



**ESL Podcast 645 – Shaving Your Face**

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**GLOSSARY**

**to set (one's) alarm** – to change the settings on one's alarm clock so that it makes a loud noise to wake one up at the desired time

\* I set my alarm for 6:00 so I could get ready for my 8:30 flight.

**tempted** – having a strong desire to do something bad, or something that one knows one should not do

\* Marcos was tempted to lie about his education on the job application, but he decided to tell the truth.

**to skip** – to not do something that one normally does; to not go somewhere when one is supposed to

\* How does the school punish students who skip class?

**shave** – the removal of the hair on one's face or body by cutting it extremely close to the skin

\* Benjamin's barber provides a free shave with every haircut.

**stubble** – very short pieces of hair that grow after one has shaved

\* She doesn't like to kiss her boyfriend when he has stubble on his chin, because it scratches her face.

**clean-shaven** – the smooth skin that appears not to have any hair shortly after the skin has been shaved very closely; without any unshaven hairs

\* All the soldiers must be clean-shaven for the morning inspection.

**five-o'clock shadow** – the appearance of a dark color on a man's face that appears at the end of the day when a man hasn't shaved for a few hours

\* No matter how well Hank shaves in the morning, he always gets a five-o'clock shadow.

**beard** – long hair over a man's cheeks and chin, but not over his upper lip

\* Santa Claus has a long, white beard.

**shaving cream** – a foam or cream that one applies to the skin before shaving to make the process easier and smoother

\* If you run out of shaving cream, try putting a lot of soap on your skin before shaving.



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**to lather up** – to rub a lot of lotion, soap, or cream over one’s skin so that foam-like bubbles appear

\* Don’t forget to lather up behind your ears!

**razor** – a small tool held in one’s hand, with very sharp pieces of metal at one end, used to shave off hair

\* Please keep your razors hidden from the kids. We don’t want them to cut themselves accidentally.

**sharp** – with a very thin edge or point that gives something the ability to cut other things easily

\* Be careful! That knife is really sharp.

**razor blade** – the small, very sharp pieces of metal that are used for shaving and can be replaced on most razors

\* How often do you change your razor blades?

**dull** – not sharp, especially when something should be sharp but has been used a lot

\* This knife is so dull that it won’t even cut a tomato anymore.

**electric razor** – an electronic tool held in one’s hand to shave off hair

\* With this electric razor, there’s no risk of cutting yourself, but you don’t get a very good shave, either.

**to nick** – to accidentally make a small cut in one’s skin, causing bleeding

\* Juliana nicked her fingertip with the scissors.

**pothole** – a large hole on a road or path caused by people traveling over it and rock being removed gradually over time

\* The road to Grandpa’s house is full of potholes and we have to drive slowly to try to avoid them.



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**COMPREHENSION QUESTIONS**

1. Which of these things might need to be sharpened?
  - a) Shaving cream.
  - b) A dull razor.
  - c) An electric razor.
  
2. What happened when he tried to shave quickly?
  - a) He accidentally cut the skin on his neck.
  - b) He missed the hairs on his neck.
  - c) He hurt his neck by stretching too far.

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**WHAT ELSE DOES IT MEAN?**

**shave**

The word “shave,” in this podcast, means the removal of hair from one’s face or body by cutting it extremely close to the skin: “Gavin has had a moustache for years, but we all agree he’d look better with a good shave.” The phrase “to shave (something) off” means to reduce something by a small amount, or to make something slightly smaller or less expensive: “The doctor said I should shave off a few pounds.” Or, “The company reengineered its design to shave a few dollars off the sales price.” Finally, the phrase “a close shave” refers to a situation where one almost had a problem, but managed to avoid it: “That was a close shave! If you hadn’t moved to the side of the road, that other car would have hit us!”

**to nick**

In this podcast, the verb “to nick” means to accidentally make a small cut in one’s skin, causing bleeding: “Siena nicked her hand while picking up the pieces of broken glass.” A “nick” can also be a small cut or dent in something: “The table has a few nicks and scratches, but overall it is in very good condition.” The phrase “in the nick of time” means just in time, or at the last minute: “Wayne turned in his application in the nick of time.” Or, “Damien found a new job in the nick of time, right before his family ran through its savings.” Finally, as a man’s name, “Nick” is a nickname (short version) for “Nicholas”: “My real name is Nicholas, but most of my friends call me Nick.”



