



ESL Podcast 667 – Trying to Remember

GLOSSARY

to hurry up – to rush; to do something more quickly than usual

* Hurry up! We need to run to the bus stop or we'll miss the bus!

combination – the series of numbers, usually three sets of two digits, needed to open a door, lid, or lock

* The combination for Ryan's bicycle lock is 62-31-64.

lock – a device used to close a door, lid, or other thing so that it can be opened only with a key or combination, to keep something safe and not allow it to be stolen

* Someone broke the lock on the door and stole most of our merchandise.

to know (something) by heart – to have something memorized; to know something and be able to say it without reading it

* Do you know any poems by heart?

on the tip of (one's) tongue – something that one would normally be able to say, but has temporarily forgotten and is not able to say right now, although it seems like one will be able to remember and say it soon

* The actor's name is on the tip of my tongue, but I just can't think of it right now.

digit – a numerical character; a one-character number: 0, 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 7, 8, or 9

* U.S. social security numbers are nine-digit numbers.

to have (something) down cold – to have something memorized very well so that it would be impossible for one to forget it or be uncertain about it

* Dmitry thought he had his lines down cold, but on opening night he got nervous and couldn't remember what he was supposed to say on stage.

to slip (one's) mind – for one to not be able to remember something temporarily, even though one normally knows it

* I'm so sorry I forgot your birthday! It slipped my mind.

mnemonic – a mental trick used to remember something, often a poem or a funny sentence

* Most students use a mnemonic to learn the names of the planets: "Mother visits every Monday just so uncle never pouts" helps them remember "Mars, Venus, Earth, Mercury, Jupiter, Saturn, Uranus, Neptune, Pluto."



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to jog (one's) memory – to do something that helps someone remember something; to cause someone to remember something

* Hearing a certain song sometimes help to jog my memory, especially if it's the same song that was playing when I first heard or learned the fact I'm trying to remember.

to have to do with – to be related to something; to be connected to something; to be relevant

* This book has to do with the Mexican-American War.

to let (someone) in on – to let someone know about something, especially when it is a secret known by only a few people

* If I let you in on a secret, will you promise not to tell anyone?

to lie through (one's) teeth – to tell a very bold, daring, or outrageous lie

* I can't believe you've been lying through your teeth all this time!

to concentrate – to focus; to think very clearly about something, not being distracted by other things, people or ideas

* How can you concentrate on your homework if you're listening to music and watching TV while reading the textbook?

to run for (one's) life – to run as quickly as one can, as if there is the possibility of death if one does not move quickly enough

* Run for your life! There's a bomb in that building!

if you know what's good for you – a phrase used to show that one's advice is based on the other person's best interests and that he or she will benefit by following that advice

* If you know what's good for you, you'll stop falling asleep at the office.



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COMPREHENSION QUESTIONS

1. What does Randal mean when he says, “I thought you knew it by heart”?
 - a) He thought she had the combination memorized.
 - b) He thought she was in love with Rob.
 - c) He thought she had the combination written on a heart-shaped piece of jewelry.

 2. What does Randal mean when he says Marjorie lied through her teeth?
 - a) She told the lie in a whisper.
 - b) She told the lie while eating.
 - c) She told the lie very boldly.
-

WHAT ELSE DOES IT MEAN?

combination

The word “combination,” in this podcast, means the series of numbers, usually three sets of two digits, needed to open a door, lid, or lock: “The combination on his briefcase is just his birthday: 04-17-65.” Normally a “combination” is a mixture of two or more things that are used together: “She felt a combination of excitement and fear.” Or, “This restaurant serves an interesting combination of Greek and Thai foods.” The word “combination” can also refer to something used for more than one purpose: “This room is our combination guest room and home office.” Finally, the phrase “a winning combination” refers to two or more things or people that work very well together: “Lilia is a great salesperson and Perry is an excellent web designer, so when they opened an online business together, it was a winning combination.”

concentrate

In this podcast, the verb “to concentrate” means to focus and think very clearly about something, without being distracted by other things, people, or ideas: “It’s hard to concentrate on what he’s saying, because his hair is so wild.” The verb “to concentrate” also means for a lot of something to be present in a particular area, or for many things to be in the same place: “The worst traffic is concentrated on the interstate freeway just north of the city.” A “fruit concentrate” is a juice from which the water has been removed, so that it can be transported and then water can be added again later: “This juice is made from 100% real orange juice concentrate, with no added sugar.”



