with “handles” (something to hold onto) at each end. A child can jump rope alone, or with others. When two children each hold the ends of two jump ropes and a third child stands between them, jumping over the ropes as they pass under, the game is called “double Dutch.” Children have many songs and “chants” (words that are repeated many times) that they use as they see how long they can jump without “tripping” (hitting something with one’s foot and falling) over the ropes.

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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 number 594: Competition and Prizes.

This is English as a Second Language Podcast episode 594. 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 will help you improve your English even faster.

This episode is called "Competition and Prizes." It's a dialogue between Olga and Apollo that is going to be using a lot of vocabulary we might use when you are competing with someone – you are both trying to win something such as in a sport or a game. Let's get started.

[start of dialogue]

Olga: Are you going to take me on, or are you chicken?

Apollo: Me chicken? No way! Bring it on!

Olga: Okay, but get ready to get trounced. I'm going to teach you a thing or two about how this game should be played. Ready for some humiliation?

Apollo: Stop trash-talking and get over here. What are we playing for? How about 20 or 30 dollars?

Olga: Those stakes are too high. Let's say that the champion will get bragging rights.

Apollo: Bragging rights?! If I can't have a cash prize, I was hoping for at least a trophy or a medal.

Olga: Yeah, right. You want a medal for winning at thumb wrestling?!

Apollo: As far as I'm concerned, thumb wrestling should be an Olympic sport!

[end of dialogue]



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Olga begins our dialogue by asking Apollo, “Are you going to take me on, or are you chicken?” “To take (someone) on,” or “to take on (someone)” is a phrasal verb meaning to compete against someone. When someone wants to challenge you in a game or a sport, you decide to play against them, you are taking them on. “To take on” has a couple of different meanings in English however, somewhat different than this one; take a look at the Learning Guide for some more explanations on that phrasal verb. “To be chicken” here means to be scared, to be afraid of something. We tend to think of chickens as being scared animals, at least in the U.S. So, a chicken is a “coward,” someone who doesn’t have any bravery, someone who is always afraid of things. It’s definitely an insult to call someone a chicken or to say simply, “Are you chicken?” Notice you can use it with or without the indefinite article “a”.

Apollo says, “Me chicken (you’re saying that I am chicken)? No way (absolutely not)!” He says, “Bring it on!” “Bring it on” is a phrase used to show that you are ready to do something; you are excited about something; you are enthusiastic about doing something. We might say this phrase in response to someone who challenges us to do something, who says, “I want to play you in basketball. I challenge you to a game,” and you say, “Bring it on,” meaning yeah, okay, let’s play, I’m going to beat you, I’m going to win. That’s what you’re saying here.

Olga says, “Okay, but get ready to be trounced.” “To trounce” (trounce) means to defeat someone, to beat someone very badly; to win with many, many points, more than the other team. Well, Olga is saying that Apollo is going to get trounced – the passive form – to get trounced by Olga. She says, “I’m going to teach you a thing or two about how this game should be played.” When you say you’re “going to teach someone a thing or two,” you are saying that you are an expert; you are going to show someone how something should be done. We often use this phrase to make a joke when we think that we are much better than the other person, and that’s the case here with Olga. She thinks she is much better at this game, whatever it is they’re playing. Olga then says, “Ready for some humiliation?” “Humiliation” is when you are very embarrassed by something, when something very wrong has been done to you or you have done something wrong.

Apollo says, “Stop trash-talking and get over here.” “To trash (trash) -talk” means to insult someone you are competing against, and say good things about yourself; you say bad things about the other person. So, for example it is very common in boxing matches when two men, typically, hit each other with their fists in a formal competition we call boxing, it’s very common for one or both of the



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fighters – the boxers – to trash-talk the other, to say how terrible the other person is and how good they are. That’s to trash-talk.