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**CULTURE NOTE**

Most American men “stick to the basics” (use only the simplest things) when it comes to shaving: a can of shaving cream and a razor. However, there are many other shaving products that men can purchase to help them shave their face or “maintain” (keep in good condition) a beard.

For example, men can purchase “elaborate” (fancy and detailed) “shaving brushes,” which are used to apply shaving cream. They can also purchase very expensive shaving creams, lotions, and powders for a “smoother” (softer, with a flat, even surface) shave. There are also many different kinds of razors. A “disposable razor” is designed to be thrown away once the blades become dull. Other razors have blades that can be purchased separately and replaced when they become dull.

Men who have a moustache or long “sideburns” (the hair that grows down the side of a man’s cheeks, connected to the hair on his head, but not connected to a beard) often use special “moustache combs” and “moustache scissors” to help them “straighten” (put something in a straight line) the hairs and make sure they are all the same length.

Some men also like to “apply” (use; put on) “aftershave,” which is a “perfumed” (with a nice smell) liquid, often with a little alcohol to prevent “infection” (contamination and irritation caused by bacteria) where the skin has been nicked. Other men apply an aftershave lotion that “moisturizes” (adds liquid to) their “facial” (on the face) skin.

A “shaving kit” contains most or all of these shaving products, and sometimes shaving kits are given to men as gifts.

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



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**COMPLETE TRANSCRIPT**

Welcome to English as a Second Language Podcast number 645: Shaving Your Face.

This is English as a Second Language Podcast episode 645. I'm your host, Dr. Jeff McQuillan, coming to you from the Center for Educational Development, right here in 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 – and make your day a little happier!

This episode is called “Shaving Your Face.” It’s a story about me shaving; that is, removing hair from my face. Let’s get started.

[start of story]

I forgot to set my alarm last night and I woke up later than usual. I was tempted to skip my morning shave, but I hate having long stubble all day. I like to be clean-shaven every day. I’m the kind of guy who gets a five-o’clock shadow early in the afternoon, so if I skipped my morning shave, I’d look like I was growing a beard by the end of the day.

I went into the bathroom and picked up my shaving cream. I lathered up my face and checked to see that my razor was sharp and that I didn’t need to replace the razor blades. There’s nothing worse than trying to shave with a dull razor. I tried using an electric razor for a while, but I could never get a close enough shave.

I tried to focus on shaving my neck, chin, and cheeks. I was in too much of a hurry, though, and nicked myself on the neck. I hate it when that happens! I knew I was in too much of a hurry, but I was going to be really late. Oh, I did it again! This time I nicked myself on the chin. “Okay,” I said to myself, “slow down. You’d rather be a little late to work than to end up with a face full of potholes, right?”

[end of story]

I begin the story by saying that I forgot to set my alarm last night. “To set your alarm” is to change the settings on your alarm clock so that it makes a loud noise at the time you want to get up. Most of us have some sort of alarm clock next to our beds that helps us wake up with a loud noise or perhaps music. The verb we



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use it is “to set” (set) your alarm. Well, I forgot to set my alarm, which means that the alarm clock did not ring – notice the verb “ring” with alarm clocks – and therefore I woke up later than usual. In real life I rarely use an alarm clock; I’m almost always up early, around 5:30-6:00, but if it’s something very important then I might use my alarm clock if I’m traveling and need to get up very early.

I say that I was tempted to skip my morning shave. “To be tempted” is to have a strong desire usually to do something bad, something that you know you should not do. “The chocolate cookies tempted me,” I really wanted to eat one even though I didn’t need the extra sugar and fat. Well, I was tempted “to skip,” meaning not to do something I normally do, my morning shave. “Shave” is removing the hair usually from your face, or it could be from some other part of your body. Many women shave their legs, for example. I shave my head in addition to my face – that is, the top of my head. So, “I was tempted to skip my morning shave, but I hate having long stubble all day.” “Stubble” (stubble) are very short pieces of hair that grow usually on your face after you shave. So you shave your face, and then the next day you’ll have very little pieces of hair; we call that hair stubble, especially if it is something that appears right after you shave. “I hate having long stubble all day,” I said, “I like (instead) to be clean-shaven.” “Shaven” is “shave” with an “n” at the end; it’s the past participle. “Clean-shaven” is an adjective meaning that my skin is smooth; I don’t have any hair coming out of my body where I shaved. So, clean-shaven is that you completely removed the hair by shaving it.

