



**Using English at Work**  
Table of Contents

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Lesson 1 - Arriving at Work.....	2
Lesson 2 - Checking Mail, Email, and Voicemail.....	10
Lesson 3 - Attending the Morning Meeting.....	18
Lesson 4 - Working at My Desk.....	25
Lesson 5 - Taking a Break and Eating Lunch.....	33
Lesson 6 - Having Computer Problems.....	41
Lesson 7 - Scheduling a Meeting.....	50
Lesson 8 - Meeting With the Boss.....	58
Lesson 9 - Leaving Work.....	67
Lesson 10 - Socializing With Coworkers.....	75



**Using English at Work**  
Lesson 1 – Arriving at Work

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**SCRIPT**

I woke up this morning and thought, “TGIF!” I have been looking forward to the weekend and all I need to do is to get through one more day of work.

I drive to work and pull into the parking lot next to my office building. I stop at the security gate. I put my key card into the card reader and the security arm goes up. I drive into the parking structure and find a parking spot. I make sure that my parking permit is showing in the windshield and I lock up. I get my briefcase out of the back seat and walk toward the building. It’s a short walk and I’m there in no time.

When I get there, I take out my badge and put it around my neck before I go through the main entrance of the building. Employees are supposed to wear their badges at all times at work so that the security guards know that we belong there. One day last week, I forgot my badge at home and I had to get a visitor’s pass for the day. My coworker made fun of me all day. He kept asking me if he could get me some coffee and when I was leaving. What a joker!

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**GLOSSARY**

**TGIF** – “thank goodness it’s Friday”; a phrase used on Fridays to show that one is happy that the weekend is coming

\* This week has been difficult, but this weekend should be a lot of fun. TGIF!

**parking lot** – a paved area near a building where cars can be parked

\* The parking lot next to the office was full, so I had to park two streets away.

**security gate** – a metal bar or door that stops cars and people from entering an area unless they have permission

\* The U.S. president lives in the White House, which has security gates at all of the entrances.

**key card** – a small, rectangular piece of plastic for identification that electronically tells a machine whether the person should be allowed to do something

\* At the World Bank, people must have their key cards with them all the time, so they wear them on strings around their necks.



**Using English at Work**  
Lesson 1 – Arriving at Work

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**card reader** – a machine that electronically “reads” plastic cards and decides whether a person should be allowed to do something

\* If you pass your card through the card reader too quickly, it might not read it correctly.

**security arm** – a long and heavy metal or wooden bar that blocks a road, but can be moved up to let people drive by if they have permission

\* The driver didn’t see that the security arm was down, so she drove into it and broke it.

**parking structure** – a concrete building with many floors for cars to park on

\* Whenever Gisela parks in a parking structure, she always forgets which floor her car is on.

**parking spot** – a place for one car to be parked, usually marked with painted white or yellow lines

\* The president of the company has a private parking spot near the building’s entrance, but the rest of us have to drive around looking for a spot.

**parking permit** – a piece of paper or plastic that gives a person permission to park his or her car in a specific area

\* At many universities, students have to pay more than \$50 per month to get a parking permit.

**windshield** – the glass window in the front of a car that lets the driver see where the car is going

\* A small rock hit Kayla’s windshield while she was driving behind a large truck yesterday, but fortunately the glass didn’t break.

**to lock up** – to lock the door on one’s car or home; to close the locks on the doors to one’s car or home so that other people cannot get in without a key

\* Did you remember to lock up your house before you came to work this morning?

**in no time** – very quickly; with very little delay; right away

\* If you work hard you can finish your homework in no time.

**badge** – a piece of identification, usually with a photograph, that shows that a person works at a specific organization or business

\* If you have a question about something at a museum, you should look for an employee who’s wearing a badge.



**Using English at Work**  
Lesson 1 – Arriving at Work

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**main entrance** – the front door to a building; the primary place for people to enter a building

\* National Geographic's main entrance is on M Street, but you can enter through 16<sup>th</sup> Street or 17<sup>th</sup> Street, too.

**at all times** – all the time; always

\* When you are in a big city in another country, I suggest paying attention to what is happening around you at all times.

**security guard** – a person who decides who can and cannot enter a building for safety reasons

\* The security guard lost his job because he fell asleep while he should have been watching the entrance.

**visitor's pass** – a piece of paper or a badge that lets a visitor enter a building where he or she does not work, usually because he or she has a meeting there

\* Please give your visitor's pass back to the guard when you leave the building.

**to make fun of (someone)** – to laugh at someone or to make other people laugh at someone in a way that isn't very nice

\* When Jeremiah gave the wrong answer, his classmate made fun of him and all of the other students laughed.



**Using English at Work**  
Lesson 1 – Arriving at Work

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**COMPLETE TRANSCRIPT**

ESLPod.com presents “Using English at Work,” a special 10-episode course to teach you the English that people use in a typical day at work. I’m Dr. Jeff McQuillan, from the Center for Educational Development in beautiful Los Angeles, California. I’ll be your host for this series.

In this course, each lesson has three parts. First, we will hear a story read slowly, talking about a part of my day at work. Second, I will explain the vocabulary we used in the story, providing examples of how the new words should be used. Third, we will hear another version of the story, this time at a normal pace – a normal speed. To give you a chance to hear different voices speaking English the voice used in the stories is not my voice, although it is a story about me and my day at work.

Are you ready? Let’s begin with lesson one: Arriving at Work.

[start of script]

I woke up this morning and thought, “TGIF!” I have been looking forward to the weekend and all I need to do is to get through one more day of work.

I drive to work and pull into the parking lot next to my office building. I stop at the security gate. I put my key card into the card reader and the security arm goes up. I drive into the parking structure and find a parking spot. I make sure that my parking permit is showing in the windshield and I lock up. I get my briefcase out of the back seat and walk toward the building. It’s a short walk and I’m there in no time.

When I get there, I take out my badge and put it around my neck before I go through the main entrance of the building. Employees are supposed to wear their badges at all times at work so that the security guards know that we belong there. One day last week, I forgot my badge at home and I had to get a visitor’s pass for the day. My coworker made fun of me all day. He kept asking me if he could get me some coffee and when I was leaving. What a joker!

[end of script]

I began by saying that when I woke up, I thought, “TGIF!” “TGIF” is an “acronym,” meaning that each letter is the first letter of another word. “TGIF” (all capital letters) means “Thank goodness it’s Friday.” Some people also say “Thank God it’s Friday.” People say “TGIF” on Fridays to show that they are



**Using English at Work**  
Lesson 1 – Arriving at Work

happy that the weekend is coming. I said that I have been looking forward to the weekend and that all I need to do is get through, or to be able to finish, one more day of work. So the day I am talking about must be Friday.

Then I drive to work and “pull into,” or enter, a parking lot. A “parking lot” is a flat, area where cars can be parked, usually if the driver pays a little bit of money. In the United States, many businesses have parking lots in front of or behind their buildings. In this case, the parking lot is next to my office building. I stop my car at the security gate. A “security gate” is a metal bar or a door that goes across a road and stops cars and people from entering an area unless they have permission to do so. There are security gates in front of most military buildings, for example, so that only soldiers or members of the military can go in. Most areas that charge for parking (where you have to pay for the parking) have some sort of security gate to stop you from going in without paying or without permission.

When my car is stopped in front of the security gate I put my key card into the card reader. A “key card” is a rectangular piece of plastic, like a driver’s license or a credit card, which is used for identification and electronically tells a machine when someone should be allowed to do something. Many businesses have key cards instead of the normal metal key to get into rooms or buildings. In this case, the key card lets me pass through the security gates. A “card reader” is a machine that electronically “reads” the key card and decides whether a person should be allowed to do something. The card reader is able to look at the electronic information on the card and determine if I should be let in (if I can go in or not). We use card readers for many things; when you buy food or groceries with a credit card, in many American supermarkets you have to put your credit card into or through a card reader at the store. When I put my key card into the card reader at work, the security arm goes up. A “security arm” is a long, heavy metal or wood bar that blocks a road, but it can be moved up to let people drive by if they have permission. So, it’s a kind of security gate. In the movies, bad people sometimes drive quickly so that their cars will break through the security arms, but in usual life we usually wait for the guard or the machine to lift the security arm and let us drive into the parking lot.

Next I drive into the parking structure. A “parking structure” is a large concrete building with many floors (or levels) for cars to park on. Large cities have many parking structures because there are many cars that need to park on a small piece of land. Many people don’t like parking structures, because it’s difficult to find your car if you forget which floor (or level) you are parked on. I do this all the time! I drive into the parking structure and I find a parking spot. A “parking spot” is a place for one car to be parked; it’s usually marked with white or yellow



**Using English at Work**  
Lesson 1 – Arriving at Work

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painted lines. Sometimes it is very difficult to find a parking spot in the city and people have to drive for a long time until you find one. But I don't have that problem, so I pull in, or drive into the parking spot.

I make sure that my parking permit is showing in the windshield. A "parking permit" is a piece of paper or plastic that gives a person permission to park his or her car in a specific area. A "permit" allows you to do something; the verb is "to permit." Notice when we use it as a noun, the accent is on the first syllable: "permit," when we use it as a verb, the accent is on the second syllable: "permit." So, this is a parking permit that permits me to park in a certain place. Many universities have one color of parking permit for professors and another color for students. This way, the universities can let the professors park closer to the buildings and the students have to park farther away. I hated this when I was a student, but of course I loved it when I worked as a professor. I said that my parking permit is showing in the windshield, this means you can see it in or through the windshield. A "windshield" is a large glass window in the front of a car that a driver looks through to see where he or she is going. My parking permit has to be seen through the windshield so that if a guard walks by, he or she will know that I have permission to park my car there. If I don't have permission, my car may be towed (towed). If your car is "towed," the company brings a truck and they take it away, and then you have to pay extra money to get it back, so you don't want to do that. Next I take my briefcase out of the back seat, the second row of seats in the car is called the "back seat." A "briefcase" is a small container or bag that people use to carry their work papers in.

Then I lock up the car. "To lock up" means to use a key to close the locks on the doors of one's car or home so that other people cannot get in without a key. You probably lock up your house before you go to sleep at night. Well, I am locking up my car before I go into the office so no one steals it. Here I could also just say "lock" – I "lock" my car, but we often say "lock up" (two words) to add more emphasis to the sentence. After I lock up my car, I walk toward the building. It's a short walk and I'm there in no time. The phrase "in no time" means very quickly, right away, or with very little delay. If you listen to ESL Podcast premium courses like this, you'll learn new vocabulary in no time, or very quickly.

When I get to the office building, I take out my badge and put it around my neck. "To take out" means to remove from something, such as remove it from my briefcase. A "badge" (badge) is a piece of identification, usually or often with a photograph, that shows that a person works for a specific organization or business. A badge is something that you wear so people can see it. In this case, I put it around my neck; it is hanging from my neck. Usually, there's a piece of string or some other fabric that holds the badge. Police officers always



**Using English at Work**  
Lesson 1 – Arriving at Work

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have badges that they keep in their pocket. If someone knocks on your door and they say that they are police officers, you may ask them to show their badge before you allow them into your house.

