



ESL Podcast 623 – A Hit-and-Run Accident

GLOSSARY

hit-and-run – a type of car accident where a driver hits a person or object but leaves without stopping to see the damage or apologize, because he or she does not want to get in trouble

* Mona was injured in a hit-and-run accident last year. The police never found out who the driver was.

to take off – to leave a place, especially very quickly and without saying goodbye

* You should have thanked the hostess for her hospitality before you took off in the middle of the party.

a bat out of hell – very quickly, almost as if running away from some danger

* Tracy thought she saw a ghost and ran out of the house like a bat out of hell.

damage – harm that makes something broken or injured; an action that puts something in worse condition than it was in before

* The earthquake caused a lot of damage to office buildings and apartment buildings.

totaled – destroyed; ruined; no longer usable because something has been broken and cannot be fixed

* His bicycle was totaled when the car ran over it.

to revoke a license – for the government to take away someone's driver's license because he or she has been a very bad driver

* If you drink alcohol and then drive, the state will revoke your license.

to throw the book at (someone) – to punish someone very badly, possibly accusing them of many crimes and putting them in jail

* This city really throws the book at people who hurt children.

to do jail time – to spend time in prison as a punishment for one's crimes

* How much jail time did he do for stealing all those cars?

scene of the crime – where a crime is committed; the place where a law is broken

* The detective searched the scene of the crime for clues regarding who the murderer was.



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first offense – the first time someone breaks the law; the first time someone commits a crime

* If this were your first offense, we wouldn't put you in jail, but you've stolen things from stores at least three other times.

to defend – to do or say something to protect another person; to insist that another person is innocent and shouldn't be punished

* Shelby tried to defend herself from her boss's criticism by making a list of all the projects she had finished in the past few months.

innocent bystander – a person who saw something happen but was not involved in it and didn't do anything wrong

* The police want to talk to any innocent bystanders to find out what the criminal looked like.

to talk (someone) out of (something) – to convince or persuade someone to not do something; to try to make another person change his or her mind about doing something

* Maya's parents tried to talk her out of dying her hair purple, but she did it anyway.

fender bender – a minor accident when two cars hit each other, causing only a little damage

* The cars hit each other at a very slow speed, causing only a fender bender.

as good as new – like new; as if damage or another problem had never happened

* The doctor says your broken arm will heal and be as good as new in a few months.

to pull a fast one on (someone) – to trick or fool someone; to make someone believe something that isn't true

* The car salesman pulled a fast one on us, changing the dollar amount on the paperwork when we weren't looking, so we ended up spending more than we had planned.

to wring (someone's) neck – to choke or strangle someone by putting one's hands around that person's neck and squeezing or pressing very hard so that he or she cannot breathe and might die, often used to emphasize one's anger, but without really meaning it

* If you ever spend your entire paycheck at the casino again, I'll wring your neck!



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COMPREHENSION QUESTIONS

1. What does Flora mean when she says, “My car is totaled”?
 - a) Her car was worth a lot of money.
 - b) Her car has been completely destroyed.
 - c) She had already finished paying off her car loan.

2. What does Saul mean when he talks about wringing his nephew’s neck?
 - a) He’s going to make his nephew pay for the damage.
 - b) He’s going to make his nephew apologize.
 - c) He’s very angry and is going to punish his nephew.

WHAT ELSE DOES IT MEAN?

to take off

The phrase “to take off,” in this podcast, means to leave a place, especially very quickly and without saying goodbye: “I was having a great conversation with a beautiful young woman, but then she took off so quickly I didn’t have time to get her phone number.” The phrase “to take (something) off” is also used to talk about removing clothing: “Aren’t you hot? Why don’t you take off your jacket?” When talking about airplanes, “to take off” means to lift off or to leave the ground and begin flying: “Do you get nervous when planes take off?” The phrase “to take off” can also mean to begin to become successful: “Once he hired some good salespeople, his business really took off.”

