



ESL Podcast 653 – Reading Product Reviews

GLOSSARY

on the fritz – not working very well; undependable and likely to break soon

* Their computer is on the fritz, so they have to save their files every few minutes.

highly-rated – determined to be of good quality compared to similar products

* According to the travel guide, this is one of the most highly-rated restaurants in town.

model – one design of a machine or other product, possibly one of many offered by a particular company

* Which Toyota model do you prefer: the Corolla or the Camry?

on sale – offered for purchase at a discounted, lower price for a limited period of time

* Warm winter jackets are usually on sale in February and March, when stores want to start displaying clothing for spring and summer.

to read up on (something) – to read a lot of information to learn about something before seeing or experiencing it

* Bryce has spent the past few weeks reading up on the country so he'll know what to expect when he gets there.

review – a written opinion about the quality of a product or service, shared with other people so that they can decide which product or service they want to purchase for themselves

* Have you read any reviews of the new horror movie?

a waste of time – something that is not a good use of one's time; something that one should not spend time doing because it doesn't result in any benefits or advantages

* Making your bed each morning is a waste of time. You're just going to sleep in it again in the evening, right?

to go with (one's) gut – to do what one feels or believes is right, without doing any research or asking for other people's opinions

* When I don't know the answer to a multiple-choice test question, I just go with my gut and pick one.



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value – the relationship between the usefulness or quality of something and the amount one has to pay for it

* CFC light bulbs are more expensive than incandescent light bulbs, but they are a better value because they last longer.

reliable – something that can be trusted; something that one knows will work as expected each time it is needed

* This car may be ugly, but it's reliable and always takes me wherever I need to go.

durable – strong and not easy to break; remaining in good, like-new condition

* This vase looks fragile, but it's actually very durable. It didn't break even when we dropped it onto the sidewalk.

customer support – services offered by a company to its customers when they have problems with a product or service, or with the amount of money they have been charged

* If you're not happy with your purchase, send a complaint message to customer support and see if they'll refund your money.

defective – not working properly; with a problem or flaw; not manufactured correctly

* We had to take the defective CD player back to the store for a refund.

poorly designed – with a bad design; with a problem in the way the pieces of something are put together, or the way they work together

* This stroller is poorly designed, because it's too difficult to get a baby in and out of it.

overall – considering all the factors or parts of something; comprehensively

* The teacher found a few errors in my essay, but he said that overall it was very well written.

all the better – even better; something that is an improvement or makes a situation more pleasant, beneficial, or advantageous

* They're already offering to sell us the boat at a great price, but if they'll deliver it to our house for free, all the better.

enough said – an informal phrase used when something is very obvious and no other information needs to be added, often used humorously

* - Will it be a big party?

- We've sent out more than 700 invitations. Enough said.



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COMPREHENSION QUESTIONS

1. Why did Andrea buy a new TV?
 - a) Because the old one was stolen.
 - b) Because the old one wasn't working well.
 - c) Because the old one belonged to her roommate.

 2. What does Andrea mean when she says, "I go with my gut"?
 - a) She leaves when she gets hungry.
 - b) She does whatever she feels is right.
 - c) She feels very brave.
-

WHAT ELSE DOES IT MEAN?

to read up on (something)

The phrase "to read up on (something)," in this podcast, means to read a lot of information to learn about something before seeing it or experiencing it: "Don't you think you should read up on plumbing before you try to replace your kitchen sink?" The phrase "to read into (something)" means to interpret something as if it had more meaning than it actually does: "I was only trying to be friendly when I asked her to join me for dinner. I hope she doesn't read into it and think I was asking her out on a date." Finally, the phrase "to read something (over)" means to review a document, especially to look for errors: "Would you mind reading over this report before I give it to my boss?"

value

In this podcast, the word "value" means the relationship between the usefulness or quality of something and the amount one has to pay for it: "An all-you-can-eat buffet offers great value if you're really hungry." The word "value" can also mean how much money something is worth: "Home values have fallen in recent years." "Market value" is how much something can be sold for: "What's the market value of that painting?" The word "values" also refers to what people think is most important: "Most people share the values of honesty, kindness, and generosity." Finally, the phrase "shock value" refers to something's ability to surprise someone: "Some driver-education courses use photographs of car accidents because their shock value can make new drivers realize how important it is to drive safely."