I put my badge around my neck so that people can see it and then I go through the main entrance of the building. A “main entrance” is the front door of a building, or the primary place where people enter a building that has more than one entrance. A main entrance is usually bigger and perhaps nicer or more beautiful than the other entrances. Where I work, the employees (or the people who work at the company) are supposed to show their badges at all times. The phrase “at all times” means always or all the time. For example, parents want to know where their children are at all times. At my office, people are supposed to wear their badges at all times so that the security guards know that we belong there. A “security guard” is a person who decides who can and cannot enter a building for safety reasons. Security guards are popular at many U.S. companies, to protect the employees. They usually wear uniforms, they look a little like police officers but they are not; they are private guards. Sometimes in American businesses security guards will have guns.

I said that one day last week I forgot my badge at home, meaning that I forgot to bring it to work. That day, I had to get a visitor’s pass. A “visitor’s pass” is a piece of paper that lets a visitor enter a building where he or she does not work, usually because he or she has a meeting there. A pass is similar to a permit; it allows you to do something, to enter somewhere. To get a visitor’s pass, you usually walk into the building and tell the security guard that you have a meeting with someone. The security guard calls that person to confirm that you do, in fact, have a meeting, and then gives you a visitor’s pass, which might be a sticker that you put on your clothes or a badge to wear on your shirt. When I had to get a visitor’s pass, my coworker made fun of me all day. “To make fun of someone” means to laugh at someone or to make other people laugh at someone in a way that isn’t very nice. If I use the wrong word in Spanish, French, or Italian and someone laughs at me and begins to copy my mistake, he is making fun of me. It’s not a very nice thing to do. My coworker made fun of me by asking whether he could get me some coffee and asking when I was leaving, because those are the types of things that you would ask a regular visitor; to be nice, you may offer to get them some coffee. I wasn’t angry, though. I said, “What a joker!” meaning that my coworker is always making funny jokes like that; he’s a joker.

Now that we’ve talked about the new vocabulary, let’s listen as I describe the first part of my day again. This time, I’m going to speaking more quickly, at the speed that a native speaker would use.



**Using English at Work**  
Lesson 1 – Arriving at Work

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[start of script]

I woke up this morning and thought, “TGIF!” I have been looking forward to the weekend and all I need to do is to get through one more day of work.

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When I get there, I take out my badge and put it around my neck before I go through the main entrance of the building. Employees are supposed to wear their badges at all times at work so that the security guards know that we belong there. One day last week, I forgot my badge at home and I had to get a visitor’s pass for the day. My coworker made fun of me all day. He kept asking me if he could get me some coffee and when I was leaving. What a joker!

[end of script]

I hope that listening to me talk about arriving at work has taught you some new vocabulary that you can use in your own workplace. Our first lesson has ended, and in the next lesson I’m going to talk about checking my mail, email, and voicemail.

This course has been a production of the Center for Educational Development, in beautiful Los Angeles, California. Visit our website at [eslpod.com](http://eslpod.com).

This course was produced by Dr. Jeff McQuillan and Dr. Lucy Tse. Copyright 2008.



**Using English at Work**  
Lesson 2 – Checking Mail, Email, and Voicemail

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**SCRIPT**

The first thing I do when I get to work each morning is to check my inboxes. I go to the mailroom to check my mail slot to see what mail has arrived overnight. There are always a lot of intra-office and inter-office letters and memos. Much of it is junk mail, so I spend a few minutes sorting through it.

The next thing I do is to turn on my computer to check email. I open my email program and my new messages automatically download into my inbox. Even though I have a pretty good spam filter, I still check through my trash folder carefully to make sure nothing important was filtered out. We're also not supposed to get personal emails at work, but sometimes my friends send or forward me messages to this address and I have to make sure I respond using my personal email address. When I don't have time to finish a message or when I get interrupted, I save it into my draft folder.

Finally, I check my voicemail. I call the voicemail system and enter in my PIN to bypass the outgoing message. I have two new messages, and after listening to them, I save one of them and delete the other.

I look at the clock and it's already 9:30 AM! It's time for the morning meeting.

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**GLOSSARY**

**inbox** – an electronic space or a real box that holds emails, papers, and other things that one needs to read and respond to

\* Mike has two inboxes on his desk: one for things that have to be responded to right away, and one for things that he can read whenever he has some free time.

**mailroom** – a room in a large office building where mail is organized so that it can be given to the right people

\* Every afternoon the mailroom receives thousands of pieces of mail and the workers have to deliver them to the right people by 5:00 p.m.

**mail slot** – a small box that has a person's name on it and holds mail for that person

\* When you go on vacation, don't forget to put an "out of office" sign on your mail slot, so that people know you won't be coming in to get your mail.



**Using English at Work**  
Lesson 2 – Checking Mail, Email, and Voicemail

**intra-office** – within one office or office building

\* Kelly works in this building on the 29<sup>th</sup> floor, so if you want to send her something, you should put it with the intra-office mail.

**inter-office** – among many offices or office buildings

\* Many companies have inter-office mail, because having someone take large bags of mail from one office building to another is cheaper and faster than using the regular mail service.

**memo** – memorandum; a short written document that describes something at work, usually with four lines at the top: the name of the author, the name of the person it's going to, the subject, and the date

\* The president doesn't have time to read a long report, so please send her a one-page memo that describes the report's most important ideas.

**junk mail** – mail or email that doesn't have any useful or helpful information and that one throws away or deletes without reading; spam; unwanted mail or email

\* If you receive a lot of junk mail, you can call this phone number and ask to have your name taken off of many companies' mailing lists.

**to sort** – to put things in order; to divide things into different groups or categories

\* Please sort these books by author, so that everything written by Tolstoy is on the right and everything written by Dostoevsky is on the left.

**to download** – to copy a file from the Internet or a large network computer onto one's own computer

\* Do you download music from the Internet?

**spam filter** – the part of an email program that keeps spam, or unwanted emails, from coming into an email inbox

\* If your spam filter is too high, some of your friends' email might go to your spam folder where you won't see it.

**trash** – garbage; a place to put things that should be thrown away or deleted

\* I accidentally deleted a very important email, but I was able to find it in the trash folder and save a copy of it.

**to forward** – to send an email that one has received to other people

\* When your sister sends you an email with the photos from the party, please forward it to me.



**Using English at Work**  
Lesson 2 – Checking Mail, Email, and Voicemail

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**draft** – something that one has begun to write but has not yet finished; an unfinished document; an unfinished piece of writing

\* I just finished writing a draft of the email I want to send to Carol, but I'm going to wait a few hours and read it again after lunch before I send it.

**voicemail** – recorded voice messages from people who called your phone number when you weren't able to answer the phone

\* I try to remember to delete my voicemail messages after listening to them, because if there are too many, people won't be able to leave me new messages.

**PIN** – Personal Identification Number; a set of secret numbers that are used as a password for getting information or money

\* Don't write down your PIN. If other people see it, they can use it to get your private information.

**to bypass** – to skip something; to go around something

\* You can bypass the road construction on Main Street by driving on Holly Street instead.

**outgoing message** – the recorded voice message that callers hear when they call a phone number but nobody answers

\* Make sure that your outgoing message on your home answering machine is friendly but professional, in case your boss calls you at home.

**to save** – to keep something for use in the future; to not delete or throw away something

\* Cassidy always saves tickets from the museums she goes to, so that she can remember where she went on her vacations.

**to delete** – to get rid of an electronic file or message; to remove something from one's computer

\* I accidentally deleted my homework, so now I have to do it again.



**Using English at Work**  
Lesson 2 – Checking Mail, Email, and Voicemail

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**COMPLETE TRANSCRIPT**

Welcome to lesson two of ESLPod.com’s “Using English at Work.” I’m your host, Dr. Jeff McQuillan, from the Center for Educational Development.

In the first lesson of “Using English at Work,” we learned vocabulary about arriving at work, or getting to the office. In this second lesson, we’re going to talk about checking email, mail, and voicemail at work.

Let’s get started by listening to the story of this part of my day at a slow speed.

[start of script]

The first thing I do when I get to work each morning is to check my inboxes. I go to the mailroom to check my mail slot to see what mail has arrived overnight. There are always a lot of intra-office and inter-office letters and memos. Much of it is junk mail, so I spend a few minutes sorting through it.

The next thing I do is to turn on my computer to check email. I open my email program and my new messages automatically download into my inbox. Even though I have a pretty good spam filter, I still check through my trash folder carefully to make sure nothing important was filtered out. We’re also not supposed to get personal emails at work, but sometimes my friends send or forward me messages to this address and I have to make sure I respond using my personal email address. When I don’t have time to finish a message or when I get interrupted, I save it into my draft folder.

Finally, I check my voicemail. I call the voicemail system and enter in my PIN to bypass the outgoing message. I have two new messages, and after listening to them, I save one of them and delete the other.

I look at the clock and it’s already 9:30 AM! It’s time for the morning meeting.

[end of script]

We begin our story by saying that the first thing I do when I get to work each morning is to check my inboxes. An “inbox” is an electronic space or a real box that holds emails, or if it’s a real box, papers, and other things that you need to read and respond to. In an email program, the inbox is usually the main screen. On your desk, it’s probably a small box that other people put papers into. I check my inboxes, meaning that I look to see if there is anything inside them.



**Using English at Work**  
Lesson 2 – Checking Mail, Email, and Voicemail

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First, I go to the mailroom. A “mailroom” is a room in a large office building where mail is organized so that it can be given to the right person. Offices with many employees might receive thousands of pieces of mail, so they need to have special employees who work in the mailroom and make sure that each piece of mail gets to the right person. You may start out in a company by working in the mailroom, which is usually considered the lowest level job in a company. Some people think that if you work hard enough, you can start in the mailroom and someday be president, although I don’t think that happens very often in most companies!

When I’m in the mailroom, I check my mail slot to see what mail has arrived overnight. A “slot” is normally a small rectangular opening in something, but a “mail slot” is a small box that has a person’s name on it and holds mail for that person. Some houses have mail slots in their front doors. I live in an older house, where we still have a mail slot in our door; many houses now, however, have “mailboxes,” these are little boxes outside of your house. In the story, I’m talking about the mail slots in the mailroom in the office building where I work.

There are always a lot of intra-office and inter-office letters in my mail slot. An “intra- (intra-) office letter” is one that is sent and received within one office building. An “inter- (inter-) office letter” is one that is sent between different offices of the same company. For example, if I work at a large bank and I want to send something to a customer, I put it in the regular mail. I use, in the United States, the U.S. Postal Service; I put a stamp on it, I put it in the mailbox, and it is delivered to the other company. If I want to send something to someone who works for my company – my bank, but in another office, perhaps in the other side of the city, then I put it in inter-office mail. This way, at the end of the day someone will carry a large bag with all the inter-office mail to the other office, because this is cheaper and usually much faster than using the regular public mail. And if I need to send something to someone who works in my office in the same building, but I’m feeling lazy and I don’t want to take the time to walk to his or her desk, I’ll put it in the intra- (intra) office mail, and at the end of the day someone will deliver all the intra-office mail to the right people who work in my office building or put it into the right mail slot for that person.

My mail slot has a lot of intra-office and inter-office letters and memos. A “memo” is short for “memorandum.” It’s usually a short written document that describes something at your workplace, usually with four lines at the top: the name of the of the person who wrote the memo, the name of the person it’s going to, the subject of the memo, and the date it was written. Busy people often don’t have time to listen to people talk about their ideas or to read long reports, so writing up a one-page memo is a good way to let those people know about the



**Using English at Work**  
Lesson 2 – Checking Mail, Email, and Voicemail

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most important ideas. Companies often use memos to provide information quickly to their employees.