to pull a fast one on (someone)

In this podcast, the phrase “to pull a fast one on (someone)” means to trick or fool someone, or to make someone believe something that isn’t true: “The customers pulled a fast one on the waiter, telling him that they had already paid when they actually hadn’t.” The phrase “to pull someone’s leg” means to trick someone by telling them something that isn’t true, but doing so as a joke: “Did you really invent the Internet, or are you just pulling my leg?” Finally, the phrase “to pull the rug out from under (somebody’s) feet” means to take something away from someone unexpectedly when he or she needs that thing very badly in order to succeed: “The accountants really pulled the rug out from under our feet when they cut our department’s funding in half.”



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CULTURE NOTE

Hit-and-run laws “vary” (are different) by state, but “in general” (normally), drivers who commit a hit-and-run are punished more “harshly” (more severely or strongly) than drivers who are simply involved in a “collision” (when two or more things hit each other). In either type of accident, a driver makes a mistake and may have shown “poor judgment” (bad decision-making), but in a hit-and-run accident, the driver is also guilty of “callousness” (not caring about other people’s suffering) and not stopping to help the “victim” (the person who is hurt by someone’s else’s actions).

In California and most other states, drivers are required to stop their “vehicle” (car or truck) at the “scene” (location) of the accident whenever another person has been hurt or killed. Not stopping after a hit-and-run can be punished with up to one year in jail and/or a “fine” (money that must be paid as a punishment) of between \$1,000 and \$10,000. If someone is killed or “gravely” (seriously) injured in the hit-and-run, a driver who “fails to” (doesn’t) stop can be put in jail for a longer period of time. Hit-and-run drivers may also have their license revoked.

If the hit-and-run involves another car or piece of “property” (something that can be owned), but no one is injured or killed, the driver still needs to stop. He or she should try to find the owner of the damaged property. If the owner cannot be found, the driver should leave a “note” (writing on a piece of paper) with his or her name and contact information, as well as information about his or her “insurance policy” (an agreement for a company to provide financial protection if one is in an accident).

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



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COMPLETE TRANSCRIPT

Welcome to English as a Second Language Podcast number 623: A Hit-and-Run Accident.

This is English as a Second Language Podcast episode 623. I'm your host, Dr. Jeff McQuillan, coming to you from the Center for Educational Development in beautiful Los Angeles, California.

Go to our website at eslpod.com and download a Learning Guide for this episode. To get our Learning Guides, you can become a member and help support this podcast on our website.

This episode is a dialogue between Flora and Saul. There has been a car accident. One car – one automobile has hit another one and then immediately left. Let's get started.

[start of dialogue]

Flora: What happened to my car?!

Saul: I saw it happen. A car came around the corner and hit the back of your car.

Flora: Didn't the driver stop?

Saul: No, it was hit-and-run. The driver just took off. He was driving like a bat out of hell. It looks like he caused some damage.

Flora: Some damage?! My car is totaled. I hope whoever it was gets his license revoked. Better yet, I hope the judge throws the book at him and he does jail time. But how are the police going to catch someone who leaves the scene of the crime like this? That guy must be a real jerk!

Saul: Take it easy. Maybe he just panicked. It's probably his first offense. Maybe he's young and just learning how to drive.

Flora: Maybe...Hey, why are you defending the driver?

Saul: Well...



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Flora: You know the person driving the car, don't you? You're not an innocent bystander. You're trying to talk me out of calling the police!

Saul: Well, I have this nephew who sometimes borrows my car, and he drives too fast. He did hit your car, but it's a simple fender bender.

Flora: Fender bender?! My car is totaled.

Saul: I'm sure it's not as bad as it looks. If you don't call the police, I'll make sure it's repaired. It'll be as good as new.

Flora: Are you trying to pull a fast one on me?

Saul: No, not at all. I'll get your car fixed, right after I wring my nephew's neck!