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CULTURE NOTE

Americans use many mnemonics to remember lists of things that should be in a particular order. For example, some people remember the colors in the rainbow as:

Richard Of York “Gave Battle” (fought) “In Vain” (without success).
(Red, Orange, Yellow, Green, Blue, Indigo, Violet)

Biology students sometimes memorize the “order of taxonomy” (a system for classifying animals and plants) with this mnemonic:

Kids Prefer Cheese Over Fried Green Spinach.
(Kingdom, Phylum, Class, Order, Family, Genus, Species)

This mnemonic helps music students remember which “notes” (musical tones) are on each line of the “treble staff” (five lines used to write higher musical sounds):

Every Good Boy Deserves “Fudge” (a sweet chocolate candy).
(E, G, B, D, F)

The notes shown on the spaces between the lines are F, A, C, E, and most students learn them as **Face**.

For the “bass staff” (five lines used to write lower musical sounds), the mnemonic is:

Good Boys Do Fine Always.
(G, B, D, F, A)

And the spaces on the bass staff are memorized as:

All Cows Eat Grass.
(A, C, E, G)

In math, the “order of operations” (instructions for which calculations should be performed first) can be memorized with this mnemonic:

Please Excuse My Dear Aunt Sally.
(Parentheses, exponents, multiplication, division, addition, subtraction)

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



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COMPLETE TRANSCRIPT

Welcome to English as a Second Language Podcast number 667: Trying to Remember.

This is English as a Second Language Podcast episode 667. I'm your host, Dr. Jeff McQuillan, coming to you from the Center for Educational Development in beautiful Los Angeles, California, where the sun is shining and there are no clouds in the sky.

Go to our website at eslpod.com and download a Learning Guide for this episode to help you improve your English – and to have a little more sunshine in your life!

This episode is a dialogue between Randal and Marjorie. It's about trying to remember something, phrases related to when you forget something, something that happens to...um...well...let's get started.

[start of dialogue]

Randal: Hurry up. Rob will be here any minute.

Marjorie: I can't remember the combination to this lock.

Randal: I thought you knew it by heart.

Marjorie: It's on the tip of my tongue, but I can't seem to remember the last two digits. It's 73 or 63 or 38...

Randal: You said you had it down cold!

Marjorie: I do know it, but it's just slipped my mind. I'll figure it out. I used a mnemonic to remember those last two digits. I just need to jog my memory. The last digits have to do with my birthday, or is it Rob's birthday...

Randal: I only let you in on this little joke we're going to play on Rob because you said you knew the combination to the lock on his bike. I should have known you were lying through your teeth.

Marjorie: I wasn't lying. I really do know it. If you'll just stop talking so I can concentrate...



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Randal: Too late. Here comes Rob. Run for your life, if you know what's good for you!

[end of dialogue]

Randal says to Marjorie, "Hurry up." "Hurry up" is a two-word phrasal verb meaning to do something more quickly than what you are doing now, to rush, to do it faster. Randal is telling Marjorie to hurry up, meaning finish what she is doing faster, because Rob will be here any minute – Rob will be here soon.

Marjorie says, "I can't remember the combination to this lock." A "lock" is a device, something you use to make sure no one opens or goes in a certain place. You can have a lock on your door so that no one can open your door without having a key. You can also have a lock on a bicycle, and often those locks don't have keys. They have instead what's called a "combination." The "combination" is the series of numbers that you need to know, and you turn a little wheel back and forth to these numbers, and when you go to the right numbers – the right combination – then the lock will open. "Combination" has some other meanings as well; take a look at our Learning Guide for some additional explanations.

Randal says, "I thought you knew it by heart." "To know (something) by heart" means to have something memorized, to be able to say it without reading it. We often know our passwords by heart, or at least some of them. You may know the names of all of your cousins by heart. I sure don't; I have too many. I barely know the names of my brothers and sisters. I do know my wife's name – usually!

Well, Randal says to Marjorie, "I thought you knew (this combination to the lock) by heart." Marjorie says, "It's on the tip of my tongue." The "tip" is the end part of something in this case. But the expression "to be on the tip of your tongue" means that you normally remember but you have temporarily forgotten it. You think you will be able to remember it soon, but you can't think of it at this very moment – right now. Marjorie says, "I can't seem to remember the last two digits," which in this case means numbers. She says, "It's 73 or 63 or 38..." Randal then says, "I thought you had it down cold!" "To have (something) down cold" is the same as knowing it by heart; it means to memorize it, you memorize it so well you will never forget it