Many of the letters and memos I receive are what I call “junk mail.” “Junk mail” is mail or email that doesn’t have any useful or helpful information in it; it’s the mail that you throw away or delete from your email program without reading. It’s mail that you didn’t ask for and that you don’t want. Another word for “junk mail” when we’re talking about email is “spam.” At my house, most of the junk mail I get are advertisements that I don’t want, so I throw them away without even reading them. At the office, I spend a few minutes sorting through the junk mail. “To sort” means to put things in order, or to divide things into different groups or categories. In this case, I’m separating the junk mail from the mail I really want to read. You might, for example, sort your clothes by color, or you might sort your papers in alphabetical order from A to Z.

After sorting through my junk mail, I turn on my computer to check email. I open my email program and my new messages automatically download into my inbox. “To download” means to copy a file from the Internet or a large network computer onto your own computer. Many people like to download music or videos from the Internet. My email gets downloaded from the company’s large computer servers into my inbox, the electronic space for new messages that I need to read. I have a pretty good spam filter. A “spam filter” is usually part of your email program that keeps, or prevents, spam – unwanted emails – from coming into your email inbox. We say the spam filter “traps” a lot of emails for advertisements and other things I never asked for. “To trap,” here, means to get, to hold, and not to let go so that you don’t see them when you open your inbox. Sometimes a spam filter is too high and it puts emails that want to see into the trash or spam folder by accident or by mistake. We talk about a spam filter being “high,” that means it’s trapping too many messages. That’s why I still check through my trash folder carefully to make sure nothing important was trapped or filtered out. “Trash” is another word for garbage, or something that you throw away, that you don’t want. So your “trash folder” is where the email program may put trash – things you don’t want. Many email programs have a separate “spam folder,” where all the spam messages go. When I check through my trash folder, I look at all the messages in the folder, just to make sure they’re really trash or things I don’t want anymore, so I can read any messages that were put there by accident.

We’re not supposed to, at my office, get personal emails at work, but sometimes my friends send or forward me messages to my work address. “To forward (something)” in this case means to send an email that you have received to other people. Sometimes my friends and relatives forward funny jokes – although usually they’re not very funny! They didn’t write the jokes, but they receive them



**Using English at Work**  
Lesson 2 – Checking Mail, Email, and Voicemail

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from other people and then forward them to their friends. When my friends forward messages to my work email address, I have to make sure I respond to or answer them using my personal email address, not my work email address. When I don't have time to finish a message, or when I get interrupted, I save my message into my draft folder. A "draft" is an unfinished document, or something that you have begun to write but have not yet finished. You go through many drafts, usually, when we write things, especially formal reports. We hope that each time we write a new draft, or revise or change the draft it gets better. A "draft folder" is where an email program puts messages that you have started writing but aren't ready to send yet, you still haven't finished them. Later, when you have time, you can go back to your draft folder, finish writing the message that you started earlier, and then send it to someone after you've finished it.

Finally, or lastly, I check my voicemail. "Voicemail" is a system of recorded voice messages from people who call your phone number when you aren't able to answer the phone. We used to have what we called "answering machines," which had cassette tapes to record messages, but most companies today are computerized and they use something that we call "voicemail." At my house, however, we still have one of the old answering machines, not voicemail.

I call the voicemail system and enter in my PIN. "PIN" is an acronym, where each letter is the first letter of another word. Here "PIN" means "Personal Identification Number." A PIN is usually a set of secret numbers – four to six – that are used as a password for getting information or for getting money. When you take cash out of an ATM or bank machine, you usually have to enter your PIN. You might also have a PIN for registering for a class at college. The PIN I'm talking about here is for listening to my voicemail messages.

When using voicemail, you can often use your PIN to bypass the outgoing message. "To bypass something" means to skip something or to go around something that you don't want to see or hear. For example, many websites have introductory screens, sometimes with video and music; you can usually bypass this introduction – these screens – by clicking on "skip introduction" or "skip this." "To skip" is the same as to go to the next step without looking or seeing the current screen. When I call the voicemail system, it usually plays my "outgoing message," the message people hear when they call me. But by entering my PIN I bypass that outgoing message, because I don't need to hear it.

After listening to two new messages, I save one and I delete the other. "To save" means to keep something for use in the future, it's the opposite of delete or throw away. We usually save important emails from our friends, we save photos that were taken when we were with our friends, in this case, I'm saving a voicemail



**Using English at Work**  
Lesson 2 – Checking Mail, Email, and Voicemail

message so that it stays in the voicemail system and I'm able to listen to it later. I "delete" the other message – I get rid of the other message. We usually delete drafts once we've finished the final document, for example. In this case, I'm deleting the second voicemail message, getting rid of it because I won't need to listen to it again. Next I look at my clock and I see that it's already 9:30 a.m. It's time for my morning meeting.

Let's listen again to this story of checking email, mail, and voicemail, this time the story will be read at a normal speed.

[start of script]

The first thing I do when I get to work each morning is to check my inboxes. I go to the mailroom to check my mail slot to see what mail has arrived overnight. There are always a lot of intra-office and inter-office letters and memos. Much of it is junk mail, so I spend a few minutes sorting through it.

The next thing I do is to turn on my computer to check email. I open my email program and my new messages automatically download into my inbox. Even though I have a pretty good spam filter, I still check through my trash folder carefully to make sure nothing important was filtered out. We're also not supposed to get personal emails at work, but sometimes my friends send or forward me messages to this address and I have to make sure I respond using my personal email address. When I don't have time to finish a message or when I get interrupted, I save it into my draft folder.

Finally, I check my voicemail. I call the voicemail system and enter in my PIN to bypass the outgoing message. I have two new messages, and after listening to them, I save one of them and delete the other.

I look at the clock and it's already 9:30 AM! It's time for the morning meeting.

[end of script]

That's the end of our second lesson. In our next lesson, number three, I'm going to talk about attending, or going to, an office meeting.

This course has been a production of the Center for Educational Development, in beautiful Los Angeles, California. Visit our website at [eslpod.com](http://eslpod.com).



## SCRIPT

I arrive at the conference room right before the meeting starts, and sit down in a chair around the large conference table. Our manager passes out a handout of the meeting agenda with some announcements and goes over some bullet points regarding old and new business.

Then, he asks each person to give a status report on his or her projects. Each of us takes turns giving a quick rundown, while everyone else listens. Of course not everyone is paying attention, since they're thinking about their own reports and what they plan to say. Sometimes our manager will make some comments or give us some feedback, but usually there's very little discussion.

The meeting always ends the same way. Our manager gives a short summary of how our department is doing and a little pep talk to get us motivated.

Now it's back to our desks to do some work!

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## GLOSSARY

**conference room** – a big room used for having meetings at work, usually with a big table and many chairs

\* For Monday's meeting, we need to have a large conference room with at least 23 chairs.

**conference table** – a big table in a conference room with chairs placed around it for meetings

\* When the meeting ended, the conference table was covered with empty water bottles, coffee cups, papers, and pens.

**manager** – a person whose job is to be responsible for a department or a team; a group leader at work

\* If you do your work well, the company might ask you to begin working as a department manager in a few years.

**handout** – a piece of paper that gives information about something that will be discussed during a presentation or meeting

\* This handout has the main points of my presentation and my contact information: my name, phone number, and email address.



**agenda** – a plan for what will be discussed during a meeting, and in what order

\* This agenda shows that there will be three breaks during today's meeting.

**announcement** – something that is said or written to let people know about something important

\* This morning Krista made an announcement that she and her husband are expecting their first baby!

**to go over (something)** – to talk about something in depth; to talk about a specific topic or plan

\* Let's go over the details again, just to make sure that everyone understands the new plan.

**bullet point** – a line of text in a list where each line begins with a small symbol (for example, •, ▪, ➤)

\* If you have a long list of items, it's easier to read them as bullet points than as a long sentence with lots of commas separating the ideas.

**old business** – things that were discussed in a previous meeting and still need to be talked about in today's meeting

\* We need to talk about some old business. We've already talked about hiring two new employees. Hector, have you been able to make any progress with this?

**new business** – things that are being discussed in today's meeting for the first time

\* We received a very angry letter from one of our best customers, so in today's new business I'd like us to talk about what went wrong.

**status report** – a quick spoken or written explanation of what one has done on a project or assignment; an explanation of what has been completed on a project

\* At our staff meeting, each person was asked to give a three-minute status report about what he or she had done since we met last month.

**to take turns** – to do something in order, one person at a time, or one person after another

\* Children, please take turns playing with the new toy.



**Using English at Work**  
Episode 3 – Attending the Morning Meeting

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**rundown** – a short spoken or written explanation of the most important points or ideas about something

\* Carla, can you please give us a two-minute rundown of what you learned at the conference last week?

**to pay attention to (something)** – to listen carefully and try to understand something

\* Please don't play the piano right now. I need to pay attention to the news report to find out more about the fire.

**feedback** – positive or negative comments given in reaction to something that one has presented or done, designed to help one make it better next time

\* After she finished her presentation, Clark gave her some helpful feedback about speaking more slowly in the future.

**summary** – a short written or oral description of the main points or main ideas of something longer

\* Please write a one-page summary of what was discussed during the meeting.

**pep talk** – a short and encouraging speech; a short speech that is meant to help people do something faster, better, or with more enthusiasm

\* Before every basketball game, the coach always gives his players a pep talk to help them win the game.



## COMPLETE TRANSCRIPT

Welcome to lesson three of ESLPod.com’s “Using English at Work.” I’m your host, Dr. Jeff McQuillan, from the Center for Educational Development.

In the second lesson of “Using English at Work,” we learned vocabulary for checking mail, email, and voicemail. In this third lesson, I’m going to talk about attending, or going to, a morning meeting.

Let’s listen to the story first at a slow speed.

[start of script]

I arrive at the conference room right before the meeting starts, and sit down in a chair around the large conference table. Our manager passes out a handout of the meeting agenda with some announcements and goes over some bullet points regarding old and new business.

Then, he asks each person to give a status report on his or her projects. Each of us takes turns giving a quick rundown, while everyone else listens. Of course not everyone is paying attention, since they’re thinking about their own reports and what they plan to say. Sometimes our manager will make some comments or give us some feedback, but usually there’s very little discussion.

The meeting always ends the same way. Our manager gives a short summary of how our department is doing and a little pep talk to get us motivated.

Now it’s back to our desks to do some work!

[end of script]

The story begins when I arrive, or come to, the conference room right before the meeting starts, and sit down in a chair around the large conference table. A “conference” is a type of large meeting, usually a formal meeting. A “conference room” is a large room in an office building that is used only for meetings; it’s not an office. A “conference table” is the large table inside the conference room. Conference tables are usually big, round, or perhaps rectangular tables that have chairs placed around them for the meetings. Usually the meeting leader, the person who is running the meeting, sits at one end of the conference table so everyone can see him or her.



**Using English at Work**  
Episode 3 – Attending the Morning Meeting

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After I sat down, the manager passes out a handout of the meeting agenda. A “manager” is a person who is in charge of, or responsible for, a department or a team at work. At a large company, for example, a salesperson begins working as a sales representative and, if he or she does well, might become a sales manager in a few years. If he or she continues to do well, perhaps they will later become Vice President of Sales.