[end of dialogue]

Flora begins the dialogue by saying, "What happened to my car?!" Saul said, "I saw it happen (whatever happened, he saw it). A car came around the corner and hit the back of your car." So, a car was driving on one street, then turned right or left and started to drive down another street. He came around the corner, and then he hit the back of Flora's car.

Flora says, "Did the driver stop?" meaning did he stop this car and get out to see if he had hit anything. Saul says, "No, it was hit-and-run." "Hit-and-run" is a type of car accident where one driver hits a person or hits another car and then leaves immediately, without stopping to see if he has hurt anyone or damaged the car because he doesn't want to get in trouble with the police perhaps or he doesn't have car insurance, which is required in most states in the U.S. It's illegal to hit a car and then leave immediately. Hit-and-run accidents in most states will cause you to go to jail if the police find you, so you'd never want to do that. Well, that's what this driver did.

Saul says, "The driver just took off." "To take off" is a two-word phrasal verb meaning to leave a place very quickly, without saying goodbye. "Take off" actually has several meanings in English; take a look at the Learning Guide for some additional explanations. Saul says that this driver was driving like a bat out of hell. This is an old expression. A "bat" (bat) is an animal that flies at night, can bite you, and is often found in dark places. "Hell" is the word we describe the place where you go if you are not good in this world – after you die, that is. So, "a bat out of hell" means that the bat was going very quickly. Perhaps the bat is



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escaping hell, I'm not sure. But it's an old expression that means to go very quickly and dangerously. "He was driving like a bat out of hell." It's an informal expression; it's not something you would use among children perhaps. I used to hear this expression growing up; it was more common, I suppose, a few years ago, but you will still hear it. Saul says that it looks like he caused some damage. The driver caused some damage to Flora's car. "Damage" is when you break something or harm something – injure a person perhaps. It's something that makes the object in worse condition. Usually "damage" is about a thing, not a person, although you could say "I damaged my hand," but you would more likely say "I hurt my hand" or "I injured my hand." But you wouldn't say "I injured my table," you would say "I damaged my table" or "I damaged my car." So that's what happened here; the man cause some damage.

Flora says, "Some damage?! My car is totaled." Something that is "totaled" in this case means completely destroyed, ruined, something you can no longer fix, you can no longer use. We usually use this word in talking about cars. "The car was in an accident and it was totaled," meaning you could not fix the car. Flora says, "I hope whoever it was (whoever hit her) gets his license revoked." "To revoke" (revoke) means to cancel some official permission that you have, or a license. In the U.S., each state has its own driver's license, and you must get a driver's license from at least one state to drive in the U.S. If you have an international driver's license that's okay, too. "To revoke a license" then means that the state says you can no longer drive, we are taking away your license – we're revoking it. Flora says, "Better yet, I hope the judge throws the book at him and he does jail time." A "judge" is the person in an official court of law, where you go if you have committed a crime. The judge typically determines what your punishment will be. Flora says she hopes the judge throws the book at him. This expression, "to throw the book at (someone)," means to punish someone very severely, very badly, maybe saying that they committed many crimes and must spend many years in jail – in prison. That's to throw the book at someone. Usually we use this when we are talking about a judge; it could be used in talking about, for example, a principal – the head of a school who has to punish students. It's possible.

Well, Flora hopes the judge throws the book at this person, and that the person does jail time. "To do jail (jail) time" means to spend time in prison – to spend time in jail because you have done something wrong; you have broken the law, we would say, you did something against the law. Flora is, of course, very angry. She says, "But how are the police going to catch (going to find) someone who leaves the scene of the crime like this?" The "scene (scene) of the crime" is where the crime happened, where it was committed. A "crime" is, of course,



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what you do that is against the law. To steal is a crime; to kill someone is a crime. So, the scene of the crime is where the crime happened. Flora doesn't think the police could find someone who has left the scene of the crime. Then she says, "That guy must be a real jerk!" A "jerk" is an informal way of calling someone a very stupid or bad person.