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CULTURE NOTE

When Americans buy and sell cars, they often “refer to” (look for information in) the “Kelley Blue Book” to “set” (establish; create) the selling price. The Kelley Blue Book is a company, book, and website that lists many different “makes” (companies; manufacturers) and models of cars, as well as their “suggested” (recommended) sales price.

The price of each car depends not only on its make and model, but also on its age, “condition” (quality), “features” (special characteristics), and “odometer reading” (how many miles a car has been driven), as well as whether it has been in an accident and how well it has been “maintained” (received recommended services like oil changes).

Actually, the Kelley Blue Book lists three sales prices. The first is the “retail value,” or the amount one should expect to pay for the car at an auto “dealership” (a business that sells cars to consumers). The second is the “trade-in value,” or the amount of money one should expect to receive for a car when giving it to a dealership as part of the payment for a different, more expensive car. The third is the “private-party value,” or the amount one should expect to pay when buying the car from an individual.

The Kelley Blue Book is helpful, because it is difficult to know the value of an older car, especially one sold by its owner and not by a dealership. A printed “resource” (something that helps one do something) that most people agree on can make the process of “negotiation” (reaching agreement, especially on the price of something) between the buyer and seller much faster and easier.

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



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COMPLETE TRANSCRIPT

Welcome to English as a Second Language Podcast number 653: Reading Product Reviews.

This is English as a Second Language Podcast episode 653. I'm your host, Dr. Jeff McQuillan, coming to you from the Center for Educational Development here in Los Angeles – beautiful Los Angeles, California.

Our website is eslpod.com. Download a Learning Guide for this episode from our website, where you can get all the extra vocabulary, definitions, sample sentences, cultural notes, and a complete transcript of this episode.

Our dialogue today is between Dominic and Andrea. It's going to be about when you are looking to buy something and you decide to see what other people think of that product, what we would call a "product review." Let's get started.

[start of dialogue]

Dominic: Do you want some help with that box?

Andrea: Sure, thanks.

Dominic: What is it?

Andrea: It's a new TV. My old one has been on the fritz for a week and I needed a new one.

Dominic: Is this a highly-rated model?

Andrea: Highly-rated? I just went to the electronics store and bought it. It was on sale.

Dominic: You mean you didn't read up on it before you bought it? You didn't look at the reviews?

Andrea: No, I never do that. I think that's a waste of time. I go with my gut.

Dominic: But if you read the reviews, you'll know which product gives you the best value, which is the most reliable and durable, and which company has good customer support. Nobody wants to buy something that's defective or poorly designed. Don't you care about those things?



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Andrea: Maybe, but who has time to do that? Instead, I go to the store and see which one I like overall. If it's on sale, that's all the better. That's worked for me so far.

Dominic: Is that how you bought your old TV?

Andrea: Yeah.

Dominic: Enough said.

[end of dialogue]

Dominic asks Andrea, "Do you want some help with that box?" Andrea says, "Sure, thanks." Dominic asks, "What is it?" Andrea says, "It's a new TV (a new television). My old one has been on the fritz for a week and I needed a new one." The expression "to be on the fritz" (fritz) is an informal one meaning it isn't working very well; it is unreliable; undependable; sometimes it works, sometimes it doesn't.

Dominic says, "Is this (meaning this TV) a highly-rated model?" Something that is "highly-rated" (rated) is something that people have a good opinion of, something that is made well. A "model," in this case, is one particular design of a machine or a product by some company. For example, Toyota (car company) has different models: the Corolla, the Camry, and so forth. They have different kinds of cars – different looks to their cars. That's all part of the particular or specific model. Dominic asks if this TV is a highly-rated model. Andrea says, "Highly-rated? I just went to the electronics store," places where you would buy a TV or a radio, possibly a computer – these are all electronics. She says, "I just went to the electronics store and bought it. It was on sale." Something that is "on sale" usually means that it has a lower price than normal; it is discounted, you can buy it for less.