At this meeting, my manager passes out a handout of the meeting agenda. A “handout” is a piece of paper that has information about the things that will be talked about during a meeting or a presentation. At the university, in the classes, the professors will often have handouts, things that they will give the students to look at that are related to their lecture or presentation. Each person at the meeting or presentation gets a copy of the handout. A presenter might give out handouts that have his or her contact information, for example, or handouts could have detailed financial information about a project. In this case, the handout is of the meeting agenda itself. An “agenda” is a plan for a meeting, showing what needs to be done, what needs to be discussed, in what order those things will be discussed. My manager’s handout of the meeting agenda is a piece of paper with a list of all the things that will be discussed during today’s meeting.

The handout has some announcements on it. An “announcement” is something that is written or said to let other people know about something. Your company president may make an announcement, saying that everyone can take Friday off – have Friday as a vacation day. That would never actually happen; that’s just an example!

My manager goes over some bullet points on the handout. “To go over something” means to talk about something, usually a document or report. You might also go over your notes a few minutes before an exam to help yourself remember the most important things that you’ve studied – or that you didn’t study! My manager is going over some bullet points. “Bullet points” are lines of text in a document where each line begins with a small circle; sometimes it’s a diamond or an arrow. We call those “bullets.” The text usually isn’t a complete sentence, but just a short phrase. Bullet points are often easier and faster to read than long sentences because each idea is on a separate line. They’re essentially a list of something. My manager’s bullet points are about old and new business. Everything you talk about at a meeting is either old business or new business. “Old business” is everything that you talk about that was already discussed at a previous meeting – makes sense! “New business” is everything that you are going to talk about that has not yet been discussed before. Most business meetings begin with old business and end with new business. Then, of



**Using English at Work**  
Episode 3 – Attending the Morning Meeting

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course, the new business becomes the old business for the next meeting, if you still need to talk about it more.

My manager then asks each person to give a status report on his or her projects. A “status report” is a short explanation about what someone has done on a project. In this case, the manager is asking us to tell everyone else what we have done on our projects since the last time that we spoke. Some departments have weekly meetings where everyone is supposed to give a status report. At this meeting, each person takes turns giving a quick rundown while everyone else listens. “To take turns” (always plural when used as a phrasal verb, as it is in this case) means to do something one person at a time, so that first one person does something, then another, and then another until everyone in the group has finished. In a large meeting, you have to take turns talking; you can’t all talk at the same time. Sometimes husbands and wives take turns washing the dishes, meaning that one night he does it, and the next night she does it. That’s not true in my house; I do the dishes every night. I’ll have to talk to my wife about taking turns!

At my meeting, we’re taking turns giving a quick rundown. A “rundown” is a very short explanation of the most important points of something. If your boss doesn’t have time to read a long report, she might ask you to read it for her and then give her a rundown of what it’s about. It’s a brief presentation, a summary. Our status reports are quick rundowns, quick summaries of what we’ve done since the last meeting. “Rundown” (rundown) is one word.

Not everyone, however, is paying attention at the meeting. “To pay attention to something” means to listen carefully and try to understand what someone else is saying. At the meeting, some people aren’t paying attention because they’re thinking about their own status reports and what they are going to say when it’s their turn – when it’s their time to talk. Sometimes our manager makes some comments or gives us some feedback, but there’s usually not very much discussion at the meetings. “Feedback” is either positive or negative comments that are made in response to what someone has done or, in this case, said. If you write a story and ask a friend to read it and let you know what he thinks, then you are asking him to give you feedback. The idea is that feedback will help make it better. Sometimes people will write a draft of their report, give it to their colleague, and ask for feedback so they can make the report better.

Our meetings always end the same way, meaning it’s the same ending every time we meet. Our manager gives a short summary of how our department is doing. A “summary” is, as you know, like a rundown; it’s a short description of the most important points. After my manager gives a summary of how our



**Using English at Work**  
Episode 3 – Attending the Morning Meeting

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departments are doing, he gives a little pep talk to get us motivated. A “pep (pep) talk” is a short speech that is supposed to encourage people, helping them to do something better, faster, or with more enthusiasm. Athletic coaches give their teams “pep talks” before important games to help the players play better, to get more excited, more enthusiastic. My manager’s pep talk is probably meant to help us feel that the work we are doing is very important for the company.

Finally, I say, “Now it’s back to our desks to do some work!” This means that the meeting is over – thank goodness – and we need to leave the conference room and return to our own desks to do the work in our regular jobs.

Now let’s listen to the description of the morning meeting again, this time at a normal speed.

[start of script]

I arrive at the conference room right before the meeting starts, and sit down in a chair around the large conference table. Our manager passes out a handout of the meeting agenda with some announcements and goes over some bullet points regarding old and new business.

Then, he asks each person to give a status report on his or her projects. Each of us takes turns giving a quick rundown, while everyone else listens. Of course not everyone is paying attention, since they’re thinking about their own reports and what they plan to say. Sometimes our manager will make some comments or give us some feedback, but usually there’s very little discussion.

The meeting always ends the same way. Our manager gives a short summary of how our department is doing and a little pep talk to get us motivated.

Now it’s back to our desks to do some work!

[end of script]

That brings us to the end of our third lesson about attending a morning meeting. In our next lesson, number four, I’m going to talk about working at my desk.

This course has been a production of the Center for Educational Development, in beautiful Los Angeles, California. Visit our website at [eslpod.com](http://eslpod.com).



**Using English at Work**  
Episode 4 – Working at My Desk

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**SCRIPT**

When I get back to my desk, I clear off a few stacks of paper on the top of my desk so I have some space to work. I open the computer file I have been working on for the past week. This document is a report that is due next week and the deadline is fast approaching.

I open my filing cabinet and take out two files and a manila envelope that has the information I need in them. I look around for the pad of paper I used to jot down some ideas yesterday, and take out the paper clips, stapler, and Scotch tape I know I'll also need. Now I have everything in front of me so I can get down to business.

The first thing I have to do is get organized. I scan the information I have in front of me and take notes on the things I want to include in the report. Before I analyze the data for the report, I need to skim the background information to make sure I haven't missed anything. I was making good progress but I'm feeling thirsty, so I decide to take a quick break.

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**GLOSSARY**

**to clear off** – to organize and remove things from a table, desk, or other surface  
\* Can you please clear off the table so that we can eat dinner?

**stack** – pile; a vertical (up and down) group of things that are placed on top of each other  
\* Michaela likes to read before falling asleep, so there is always a stack of books next to her bed.

**file** – information stored electronically under one name on a computer, CD, or USB drive  
\* Most of my computer files end in .doc, .xls, .ppt, or .pdf.

**document** – a piece of written, printed, or electronic collection of information  
\* Remember to save the changes to your document every few minutes in case something goes wrong with your computer.



**Using English at Work**  
Episode 4 – Working at My Desk

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**deadline** – the date when a project has to be finished; the date when something is due and must be turned in

\* Each year, the deadline for applying to this university is March 23<sup>rd</sup>.

**filing cabinet** – a metal or wooden piece of furniture with large drawers that are used to hold paper files

\* Could you look in the filing cabinet to see if you can find the papers we need for this case?

**manila envelope** – a large, yellow-colored envelope

\* Please put your application in a manila envelope and mail it to this address.

**pad of paper** – many pieces of paper that are held together at one end

\* Please bring a pad of paper to the meeting so that you can take notes.

**to jot down** – to write something down quickly

\* Quick! I need a piece of paper to jot down that phone number before I forget it.

**paper clip** – a small, bent piece of metal or plastic that is used to hold together pieces of paper

\* Please use a paper clip so that the check doesn't get separated from the bill that needs to be paid.

**stapler** – a small, metal and plastic object that, when pushed, puts a small piece of metal through pieces of paper to hold them together

\* Can I use your stapler for a minute to staple these papers together?

**Scotch tape** – a long piece of clear plastic that is sticky on one side and is used to hold two pieces of paper together, or to put a piece of paper on something else

\* I need to buy some Scotch tape so that I can wrap these presents.

**to get down to business** – to begin working very seriously on something; to get serious about something

\* Loch spent most of the morning making phone calls and talking to her colleagues, but now she needs to get down to business and finish the project.

**to scan** – to read something quickly, looking for the most important ideas

\* Kyra scanned the newspaper, looking for articles about the baseball game.

**to take notes** – to write down the most important points of something that one reads or listens to

\* If you go to class and take notes every day, studying for the text will be easy.



**Using English at Work**  
Episode 4 – Working at My Desk

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**to analyze** – to examine something carefully, trying to understand it by looking at each part in detail

\* The vice president is analyzing the sales data, trying to understand why the company sold less than expected last month.

**data** – information and facts, often in numbers

\* We got a lot of data from the physics experiment, but now we need to figure out what it all means.

**to skim** – to read something quickly, looking for the most important ideas; to not read carefully

\* Please skim these resumes and look for anyone who speaks German and French.



## COMPLETE TRANSCRIPT

This is lesson four of ESLPod.com’s “Using English at Work.” I’m your host, Dr. Jeff McQuillan, from the Center for Educational Development.

In the third lesson of our course, we talked about vocabulary related to a morning meeting at the office. In this fourth lesson, we’re going to learn words about working at your desk.

We’ll listen first to the story read at a slow speed.

[start of script]

When I get back to my desk, I clear off a few stacks of paper on the top of my desk so I have some space to work. I open the computer file I have been working on for the past week. This document is a report that is due next week and the deadline is fast approaching.

I open my filing cabinet and take out two files and a manila envelope that has the information I need in them. I look around for the pad of paper I used to jot down some ideas yesterday, and take out the paper clips, stapler, and Scotch tape I know I’ll also need. Now I have everything in front of me so I can get down to business.

The first thing I have to do is get organized. I scan the information I have in front of me and take notes on the things I want to include in the report. Before I analyze the data for the report, I need to skim the background information to make sure I haven’t missed anything. I was making good progress but I’m feeling thirsty, so I decide to take a quick break.

[end of script]

This story begins with me saying that when I get back, or return, to my desk, I clear off a few stacks of paper on the top of my desk so I have some space to work. “To clear off” means to organize and remove things that are covering the surface of a table, desk, or shelves. I usually like to clear off the papers on my desk at the end of the day so I have a clean desk when I return to work the next morning. In this case, I’m clearing off a few stacks of paper. At home, if you are messy like me, you may need to clear off your dining room table – that is, move your newspapers, books, and other things so that you’ll have room to eat your meal.



**Using English at Work**  
Episode 4 – Working at My Desk

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I said, “I clear off a few stacks of paper.” A “stack” (stack) is a pile, or a group of things that are placed on top of each other. A “stack of papers” is many pieces of paper placed on top of each other, but we can also talk about stacks of books, stacks of coins, stacks of folded towels – all of these are stacks.

Next, I open the computer file that I’ve been working on for the past week. When we talk about papers, a “file” is a group of papers that are kept together because they’re related to the same topic. But here I’m talking about a “computer file,” which is information stored electronically on a computer, a CD, or some hard drive. This course has audio files that are stored on a computer or on a CD. When I open the computer file, I’m opening a document. A “document,” here, is the same as a computer file; it’s information stored electronically with one name on your computer or CD. We often talk about Microsoft Word documents and Excel documents. It’s something that has information on it, usually on one specific topic.