Olga is trash-talking Apollo by telling him that he’s going to get trounced, and that she’s going to teach him a thing or two. Apollo says, “What are we playing for?” In other words, what is the prize? Usually when you ask this you’re talking about money, so if I win you give me 10 dollars – we’re playing for 10 dollars. “To play for” is a phrasal verb that, like “to take someone on,” has different meanings in English and those are found – you know where – in the Learning Guide.

Apollo says, “How about 20 or 30 dollars?” meaning that is what we will play for. Olga says, “Those stakes are too high.” “Stakes” (stakes) is money or something valuable that you are betting on, or that you are gambling with. Here, they are playing a game and the winner of the game will get the prize. The prize is the stakes; it’s what you are betting, it’s what you could lose if you don’t win. “Steak” (steak) is completely different; it’s a noun that refers to a kind of meat that you would eat from a cow. This is completely different, although you could have, I guess, some good steaks as the stakes for a bet – possible!

Olga says, “Let’s say that the champion (the winner) will get bragging rights.” “To brag” (brag) means to tell everyone how good you are. Usually it’s a negative thing to brag; we don’t want people bragging about themselves. But here, the expression “bragging rights” means that you have the ability to say how good you are. The other person is, in a sense, giving you permission if you win to say how wonderful you are and to tell everyone about it.

Apollo says, “Bragging rights?! If I can’t have a cash prize (in other words, if the prize if the stakes is not money), I was hoping for at least a trophy or a medal.” A “trophy” (trophy) is a large object, usually a plate or a cup or a statue, that you receive for winning a prize – for winning a competition. The trophy is the prize. In American sports, in professional hockey and professional football for example – American football, when the best professional team wins the championship they receive a large trophy. We use trophies, for example, for children when they win some competition at school. We use trophies for movie stars for the Academy Awards; the best actor and the best actress get statues as trophies. Apollo wants either a trophy or a medal. A “medal” (medal) is like a big coin; it’s a round, flat piece of metal that has something on it that says what you have won. In the Olympics, you probably know, there are gold medals, silver medals, and bronze medals. Those are the three medals – the three prizes that you get for either first, second, or third place.



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Apollo wants either a trophy or a medal. Olga says, “Yeah, right (meaning you aren’t serious; you’re being silly). You want a medal for winning at thumb wrestling?!” Your “thumb” is the smallest finger on your hand. “To wrestle” is a sport where, typically two men, are competing, and they try to use their bodies to make sure the other person is flat on the ground or cannot move. “Thumb wrestling,” however, is when you take your right hand and someone else takes their right hand, and you touch your fingers together. You curl them – you make like a what we would call a semicircle – a “u” – and you try to use your thumb to make the other thumb stay down. So you’re trying to get on top of the other person’s thumb and push it down so that he or she can’t move it. It’s a game that children play, typically. Of course, it’s a silly game, not a game where you would have a trophy or a medal. But Apollo says, “As far as I’m concerned, thumb wrestling should be an Olympic sport!” “As far as I’m concerned” is an expression we use to introduce our personal opinion, what we think about something. An Olympic sport would be a game or sport that would be played every four years either at the Winter or Summer Olympics.

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

[start of dialogue]

Olga: Are you going to take me on, or are you chicken?

Apollo: Me chicken? No way! Bring it on!

Olga: Okay, but get ready to get trounced. I’m going to teach you a thing or two about how this game should be played. Ready for some humiliation?

Apollo: Stop trash-talking and get over here. What are we playing for? How about 20 or 30 dollars?

Olga: Those stakes are too high. Let’s say that the champion will get bragging rights.

Apollo: Bragging rights?! If I can’t have a cash prize, I was hoping for at least a trophy or a medal.

Olga: Yeah, right. You want a medal for winning at thumb wrestling?!

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[end of dialogue]

Our scriptwriter deserves a trophy and a medal because, as far as I'm concerned, she's the best scriptwriter in Los Angeles, Dr. Lucy Tse.

From Los Angeles, California, I am Jeff McQuillan. I thank you for listening. Come back and listen to us again on ESL Podcast.

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