Dominic says, "You mean you didn't read up on it before you bought it?" "To read up on (something)" – notice the two prepositions: "up" and "on" – means to read a lot of information about something, to learn a lot about something. "I need to read up on American history for my history test tomorrow." Or, "I need to read up on investing money, because I'm getting old and I don't want to be poor when I'm old." The verb "to read" has lots of different phrasal verbs associated with it; take a look at our Learning Guide for some examples of those. Dominic says, "You mean (that is, do you mean) you didn't read up on it before you bought it? You didn't look at the reviews?" A "review" is someone's, usually printed but it



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could be spoken, opinion about a particular product; what they think is good, what they think is bad about it. You can find these in magazines and newspapers; you can find them very easily on the Internet. Apparently, Andrea did not read the reviews; in fact, she says, “No, I never do that (I never read the reviews). I think that’s a waste of time.” Something that is a “waste (waste) of time” is something that is not worth spending time on, something that you shouldn’t spend a lot of time on because it isn’t going to give you very much. Andrea says, “I go with my gut (gut).” This expression, “to go with your gut,” means to do what you feel is right without doing any research or asking other people’s opinions, or at least not listening to them if you do. Your “gut” is an informal way of describing the stomach, the middle part of your body. The idea is that you’re not necessarily using your brain – your intellect, you’re using your feelings and emotions to make a decision.

Dominic tells her, “But if you read the reviews, you’ll know which product gives you the best value.” “Value” means the relationship between how much something costs and how good it is. If you buy a really good car at a low price, we would say that you are getting good value. Dominic says that the reviews will tell you which product gives you the best value, which is the most reliable and durable, and which company has good customer support. Something that is “reliable” (reliable) is something you can trust, something that is dependable. “Durable” (durable) is something that is strong, something that will not break easily. The opposite of “durable” is “fragile” (fragile). Here, Dominic is really using the word to mean that it will last a long time, that you can use it for many years and it will still be good.

Dominic also mentions finding a company that has good “customer support,” we might also say “customer service.” That is, a company where if you have a problem you can call them or email them and they will help you with the problem. Or, if there’s a serious problem they will give you a refund or allow you to get something else. That’s good customer support. Dominic says, “Nobody wants to buy something that’s defective or poorly designed.” Something that is “defective” is not working properly, something that has a serious problem or a flaw, probably because it was made wrong. The company that made it did something wrong – it’s defective. When we say something is “poorly designed,” we mean that it is a bad design. There’s a problem in the way that the pieces go together; there’s a problem in the way that the company decided to make it, maybe the shape is wrong, or the pieces don’t fit together very well. That would be something that is poorly designed. A umbrella that had holes in it would be poorly designed. The purpose of an umbrella is to keep the rain from falling on you. If the umbrella had holes in it, that would be obviously a very poor design.



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Dominic says, “Don’t you care about those things?” Andrea says, “Maybe, but who has time to do that (to do all that research)? Instead, I go to the store and see which one I like overall.” “Overall” (overall) means considering everything together, comprehensively, when we consider all the different parts of something. Andrea says, “If it’s on sale (if the television, in this case, is on sale), that’s all the better.” The expression “all the better” means even better, something that is an improvement in the situation, that makes it more pleasant or cheaper or more beneficial. “That’s worked for me so far,” Andrea says, meaning that is how I’ve always done things and I have been successful.

Dominic says, “Is that how you bought your old TV (the one that doesn’t work anymore)?” Andrea says, “Yeah.” Dominic says, “Enough said.” “Enough said” is an informal phrase that we use when something is so obvious that you don’t need to add any additional information. What Dominic is saying here is that because Andrea doesn’t read the product reviews she buys things like her old television that don’t work, and this is going to be perhaps a problem with her new television. He doesn’t need to detail this argument; he doesn’t need to explain this anymore, it should be obvious to Andrea what the problem is with her thinking – with her logic. That’s why he just says, “Enough said.”

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

[start of dialogue]

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[end of dialogue]

We think our ESL Podcasts provide you with good value, thanks to the wonderful scripts by 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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