The document I’m working on is a report that is due next week and the deadline is fast approaching. A “deadline” is the date when something must be finished. My report is due next week, meaning that the deadline is next week; I must complete it by next week. When I say the deadline is fast approaching, I mean that we have a lot of work to do in a very short period of time between now and the deadline; the deadline is “coming up soon,” we could also say. Something that is fast approaching can be something positive or negative. If your birthday is next week, you may remind your friends that your birthday is fast approaching. Depending on old you are, this is a good thing or a bad thing!

Next, I open my filing cabinet. A “filing cabinet,” sometimes called a “file cabinet,” is a piece of furniture usually made of wood or metal that has large drawers that are used to hold paper files. Most office desks have a file cabinet, but there are also separate file cabinets that are not part of a desk. The documents in filing cabinets are usually organized alphabetically, from the letter A to the letter Z, or by date, or by some other way that is logical so that the files are easy to find. Or, if you’re like me, you have no system and your files are impossible to find!

I open the filing cabinet and take out two files and a manila envelope that has the information I need in them. A “manila envelope” is a large, yellow-colored envelope (notice we can say “envelope” or “envelope”) made from thick paper. In the United States, most envelopes are small and white. We use these to send letters, usually. But larger envelopes are often manila envelopes that are yellow. These envelopes are usually the size of a piece of paper and let you send things in one package without folding them. For the report, the information I need is inside two files and in a manila envelope.



**Using English at Work**  
Episode 4 – Working at My Desk

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The next thing I do is look around, or search, for a pad of paper. A “pad of paper” is many pieces of paper that are held together at one end. After you’ve finished writing on one page in the pad of paper, you can tear it off and still have the rest of the pad of paper to use. The pad of paper I’m looking for is one that I used to jot down some ideas yesterday. “To jot (jot) down” means to write something down quickly. You might jot down notes while you listen to someone on the phone, or you might jot down a phone number that you see in an advertisement.

Next, I take out the paper clips, stapler, and Scotch tape I know I’ll also need. A “paper clip” is a small piece of bent metal or plastic that holds pieces of paper together temporarily. When you remove the paper clip, the pages are no longer together. A “stapler” is a small object that pushes a small piece of metal through pieces of paper to hold them together. A paper clip is a good choice when you need to hold the papers together for only a little while, because it can be removed easily and doesn’t damage the papers. A stapler, on the other hand, is good for papers that need to be held together for a long time, because staples (small pieces of metal) are more difficult to remove and they leave two small holes in each piece of paper. The third thing I take out is the Scotch tape. “Tape” is a narrow piece of plastic that is sticky on one side and can be used to hold things together. “Scotch tape” is a type of tape that is clear and colorless, meaning it does not have a color. We use Scotch tape to put papers on the wall, to wrap presents, or just to put two pieces of paper together. Paper will often rip, or tear, when Scotch tape is removed from it, so we have to be careful what we put it on.

Once I’ve found the pad of paper, paper clips, stapler, and Scotch tape, I have everything in front of me so I can get down to business. The phrase “to get down to business” means to begin working on something very seriously, or to get serious about something. So far I have been gathering all the things I need, but now it’s time to get down to business and begin working on the report. If you invite your friends to your house, for example, to help you plant a new garden, when everyone has arrived, you may say, “Let’s get down to business,” meaning let’s begin working now. Those would be some very nice and very generous friends!

But the first thing I have to do is to get organized. I scan the information I have in front of me. “To scan” means to read something quickly, looking for the most important ideas. You probably scan web pages or long articles in the newspaper, and perhaps advertisements to find the information that interests you, because reading the whole thing would take too long. While I’m scanning



**Using English at Work**  
Episode 4 – Working at My Desk

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for information, I take notes on the things I want to include in the report. “To take notes” means to write down the most important points of what you hear or read. We usually talk about taking notes in class when a teacher or a professor is speaking, but in this case, I’m taking notes as I read other documents. Later, I’ll be able to read my notes and remember the most important points, which will be faster than reading the original documents again. Of course, to read your notes, you have to write carefully. If you are like me, many times you can’t read your own handwriting!

Well, then I say that before I analyze the data for this report, I need to skim the background information. The verb “to analyze” means to examine something very carefully in order to understand each of its parts. In this lesson, we’re analyzing the vocabulary of the story, trying to understand what each word means. At my desk, I’m analyzing the data for the report. “Data” is a type of information; it often includes numbers. We usually get data from scientific experiments or, in a business environment, from our sales reports.

Before I can analyze the data for the report, I need to skim the background information. The verb “to skim” (skim) has the same meaning, or similar meaning as the verb “to scan.” “To skim” means to read something quickly, looking for the most important ideas. When I don’t have a lot of time in the morning, I may just skim my newspaper rather than reading every story. I’m skimming it to look for the most important or interesting stories. We often skim a report to understand how the information is organized and then we go back and read it in detail. “To scan” is sometimes used to mean to look for a very specific piece of information: a telephone number or a name. Whereas “to skim” usually implies you are looking for general information, but you’re not necessarily looking for one piece of information. I’m skimming the background information to make sure that I haven’t missed anything. I was making good progress, but then I was feeling thirsty, so I decide to take a quick break, which is the subject of our next lesson.

Now that we’ve analyzed and discussed the vocabulary related to working at your desk, let’s listen again to this description of what happened at the desk, this time speaking at a normal rate of speech.

[start of script]

When I get back to my desk, I clear off a few stacks of paper on top of my desk so I have some space to work. I open the computer file I have been working on for the past week. This document is a report that is due next week and the deadline is fast approaching.



**Using English at Work**  
Episode 4 – Working at My Desk

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I open my filing cabinet and take out two files and a manila envelope that has the information I need in them. I look around for the pad of paper I used to jot down some ideas yesterday, and take out the paper clips, stapler, and Scotch tape I know I'll also need. Now I have everything in front of me so I can get down to business.

The first thing I have to do is get organized. I scan the information I have in front of me and take notes on the things I want to include in the report. Before I analyze the data for the report, I need to skim the background information to make sure I haven't missed anything. I was making good progress but I'm feeling thirsty, so I decide to take a quick break.

[end of script]

I hope listening to this story about working at your desk has taught you some new vocabulary that you can use when you're working in your own office. Our fourth lesson is now complete, and in the next lesson, number five, I'm going to talk about taking a break and eating lunch – my favorite parts of the day!

This course has been a production of the Center for Educational Development, in beautiful Los Angeles, California. Visit our website at [eslpod.com](http://eslpod.com).

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## SCRIPT

I want to get some coffee, so I walk into the break room. My coworkers, Diana and Van, are standing next to the water cooler talking about a show on TV last night. I pick up the coffee pot and pour myself a mug of coffee. I am feeling really hungry, too, so I walk over to the vending machine. I'm looking over the candy bars and potato chips when Diana says, "We're taking an early lunch. Do you want to join us?" I say, "Yes!" and the three of us walk across the street to a restaurant.

I'm happy that we came early because we beat the rush. The hostess seats us at a table and takes our drink orders. Our server comes over with our drinks and we place our food orders. I choose the lunch special and so does Diana. Van picks the all-you-can-eat soup and salad bar. While Diana and I wait for our orders to arrive, Van goes to the soup and salad bar and gets a really big plate of food. "Do you mind if I start?" he asks. "Of course not," Diana and I say.

When we finish eating, the server comes over to clear our plates and to give us our bill. We forgot to ask for separate checks so we all pay together. That was a good lunch. It was certainly better than the bag lunch I usually bring from home!

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## GLOSSARY

**break room** – a room in an office building where employees can rest when they aren't working, usually with food, coffee, a microwave, refrigerator, comfortable chairs, and tables

\* I wish that they had healthier snacks in the break room, but it's always full of cookies and soda.

**water cooler** – a machine with a large container of water that keeps water cold for drinking

\* Drinking water from the water cooler is free for the employees, so it's much better than buying bottled water each day.

**coffee pot** – a large container that holds coffee and keeps it warm so that people can fill their coffee cups with hot coffee whenever they want it

\* The coffee pot with a black lid is for regular coffee and the coffee pot with an orange lid is for decaffeinated coffee.



**Using English at Work**  
Episode 5 – Taking a Break and Eating Lunch

**mug** – a large cup with a handle, usually used for drinking hot beverages

\* Sally uses a mug with pictures of her kids so that she can see them all day while she's drinking coffee.

**vending machine** – a machine that sells food and drinks

\* Kamil buys a can of soda from the vending machine every afternoon.

**candy bar** – a long, rectangular, sweet type of food usually made from sugar and chocolate

\* Some popular candy bars include Snickers, Butterfinger, and Kit Kat.

**potato chip** – a thin slice of potato that has been fried in oil and salted

\* Do you like plain potato chips or flavored ones?

**to join** – to participate in something; to do something that other people are doing

\* Randolph would like to join us for dinner and a movie tonight. Is that okay?

**to beat the rush** – to get somewhere before most other people do; to get somewhere before it becomes very crowded

\* We beat the rush at the movie theater by buying our tickets for the evening show earlier in the day.

**hostess** – a female restaurant employee who greets customers, takes them to their table, and offers to bring them drinks before the waiter or waitress comes

\* Zhanna asked the hostess for a table next to the window.

**drink order** – what one asks for to drink at a restaurant or bar

\* The most common drink order at this restaurant is strawberry lemonade.

**server** – waiter or waitress; a restaurant employee who brings food to customers at their table

\* We asked the server to bring us ketchup for our hamburgers.

**lunch special** – a combination of foods that are offered for a lower price during lunchtime hours, usually from Monday to Friday

\* The restaurant across the street has a great lunch special with soup, salad, and a sandwich for only \$6.99.

**all-you-can-eat** – a restaurant meal where customers pay one price and can eat as much as they want to of a particular kind of food

\* If you're very hungry, going to an all-you-can-eat restaurant is a good idea because you can eat a lot of food for a low price.



**Using English at Work**  
Episode 5 – Taking a Break and Eating Lunch

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**salad bar** – a long table at a restaurant that has many different vegetables, salad dressing, cheese, fruits, and other foods so that people can build their own salads

\* Josette likes eating at salad bars because that way she can decide which vegetables she wants to eat.

**to clear (one's) plate** – to remove one's plate from the table and take it to the kitchen after one has finished eating

\* In the Chavez home, the children have to clear the plates from the table before they can go outside to play.

**bill** – a piece of paper that says how much a customer needs to pay

\* The bill charged us for two iced teas, but we had ordered only one, so we asked the waiter to correct it.

**separate checks** – pieces of paper showing how much each customer at a table needs to pay the restaurant; a bill that isn't combined for everyone at the table

\* The guys requested separate checks so that they wouldn't have to calculate how much each person should pay at the end of the meal.

**bag lunch** – food brought from home to eat at school or the office for lunch, usually in a paper bag

\* Zhaklina always brings the same bag lunch to school: a ham sandwich, an apple, and a diet soda.



## COMPLETE TRANSCRIPT

Welcome to ESLPod.com’s “Using English at Work” lesson five. I’m your host, Dr. Jeff McQuillan, from the Center for Educational Development.