Saul says, "Take it easy (meaning calm down, don't be so excited). Maybe this man was just panicked." "To be panicked" means that you are afraid, that you are very anxious, you don't know what to do. You often do the wrong thing when you panic. Saul says, "It's probably his first offense," meaning it's probably the first time that this person has had a problem, has broken the law, has committed a crime. He says, "Maybe he's young and just learning how to drive."

Flora says, "Maybe." Then she says, "Hey, why are you defending the driver?" "To defend (someone)" means to do something or say something that protects the other person, to say the other person is not guilty, they're innocent. Saul says, "Well..." Flora says, "You know the person driving the car, don't you?" She thinks Saul knows who the driver is – the name of the driver. Flora says, "You're not an innocent bystander." A "bystander" is someone who just happens to be somewhere and see something that has happened. It's a person who did not do anything wrong, but they usually saw someone who did do something wrong or were in the same place as the person who did something wrong. "Innocent" is the opposite of "guilty," meaning you didn't do anything wrong. But Flora doesn't think Saul is an innocent bystander. She says, "You're trying to talk me out of calling the police!" "To talk (someone) out of (something)" means to convince or persuade another person not to do something, to make them change their mind about doing something. "The parents tried to talk their daughter out of getting a tattoo." They tried to convince her not to put ink permanently on her skin. Something you should never do for your boyfriend or girlfriend, because someday, perhaps, they will not be your boyfriend or girlfriend any longer. I'm not speaking from personal experience, mind you!

Well, Flora says that Saul is trying to talk her out of calling the police. Saul says, "Well, I have this nephew who sometimes borrows my car, and he drives too fast. He did hit your car, but it's a simple fender bender." So Saul's nephew, which is the son of his sister or brother, borrowed Saul's car and hit Flora's car. He was the person who caused the accident. But Saul says it's not a serious accident; it's a "fender bender," a minor car accident, not serious.

Flora says, "Fender bender?! My car is totaled." I should explain that the "fender" is the front part of your car that usually is what hits another car first. "To



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bend” means to take something that is straight and make it so that it is not straight. So, a “fender bender” would be taking your fender, which is straight, and making it so that it isn’t straight because you hit it.

Flora says, “Fender bender?! My car is totaled.” Saul says, “I’m sure it’s not as bad as it looks. If you don’t call the police, I’ll make sure it’s repaired (I will do what is necessary to repair it). It will be as good as new.” “As good as new” means just like new, as if the damage had never happened.

Flora says, “Are you trying to pull a fast one on me?” “To pull a fast one on (someone)” means to trick them, to fool them, to make them believe something is true that isn’t true. Saul says, “No, not at all (I’m not trying to pull a fast one on you). I’ll get your car fixed (repaired), right after (or immediately after) I wring my nephew’s neck!” “To wring (wring) (someone’s) neck” literally means to choke or strangle someone by putting your hands around their neck. The neck is, of course, what connects your head to the rest of your body. “To wring someone’s neck” would mean basically to kill them. Now of course, Saul isn’t going to kill or strangle his nephew, even if he wants to. It’s a phrase we use to emphasize our anger at someone, to show how mad we are: “If I find the person who hit my car, I’ll wring his neck.” Or a wife might say, “If my husband doesn’t come back in an hour, when he does I’ll wring his neck.” You see, it’s something you would not use about a boss or in a formal situation. It’s used to express a great deal of anger.

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

[start of dialogue]

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Flora: Are you trying to pull a fast one on me?

Saul: No, not at all. I'll get your car fixed, right after I wring my nephew's neck!

[end of dialogue]

I'm not trying to pull a fast one on you. This script was, in fact, written by Dr. Lucy Tse.

From Los Angeles, California, I'm Jeff McQuillan. Thank you for listening. Come back and listen to us again, won't you, on ESL Podcast.

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