I say that I’m the kind of guy (I’m the type of man) who gets a five-o’clock shadow early in the afternoon. A “five-o’clock shadow” means that you get a dark color on your face by the end of the day because your hair is already growing back. “Five o’clock” would mean five o’clock in the afternoon, so that by the time you are finished working you already look like you need to shave; some men grow their hair very quickly. Truth is I’m not actually someone who would get a five-o’clock shadow early in the afternoon, but that’s what the story says. I continue saying, “if I skipped my morning shave, I’d look like I was growing a beard by the end of the day.” A “beard” (beard) is something you get by letting your hair on your face grow, not shaving it. It especially refers to the hair on the cheeks and around the jaw, as well as on the upper neck. The hair immediately underneath your nose would be called a “mustache” (mustache). So, we sometimes refer to these together; some men have a beard and a mustache, some people just have a mustache, and there are some men who just have a beard or a small beard that has become popular. By the way, in British English “mustache,” like a lot of words, is spelled slightly differently; there’s an “o” in the word – (mou) instead of just (mu). In American English there’s no “o”.



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I say that I went into the bathroom and picked up my shaving cream. “Shaving cream” is something that you put typically on your face or wherever you are shaving so that it’s easier to remove the hair; it makes the hair a little softer, it makes it easier for you to shave it. Shaving cream is typically white. “I lathered up my face and checked to see that my razor was sharp.” “To lather (lather) up” is another one of those famous two-word phrasal verbs that we talk about so much. It means to put a lot of soap or cream on your skin and move it around – move your hand against the skin so that there is a foam that comes up, a foam with little bubbles in it. The air makes it foam up, we would say. So, that’s to lather up; that’s what a man will do before he shaves his face. I also checked to see that my razor was sharp. The “razor” (razor) is a small tool that you hold in your hand that has a very sharp piece or pieces of metal at one end, it’s like a little stick, and you use that to shave the hair off of your face. The little sharp pieces of metal that actually cut the hair off of your face are called “razor blades” (blades). A razor blade that is sharp will cut the hair off easily. A razor blade that is dull, that has been used many times, will not cut the hair off easily and might cause you to cut your skin – to actually cut your face so that it’s bleeding, so that there is blood coming out. That’s not normally what we want to happen, so you always want to get a sharp razor blade to put on your razor. “Razor” is the whole thing; “razor blade” is just the thin pieces of metal. I have disposable razor blades, which means you use them a few times and then you throw them out. There are even disposable razors, where the razor blade is part of the one-piece razor, and when you’re done with you throw the whole razor out. Normally, however, you have a razor and then you have razor blades that you put on and take off as they get dull.

“I tried using an electric razor for a while, but I could never get a close enough shave.” An “electric razor,” you probably know, is an electronic tool that you can use to shave. Normally you don’t have to put shaving cream on. Some men like it because it’s convenient; my father always used to shave with an electric razor. I actually did try for a while, but I really didn’t like it. I could not get a close enough shave; in other words, it always left little pieces of hair and I didn’t like that. I wanted to be clean-shaven.

“I tried to focus on shaving my neck, my chin, and my cheeks. I was in too much of a hurry (I was going too fast), and nicked myself on the neck.” “To nick” (nick) here means to accidentally cut your skin with a razor blade causing it to bleed – causing blood to come out of it. Men sometimes nick themselves; they have little cuts in their neck or on their face when they shave. You have to be careful when you shave, of course. The verb “nick” has a couple of different meanings in English; take a look at the Learning Guide for some more examples. You can



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also find some additional meanings of the word “shave” in the wonderful Learning Guide.

Well, I nicked myself on the neck. “I hate it when that happens!” I say. That’s a popular expression: “I hate it when that happens,” I hate when that situation is present, when that thing happens. Sometimes people say it kind of as a joke, but that’s literally what it means, you don’t like this situation. I say that I knew I was in too much of a hurry, but I was going to be really late. Well, this time I nicked myself on the “chin,” the end of your jaw line, the part that is right underneath your mouth. It’s sort of where the face and the neck come together, right underneath your mouth and nose. “Okay,” I said to myself, “slow down (go more slowly). You’d rather be a little late to work than to end up with (or to have the result of) a face full of potholes.” A “pothole” (pothole – one word) is a large hole in a road or a street that is caused by many cars going back and forth. Here, I’m using it as a joke. To say that I would have a face full potholes means that I would have little cuts all over my face, just like holes in a street.

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

[start of story]

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[end of story]



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I'm never tempted to skip listening to these ESL Podcasts, because the script is written by our very own Dr. Lucy Tse.

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

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