In lesson four of this course, we learned vocabulary related to working at your desk. In this fifth lesson, I’m going to talk about taking a break and eating lunch.

We’ll begin by listening to the story read at a slow speed.

[start of script]

I want to get some coffee, so I walk into the break room. My coworkers, Diana and Van, are standing next to the water cooler talking about a show on TV last night. I pick up the coffee pot and pour myself a mug of coffee. I am feeling really hungry, too, so I walk over to the vending machine. I’m looking over the candy bars and potato chips when Diana says, “We’re taking an early lunch. Do you want to join us?” I say, “Yes!” and the three of us walk across the street to a restaurant.

I’m happy that we came early because we beat the rush. The hostess seats us at a table and takes our drink orders. Our server comes over with our drinks and we place our food orders. I choose the lunch special and so does Diana. Van picks the all-you-can-eat soup and salad bar. While Diana and I wait for our orders to arrive, Van goes to the soup and salad bar and gets a really big plate of food. “Do you mind if I start?” he asks. “Of course not,” Diana and I say.

When we finish eating, the server comes over to clear our plates and to give us our bill. We forgot to ask for separate checks so we all pay together. That was a good lunch. It was certainly better than the bag lunch I usually bring from home!

[end of script]

When the story begins, I want to get some coffee, so I walk into the break room. A “break room” is a room in an office building where employees can go to relax when they aren’t working during the day. Most break rooms have comfortable chairs or couches and coffee, water, and “snacks,” or small things for you to eat. In this break room, my coworkers, or colleagues, Diana and Van, are standing next to the water cooler talking about a show that was on television last night. A “water cooler” is a machine that keeps the water in a large container cold. Some water coolers are able to keep water hot, too, for tea and other hot drinks. I pick up the coffee pot and pour myself a mug of coffee. A “coffee pot” is a container



**Using English at Work**  
Episode 5 – Taking a Break and Eating Lunch

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for holding coffee and keeping it warm for drinking later. When you go to a restaurant, the waiter brings a coffee pot to your table and pours coffee into your cup. A “mug” (mug) is a large cup with a handle (something you hold) that people drink out of. A mug is often a little bigger than a normal cup. If it’s cold outside, you might want to drink a mug of tea or hot chocolate, for example.

In the story, I’m feeling really hungry, so I walk over to the vending machine. A “vending machine” is a large machine that you put money into to buy a drink or food. “Vending” comes from the verb “to vend,” which means to sell. Vending machines with cold sodas are probably the most common type you’ll see, but there are also vending machines that sell hot drinks like tea and coffee. Many vending machines sell sweet and salty “snacks,” which are small pieces of food that we eat between meals. You’re not supposed to eat too many snacks, but sometimes they’re so good you can’t stop!

I’m looking over the candy bars and the potato chips. “I’m looking over” means I’m examining, I’m looking at them. A “candy bar” is normally a long, rectangular, sweet type of food usually made from sugar and chocolate. “Potato chips” are thin slices of potatoes that have been fried and salted. Candy bars and potato chips may not be healthy foods, but they are very tasty!

Before I buy one of these snacks from the vending machine, Diana says, “We’re taking an early lunch. Do you want to join us?” “To join someone” means to do something that other people are doing. For example, you may say to your friend, “I hear that you’re going to see a movie tonight. Can I join you?” You’re asking if you can do the same thing that your friend is doing. Diana is inviting me to have lunch with her and some other people by asking me to join them. I say, “Yes!” and the three of us walk across the street to a restaurant.

I’m happy that we went to the restaurant early, because we beat the rush. “To beat the rush” means to do something or get somewhere early before it gets very crowded. In this case, we get to the restaurant early, before most people go there to eat lunch. At lunchtime, the busiest hour for a restaurant in the U.S. is normally between noon (or 12:00 p.m.) and 1:00 p.m. You might beat the rush for a concert by buying your tickets very early, rather than waiting until the day of the concert. Both of these are cases of “beating the rush.”

When we get to the restaurant, the hostess seats us at our table. The “hostess” is a female restaurant employee who welcomes customers to the restaurant, takes them to their table, and often asks what they would like to drink. If this employee is a man, he’s called a “host.” Our hostess takes our “drink orders.” A “drink order” is what you ask for to drink at a restaurant or a bar just like a “food



**Using English at Work**  
Episode 5 – Taking a Break and Eating Lunch

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order” is what you ask for to eat. Your drink order might be soda, juice, beer, or some type of alcohol.

Next, our server comes over with our drinks. A “server” is the same thing as a “waiter” or a “waitress.” A “waiter” is a man, a “waitress” is a woman; a “server” can be either a man or a woman. This is a restaurant employee who “serves,” or brings food to the customers. When the server comes with our drinks, we place our food orders. I choose the lunch special and so does Diana. A “lunch special” is a combination of foods that are offered for a lower price during lunchtime hours, usually Monday through Friday. Many restaurants have lunch specials to get people to come to the restaurant during the week; however on the weekends (on Saturdays and Sundays) there usually are not any lunch specials. A lunch special often has a salad, an entrée (or main course), a drink, and sometimes a small dessert.

Diana and I choose the lunch special, but Van picks the all-you-can-eat soup and salad bar. If something is “all-you-can-eat,” it means that you pay one price and you can eat as much of something as you want. Another word for all-you-can-eat is a “buffet” (buffet). In this case, Van will be able to eat as much soup and salad as he wants. A “salad bar” is a long table at a restaurant that has many different vegetables, fruits, salad dressings, cheeses, and other foods so that customers at the restaurant can build (or make) their own salads. The best salad bars are the ones that have a lot of variety, so you can choose the vegetables and other things you like best.

When Diana and I wait for our orders (the lunch specials) to arrive, Van goes to the soup and salad bar and gets a really big plate of food, because he’s allowed to take all that he can eat – and because he’s a very big person! Then he asks, “Do you mind if I start?” He’s asking for our permission to begin eating his food before our food has arrived. This is a polite thing to do when you are eating at a restaurant with other people, since people eating together usually wait until everyone is served or has their food in front of them before starting to eat. Diana and I say, “Of course not,” meaning it won’t bother us if he eats first; it’s okay. So, Van, being hungry, begins eating while we are waiting for our food.

When we finish eating, the server comes over to clear our plates. “To clear one’s plate” means to pick up the dirty plate from the table and take it to the kitchen after someone has finished eating. The server also gives us our bill. A “bill” is a piece of paper that shows how much a customer needs to pay. In this case, our bill shows the cost of the food and drinks that we ordered. We forgot to ask for separate checks. “Separate checks” are when each person at a table gets his or her own bill, so that each person pays only for what that person ate directly to the



**Using English at Work**  
Episode 5 – Taking a Break and Eating Lunch

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server. Asking for separate checks is sometimes a good idea when many people eating together but each one wants to pay separately, but we forgot to ask for separate checks, so we all pay together.

Finally, I say that it was a good lunch. It was certainly, or definitely, better than the bag lunch I usually bring from home. A “bag lunch” is the food that you bring from home to either school or work to eat during your lunch period; usually the food is put in a brown paper bag. So I guess this means I’m not a very good cook if the lunch at the restaurant was better than the bag lunch I usually bring to work. That’s true; I’m not a very good cook!

That covers all the new vocabulary in this lesson, so now please “join me” as we listen again about taking a break and eating lunch. This time we’ll listen to the story at a normal speed.

[start of script]

I want to get some coffee, so I walk into the break room. My coworkers, Diana and Van, are standing next to the water cooler talking about a show on TV last night. I pick up the coffee pot and pour myself a mug of coffee. I am feeling really hungry, too, so I walk over to the vending machine. I’m looking over the candy bars and potato chips when Diana says, “We’re taking an early lunch. Do you want to join us?” I say, “Yes!” and the three of us walk across the street to a restaurant.

I’m happy that we came early because we beat the rush. The hostess seats us at a table and takes our drink orders. Our server comes over with our drinks and we place our food orders. I choose the lunch special and so does Diana. Van picks the all-you-can-eat soup and salad bar. While Diana and I wait for our orders to arrive, Van goes to the soup and salad bar and gets a really big plate of food. “Do you mind if I start?” he asks. “Of course not,” Diana and I say.

When we finish eating, the server comes over to clear our plates and to give us our bill. We forgot to ask for separate checks so we all pay together. That was a good lunch. It was certainly better than the bag lunch I usually bring from home!

[end of script]

I hope that you have learned some new vocabulary that you can use the next time you want to take a break or eat lunch during the workday – and speak English, of course! This is the end of our fifth lesson; in the sixth lesson we’re



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**Using English at Work**  
Episode 5 – Taking a Break and Eating Lunch

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going to continue talking about my day at work. We'll be talking about my problems – my computer problems.

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## SCRIPT

When we return to the office, I know I have to try to make some headway with my report. Unfortunately, as soon as I sit down in front of my computer, it starts acting up. First, my computer screen freezes and I have to boot it up again. Then, when I try to print a copy of my report, it won't print. I discover that the problem is that the printer is jammed, so it takes some time to clear it and for it to work again. Finally, when I think that my computer worries are over, my mouse and keyboard go haywire. I finally give up and call the computer tech.

I don't usually like calling the computer tech to help me with computer problems. She's nice enough, but she always makes me feel like I did something bad to my computer – something I shouldn't have done – even when I haven't.

When she arrives, she sits down at my computer and asks me a lot of questions to find out what the problem might be. I tell her about the problems I had and she asks if I'd had any problems while working on my word processing program. I say that everything was fine, but I did have some trouble formatting one of my files and got an error message when working on my spreadsheet program. She starts doing something to my computer, typing on the keys a mile a minute for a long time. Finally she says, "Okay, it's fixed. You shouldn't have any more problems now – as long as you don't abuse your computer." Of course I never abuse my computer, but it's no use telling *her*. At least my computer is fixed and I can keep working.

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## GLOSSARY

**to make some headway** – to make progress; to move something forward; to advance something

\* If we want to make some headway with this new business, we'll have to hire someone who knows about marketing.

**to act up** – to not work correctly; to not function properly; to malfunction

\* The coffee maker is acting up, shooting coffee into the air instead of into the coffee pot.



**screen** – the electronic display (what one looks at) on a television, computer monitor, PDA, or similar type of electronic device

\* There's something wrong with the computer screen, because everything that should be white looks green.

**to freeze** – to stop responding, especially in a computer

\* Whenever Jaclyn opens more than four files at a time, her computer freezes. I think she needs to get more memory for her computer.

**to boot (something) up** – to start or turn on a computer or a similar electronic device

\* The first thing Elaine does when she gets to the office is to boot her computer up.

**to print** – to use a machine that takes information in an electronic computer file and puts it on paper in ink

\* The first time I printed the report it had big black lines on the page, so I had to use another printer.

**to jam** – to get stuck; to have papers or other objects stuck in a machine so that the machine can't work properly

\* The vending machine was jammed with coins, so I wasn't able to use it.

**mouse** – a small piece of equipment that one moves with one's hand to move the cursor (a small flashing line or arrow) on a computer screen

\* Move your mouse over the link and right click on the button that says "submit."

**keyboard** – a rectangular piece of equipment that has buttons with letters and numbers that are pushed with one's fingers to enter text into a computer program

\* Do you know how to type without looking at the keyboard?