Marjorie says, "I do know it, but it's just slipped my mind." When we say something "slips (slips) your mind" we mean you normally remember it but you are not able to remember it right now. It's similar to "being on the tip of your tongue." However, we often use "it slipped my mind" when we are talking about things that we forgot, such as an appointment. "I was supposed to go to the



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doctor today, but I got very busy at my work and it slipped my mind.” I forgot it; I did not remember it. Marjorie says, “I’ll figure it out (I’ll somehow remember and solve this problem).” She says, “I used a mnemonic to remember those last two digits.” A “mnemonic” (mnemonic – notice the first letter, “m”, is silent; you do not pronounce it) is a mental trick, I guess we could say, to remember something, often something that is sort of silly or unusual. Or, it could be a song or an expression that somehow helps you remember something else. That’s what Marjorie says she used to remember the last two digits, or two numbers, of the combination to the lock. She says, “I just need to jog (jog) my memory.” “To jog your memory” means to do something that helps you remember something. Sometimes, for example, I go into the kitchen from the living room of my house wanting to get something and I forget what it is I was going to get. So I go back into the living room, where I had originally thought of it, and sometimes just being in that same place jogs my memory. Or you may have other things that jog your memory. You may be listening to the radio and they have an announcement about healthcare, and you think, “Oh, yeah. I have to pay my health insurance this month.” That story on the radio jogged your memory. Marjorie says, “The last digits have to do with my birthday, or is it Rob’s birthday...” “To have to do with (something)” means to be related to or connected to something. You might say, “This book has to do with the American Revolution,” that’s what it is about, that is what it is connected or related to. In this case, the numbers are somehow related to Marjorie’s birthday; but she isn’t sure, maybe it was Rob’s birthday.

Randal then says, “I only let you in on this little joke we’re going to play on Rob because you said you knew the combination to the lock on his bike.” “To let (someone) in on (something)” is an expression that means to let someone know about something secret. In fact, sometimes we use the phrase “I’m going to let you in on a little secret,” I’m going to tell you something that no one else knows. Randal says that he only let Marjorie in on this joke that they are going to “play on” Rob, meaning they are going to do to Rob, “because you said you knew the combination to lock on his bike.” So they’re going to play some trick, we might call it a “prank” (prank), on Rob, do something that they think will be funny. Randal says, “I should have known you were lying through your teeth.” “To lie through your teeth” means to say something with a lot of confidence that you know is not true. It’s something that is very bold, we might say, something that is perhaps a very big lie but you say it confidently. In other words, Randal thinks Marjorie was lying – was not telling him the truth – when she told him that she knew the combination to Rob’s bike lock.

Marjorie says, “I wasn’t lying. I really do know it. If you just stop talking so I can concentrate...” “To concentrate” means to focus, to think very clearly about something and not be distracted, not think about other things that you shouldn’t



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be worrying about right now. Randal says, “Too late (meaning it’s too late). Here comes Rob.” So Rob is now arriving to wherever Randal and Marjorie are. Randal says, “Run for your life, if you know what’s good for you!” “To run for your life” means to run as quickly as you can, as fast as you can. The idea is if you don’t you might be killed; you might lose your life. Normally it’s not that serious. We use this expression to mean to run very quickly, to get away from somewhere as fast as you can. Randal says to Marjorie, “Run for your life, if you know what’s good for you!” That phrase is used to show that your advice – what you are telling them or recommending to them – is something that will help them, they will benefit from your advice. “If you know what’s good for you,” you’re saying what I am telling you will help you, it will be a good thing for you.

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

[start of dialogue]

Randal: Hurry up. Rob will be here any minute.

Marjorie: I can’t remember the combination to this lock.

Randal: I thought you knew it by heart.

Marjorie: It’s on the tip of my tongue, but I can’t seem to remember the last two digits. It’s 73 or 63 or 38...

Randal: You said you had it down cold!

Marjorie: I do know it, but it’s just slipped my mind. I’ll figure it out. I used a mnemonic to remember those last two digits. I just need to jog my memory. The last digits have to do with my birthday, or is it Rob’s birthday...

Randal: I only let you in on this little joke we’re going to play on Rob because you said you knew the combination to the lock on his bike. I should have known you were lying through your teeth.

Marjorie: I wasn’t lying. I really do know it. If you’ll just stop talking so I can concentrate...

Randal: Too late. Here comes Rob. Run for your life, if you know what’s good for you!

[end of dialogue]



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If you're a regular listener to ESL Podcast you should know the name of our scriptwriter by heart; you should have it down cold. If you don't, let me jog your memory. Her first name is Lucy. That's right, it's Dr. Lucy Tse.

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

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