**to go haywire** – to stop working correctly; to get out of control; to become uncontrollable

\* At the family's Thanksgiving dinner, things went haywire when everyone started arguing about Benjamin's decision to quit school and become a musician.

**to give up** – to stop trying to do something that is difficult or that is taking a long time

\* Macaulay was trying to play Chopin's music on the piano, but then he gave up and decided to play something easier instead.



**Using English at Work**  
Lesson 6 – Having Computer Problems

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**computer tech** – computer technician; an expert in installing or fixing computers  
\* Sometimes computer techs use so many technical words that they seem to be speaking another language.

**word processing program** – a type of computer software that lets people create written documents and control the size, color, and style of the text  
\* Two common word processing programs are Microsoft Word and Notepad.

**to format** – to change the way that text looks, usually by changing the amount of space between lines or the size, color, and style of text  
\* Do you know how to format this text so that it's in three columns?

**error message** – a short message that appears on a computer when one has done something wrong, or when the computer is no longer able to work properly  
\* I got an error message saying that the computer can't find the Internet connection.

**spreadsheet program** – a type of computer program that lets people enter numbers and perform calculations  
\* It's easier to monitor a company's finances by using a spreadsheet program than by using a written record.

**a mile a minute** – very quickly; very fast  
\* Michaela talks a mile and minute and it's very difficult to understand what she's saying.

**to fix** – to make something work again after it has been broken; to correct a problem  
\* The dishwasher is broken. Does anyone know how to fix it?

**to abuse** – to treat something or someone very badly; to hurt someone or something by treating it poorly  
\* Jimmy abuses his toys, dropping them from the windows on the third floor just to see if they will break.



## COMPLETE TRANSCRIPT

You're listening to lesson six of ESLPod.com's "Using English at Work." I'm your host, Dr. Jeff McQuillan, from the Center for Educational Development.

In the fifth lesson of "Using English at Work," we learned vocabulary and phrases related to taking a break from work and having lunch. In our sixth lesson, we're going to talk about having computer problems when you're at the office.

Let's begin by listening to the story about these computer problems at a slow speed.

[start of script]

When we return to the office, I know I have to try to make some headway with my report. Unfortunately, as soon as I sit down in front of my computer, it starts acting up. First, my computer screen freezes and I have to boot it up again. Then, when I try to print a copy of my report, it won't print. I discover that the problem is that the printer is jammed, so it takes some time to clear it and for it to work again. Finally, when I think that my computer worries are over, my mouse and keyboard go haywire. I finally give up and call the computer tech.

I don't usually like calling the computer tech to help me with computer problems. She's nice enough, but she always makes me feel like I did something bad to my computer – something I shouldn't have done – even when I haven't.

When she arrives, she sits down at my computer and asks me a lot of questions to find out what the problem might be. I tell her about the problems I had and she asks if I'd had any problems while working on my word processing program. I say that everything was fine, but I did have some trouble formatting one of my files and got an error message when working on my spreadsheet program. She starts doing something to my computer, typing on the keys a mile a minute for a long time. Finally she says, "Okay, it's fixed. You shouldn't have any more problems now – as long as you don't abuse your computer." Of course I never abuse my computer, but it's no use telling *her*. At least my computer is fixed and I can keep working.

[end of script]

When the story begins, we're returning to the office after lunch and I know that I have to try to make some headway with my report. "To make some headway" (headway) means to make progress on a project to try to finish the project. I've



**Using English at Work**  
Lesson 6 – Having Computer Problems

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spent most of the morning in meetings, organizing my desk and taking breaks – fairly typical, I think, of many people who in an office – so now I really need to get serious about working on my report if I’m going to make some headway and meet the deadline. If your parents are planning to visit you, you may try to make some headway in cleaning your house before they arrive by cleaning the bathroom today and the kitchen tomorrow and the living room the next day. Each day, you make some headway on cleaning your house – you make some progress.

Unfortunately, as soon as I sit down in front of my computer, it starts acting up. When we talk about machines and equipment, “to act up” means to stop working properly. For example, your car radio might act up and stop playing music, or your cell phone might act up and not ring when people call you – that would be great, actually, for me! In the story, my computer is acting up at work.

First, my computer screen freezes. A “screen” (screen) is the part of the computer page that you can see on your computer monitor. You have a screen on your television, a screen on your computer monitor; many people a screen on their cell phones. The screen is where the images and text are shown. When we talk about computers the verb “to freeze” means to stop responding, to stop working. It seems like computers often freeze whenever I’m in the middle of writing a very important note! When my screen freezes – when my computer stops working – I have to boot it up again. “To boot something up” means, in this case, to turn on the computer. In the morning, the first thing I do is to boot my computer up and it usually takes two or three minutes before it’s ready for me to use. But because my computer is acting up, I do what all of us do to try to fix our computers, I try to restart it by booting it up again.

Next, I try to print a copy of my report. I’m going to print the information in my file – my electronic file and put it onto a piece of paper using a printer. These days, many companies and organizations have their job applications on their website and if you want to apply for a job, you need to print out the application before you can complete it. Notice, here, we can use “print” or “print out,” they mean the same in this case. I try to print a copy of my report at the office, but of course, it won’t print. I discover that the problem is with the printer; it’s jammed. If a piece of equipment is “jammed” (jammed) it means that paper or something else is stuck inside of it so it can’t work correctly. When photocopiers and printers get jammed, we usually have to open them, reach in, pull out the paper that got stuck, and then put in new paper. My report won’t print because the printer is jammed, so it takes some time to clear it, or take out the papers that are stuck, for it to work again. We clear it – we take out or remove the paper; that’s what you do if you have a jam.



**Using English at Work**  
Lesson 6 – Having Computer Problems

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Finally, when I think my computer worries are over, my mouse and keyboard go haywire. Your “mouse” is a small piece of equipment that we move with our hands in order to move different things on a computer screen and to click on our computer. A mouse usually has two buttons, a left button and a right button. We often use the expression “to left click,” which means to press the left side of the mouse; “to right click” means to press the right side of the mouse. A “keyboard” is a rectangular piece of equipment that works with a computer. It has all the letters or symbols for whatever language we are using, so we can put information into the computer by typing.

In the story, my mouse and keyboard go haywire. The phrase “to go haywire” (haywire) means to become uncontrollable – to stop working properly. If you are a parent with small children, you might feel like things are going haywire when both of your children are sick, you have to work late at your job, you’re going to school at night, and your car isn’t working all at the same time. Things are going haywire – things are going wrong; there are many things that are going wrong. Usually you feel like things have gone haywire when you don’t have a lot of control over them.

Finally, I give up on my mouse and my keyboard. “To give up” means to stop trying to do something because it is so difficult or because it is taking a very long time. I, for example, might want to become a professional singer, but if everyone tells me that I’m a terrible singer – I’m a bad singer – I will probably give up after trying for a few years. In this story, I tried to fix my computer problems on my own, but it was just too difficult, so I gave up and called the computer tech. A “computer tech” is a “computer technician,” who is a person that knows about computers – knows how to fix computers. Many businesses have computer techs, who can come to help other employees when they’re having computer problems. If your office doesn’t have a computer tech, you’ll probably need to talk to a computer tech over the phone to fix your computer problems – or just buy a new computer!

I don’t usually like calling the computer tech to help me with computer problems. She’s nice enough, meaning she is not mean or unkind, but she always makes me feel like I did something bad to my computer, meaning I shouldn’t have done something, even though I didn’t do anything. The computer sometimes stops working for no reason, but the computer tech always makes me feel guilty, as if I had done something to break the computer.

When the computer tech arrives, she sits down at my computer, meaning that she sits on a chair in front of my computer, and asks me a lot of questions to find



**Using English at Work**  
Lesson 6 – Having Computer Problems

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out what the problem is. I tell her about the problems I had and she asks if I had any problems while working on my word processing program. A “word processing program” is a type of computer software that lets you make written documents by control the size, the style, and the color of the text among other things. Microsoft Word is the word processing program that most people use, in the United States anyway. I say that everything was fine when I was working with the word processing program, but that I did have some trouble formatting one of my files. “To format” means to change the appearance of a document, usually by changing the spacing between the lines, or changing the size and style of the text, perhaps adding a border or a line around the paper. For the first page of the report, some people like to format the title so that it’s in the middle of the page, for example. I was formatting my report when I started having computer problems.

Next, I got an error message. An “error message” is a short message that appears on your computer screen when something has gone wrong, or when the computer is no longer working properly. “Error” means mistake; in this case, there’s some problem with the computer. Sometimes error messages say things like “A fatal (or deadly) error has occurred,” and then when you click “OK” the program shuts down and you lose whatever document you were working on. “To shut down” means to close down, to no longer be operating on your computer. The opposite would be “to open up a program.” This time, I got an error message while working on my spreadsheet program. A “spreadsheet program” is a type of computer program that lets you enter numbers and perform calculations, such as adding, subtracting, and other math formulas. Spreadsheet programs often are used to calculate, or figure, out how much a company is making, for example. The most popular program currently in the U.S. is Microsoft Excel; that’s the most popular spreadsheet program.

The computer tech starts doing something to my computer, typing on the keys – the buttons on the keyboard that you push – a mile a minute for a long time. The phrase “a mile a minute” means very quickly. To say that the computer tech was typing a mile a minute means she was typing very quickly. You could also have someone who speaks a mile a minute – when they speak very quickly. After she types quickly for a long time, she says, “Okay, it’s fixed,” meaning she has taken something that was broken and made it so that it works again. You can fix a radio, you could fix a broken car, you can fix any sort of machine; you can also fix a situation or a problem that you’re having, for example, with a relationship. The best way to fix a relationship with another person is to find a new person – that’s the easiest!



**Using English at Work**  
Lesson 6 – Having Computer Problems

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The computer technician is fixing my computer, and when she's done she says, "it's fixed." Then she says to me, "You shouldn't have any more problems now – as long as you don't abuse your computer." "To abuse" (abuse) something or someone means to hurt something or someone by treating it very badly. If I were angry, I might abuse my computer by taking my hand, making a fist – putting my fingers together – and punching the computer screen. That would hurt my hand, but I would also feel better even though I was abusing or hurting my computer. I do this a lot! Of course I never actually abuse my computer, at least not in the story, but it's no good talking to her, because she wouldn't believe me. Now that my computer is fixed, at least I can begin working again.

I'm sure you can understand how frustrating all these computer problems can be. Now that we've talked a little bit about the vocabulary you may need to talk about your computer problems, let's listen to the description of this part of my day again, this time at a normal rate of speech.

[start of script]

When we return to the office, I know I have to try to make some headway with my report. Unfortunately, as soon as I sit down in front of my computer, it starts acting up. First, my computer screen freezes and I have to boot it up again. Then, when I try to print a copy of my report, it won't print. I discover that the problem is that the printer is jammed, so it takes some time to clear it and for it to work again. Finally, when I think that my computer worries are over, my mouse and keyboard go haywire. I finally give up and call the computer tech.

I don't usually like calling the computer tech to help me with computer problems. She's nice enough, but she always makes me feel like I did something bad to my computer – something I shouldn't have done – even when I haven't.

When she arrives, she sits down at my computer and asks me a lot of questions to find out what the problem might be. I tell her about the problems I had and she asks if I'd had any problems while working on my word processing program. I say that everything was fine, but I did have some trouble formatting one of my files and got an error message when working on my spreadsheet program. She starts doing something to my computer, typing on the keys a mile a minute for a long time. Finally she says, "Okay, it's fixed. You shouldn't have any more problems now – as long as you don't abuse your computer." Of course I never abuse my computer, but it's no use telling *her*. At least my computer is fixed and I can keep working.

[end of script]



English as a Second Language Podcast  
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**Using English at Work**  
Lesson 6 – Having Computer Problems

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That's the end of our sixth lesson. In our seventh lesson, I'm going to talk about scheduling a meeting at work.

This course has been a production of the Center for Educational Development, in beautiful Los Angeles, California. Visit our website at [eslpod.com](http://eslpod.com).

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## SCRIPT

At 3 p.m., I get a call from one of our vendors who wants to set up a meeting for the following week. Since I was away from my desk at the time, she left a voicemail message. When I get back to my desk, I retrieve the message and listen to it, and then return her call. I call her twice, but she isn't there, so I leave a voicemail message for her. We're playing phone tag. Finally, at 4 p.m., she calls again and since I am at my desk, we can talk at last.

Andrea asks me if it is possible for us to meet early in the week next week. I check my calendar and I tell her that I'm tied up Monday and Tuesday, but that I'm free Wednesday afternoon or Thursday morning. She says that Wednesday afternoon suits her and asks what time would be good for me. I tell her the earlier the better, since I will be entertaining clients that night and need to leave work a little early that day. She suggests 1 p.m. I check my schedule again to confirm that 1 p.m. Wednesday is free and clear and it is. She says that she will send me an email Wednesday morning as a reminder and I thank her. After all of that back and forth, we finally have a meeting set for next week.

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## GLOSSARY

**vendor** – a company that sells a product or service to other companies

\* Which company is your vendor for computer products?

**to set up** – to schedule; to arrange; to set a time for

\* Let's set up a meeting with all of the department heads for next Thursday at 11:30.

**away from (one's) desk** – not at one's desk; not near the phone at work; not in one's office

\* I put your mail on your chair when I saw that you were away from your desk.

**retrieve** – to get information that was stored on a computer or in a voicemail system

\* Were you able to retrieve the files after your computer stopped working?



**Using English at Work**  
Lesson 7 – Scheduling a Meeting

**to return (one's) call** – to call someone back on the telephone after he or she has called you and left a message because you weren't there

\* I would appreciate it if you could return my call as soon as you get this message.

**to play phone tag** – to repeatedly leave messages for someone because he or she is not there to answer the phone when you call, and to have him or her repeatedly call you back and leave messages for you when you are not there

\* Monty and Vito both had several meetings this week, so they were playing phone tag with each other.

**early in the week** – Monday or Tuesday of a week; the first days of a week

\* I'm available early in the week, but from Wednesday through Friday I will be at a conference.

**calendar** – schedule of appointments; appointment book; a piece of paper or book showing when one is available and when one is busy; a schedule showing the days of the week or month

\* Marco keeps Rhonda's calendar, so if you want to make an appointment with Rhonda, you need to call Marco to find out when she's available.

**tied up** – busy; occupied; not available

\* Jorge was tied up in meetings all morning and we couldn't speak to him until the afternoon.

**free** – available; not busy; not occupied

\* When are you free for an interview next week?

**to suit (someone)** – to be convenient or good for someone; to not be inconvenient or bad for someone

\* I'd like to send you my resume via email, if that suits you.

**the earlier the better** – as soon as possible; preferably very soon

\* Please come to my office anytime tomorrow morning, the earlier the better because I have lots of afternoon appointments.

**to entertain clients** – to take important customers to dinner and/or a show while they are visiting one's city to try to improve the relationship between them and one's company

\* When you're entertaining clients, don't talk about the company and our products too much or they'll get tired of hearing about them.



**Using English at Work**  
Lesson 7 – Scheduling a Meeting

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**to confirm** – to verify; to say that something is correct or true after checking to make sure

\* We'll call to confirm your appointment with Dr. Litchman in one week.

**free and clear** – open; without appointments; available for a meeting

\* This week is very busy, but next week is free and clear.

**reminder** – something that is said or written so that one does not forget about something important

\* Sometimes people tie a piece of string around their finger as a reminder to do something.

**back and forth** – a conversation where two people alternate in speaking; a conversation where first one person speaks, then the second, then the first again, and then the second again, especially when exchanging information

\* It was interesting to hear the children's back and forth as they tried to explain their math homework to each other.



**Using English at Work**  
Lesson 7 – Scheduling a Meeting

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**COMPLETE TRANSCRIPT**

You're listening to ESLPod.com's "Using English at Work" lesson seven. I'm Dr. Jeff McQuillan, from the Center for Educational Development, your host for this course.

In the sixth lesson of "Using English at Work," we learned vocabulary that is used when we're having computer problems. In lesson seven, we're going to learn how to schedule a work-related meeting in English.

We'll get started by listening to our story at a slow speed.

[start of script]

At 3 p.m., I get a call from one of our vendors who wants to set up a meeting for the following week. Since I was away from my desk at the time, she left a voicemail message. When I get back to my desk, I retrieve the message and listen to it, and then return her call. I call her twice, but she isn't there, so I leave a voicemail message for her. We're playing phone tag. Finally, at 4 p.m., she calls again and since I am at my desk, we can talk at last.

Andrea asks me if it is possible for us to meet early in the week next week. I check my calendar and I tell her that I'm tied up Monday and Tuesday, but that I'm free Wednesday afternoon or Thursday morning. She says that Wednesday afternoon suits her and asks what time would be good for me. I tell her the earlier the better, since I will be entertaining clients that night and need to leave work a little early that day. She suggests 1 p.m. I check my schedule again to confirm that 1 p.m. Wednesday is free and clear and it is. She says that she will send me an email Wednesday morning as a reminder and I thank her. After all of that back and forth, we finally have a meeting set for next week.

[end of script]

When this part of my day begins, it is 3 p.m. and I get a call from one of our vendors. A "vendor" is a company that sells a specific type of product to other companies. Most companies have vendors for computer products, office supplies, maybe photocopy machines, and many other things – whatever that company needs to buy from another business. The vendor who calls me wants to set up a meeting for the following week. "To set up a meeting" means to schedule or arrange a meeting, or to find a time when two or more people are available to meet. You might set up a time to have lunch with a friend, or meet



**Using English at Work**  
Lesson 7 – Scheduling a Meeting

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someone to fix your broken sink in your house – you’ll set up a time. The vendor called to set up a meeting with me for the following, or next week.

Since I was away from my desk at the time that she called, she left a voicemail message. To be “away from your desk” means not to be in your office, maybe because you’re having another meeting or you’re taking a break. Because I was away from my desk, I wasn’t able to answer my phone when it rang, so the vendor left me a voicemail message. When I get back to my desk, or return to my office, I retrieve the message and listen to it. “To retrieve” means to get something, especially when we’re talking about information that was stored on a computer or, in this case, in a voicemail system. To retrieve a voicemail message, I have to call the voicemail system, enter my PIN (or personal identification number), and then I can listen to the recorded message. Sometimes when you call someone in an office and they don’t answer their phone, you may hear a message like this: “I’m away from my desk right now. Please leave a message and I’ll return your call when I get back.” That’s a very common outgoing message. “Outgoing,” here, means that’s what people will hear when they call you.

After listening to the vendor’s message, then I return her call. “To return someone’s call” means to call someone back on the telephone after he or she has called you and left a message. When people leave a message, they usually give their name, their telephone number, and the time they called. I call the vendor twice, but she isn’t there, meaning that she isn’t answering her phone. So I leave a voicemail message for her. Now we’re playing something we call “phone tag.” “To play phone tag” means that two people are exchanging voicemail messages but aren’t able to actually speak to each other. For example, I start by calling you, but you don’t answer your phone so I leave you a message – a voicemail message. Then, when you get the message, you call me, but I don’t answer the phone, so you leave me a message. If we are both busy people – I’m not, but you probably are – we might continue to do this for a long time, and this is what we call “playing phone tag.” “Tag” (tag) is a game that children play, when one person is touched by another person and they become what we call “it.” You say, “You’re it!” and then that child has to run and touch someone else, and that person becomes “it,” and you don’t want to be “it.” I don’t know why we say “it,” but that’s the word we use. Getting back to our story.

Fortunately, I don’t have to play phone tag with the vendor for very long. At 4 p.m. she calls me again, and because this time I’m at my desk, or in my office, we can talk at last, or finally. Andrea, who works for the vendor, asks me if it is possible for us to meet early in the week next week. The phrase “early in the week” usually means Monday or Tuesday – maybe Wednesday. The phrase



**Using English at Work**  
Lesson 7 – Scheduling a Meeting

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“late in the week” usually means Thursday or Friday. The “middle of the week” or “mid-week” usually means Tuesday, Wednesday, or Thursday. So, someone may call you and say, “Let’s meet late next week,” they mean Thursday or Friday. Or, “Let’s meet next week in the middle of the week,” Tuesday, Wednesday or Thursday

Before responding to her question, I check my calendar. A “calendar” is a schedule of the days and months of the year. It’s also a person’s personal schedule or list of when you are available to meet with someone and when you are busy – when you have other things going on or happening. I check my calendar to see whether I am available to meet early in the week next week and I tell Andrea that I’m tied up Monday and Tuesday. To be “tied up,” here, means to be busy or occupied and therefore unable to meet at a certain time. In other words, I’m tied up on Monday and Tuesday because I have other appointments those days, so I cannot meet with her then. If your friend asks you if you want to play basketball on Saturday and you’re working that day, you would say, “I’m sorry. I’m tied up on Saturday, I can’t join you.” But if I tell my friend that I’m free on Wednesday afternoon or Thursday afternoon, then you’re saying that you have time to meet during those particular days. So “free” is the opposite of being “tied up.” If you’re free, you have time; if you’re tied up, you have something else on your schedule.

Andrea says that Wednesday afternoon suits her (I tell her that I am free on Wednesday afternoon). “To suit someone” means to be convenient for someone, or not to create problems for someone. When Andrea says that Wednesday afternoon suits her, she means that she is available to meet with me on Wednesday afternoon. “To suit someone” can also be used more generally to mean that it’s okay or it’s acceptable to someone. For example, if your husband or wife asks you if you want to go on vacation to beautiful Los Angeles, California, you might say, “That suits me!” meaning that you like the idea, it is acceptable to you.

Then Andrea asks me what time would be good for me. This is her way of asking me what time I would like to meet. I tell her the earlier the better. The phrase “the earlier the better” means the sooner the better or as early as possible. I want to meet in the afternoon, not in the late afternoon. The late afternoon would be after 3 or 4:00; I’m asking to meet in the early afternoon, in fact, the earlier the better. I explain that the reason meeting earlier is better for me is that I’ll be entertaining clients that night and I need to leave work a little early that day. “To entertain clients” means to take important customers for your business to dinner or perhaps to a play or some entertainment. This is supposed to improve their relationship with your company, or your relationship with them.



**Using English at Work**  
Lesson 7 – Scheduling a Meeting

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Usually managers are given a certain amount of money to entertain clients, taking them out for lunch or dinner, especially if they work in sales. Since I have to entertain clients on Wednesday night, I need to leave the office early that day, and that's why I would prefer to meet with Andrea earlier in the afternoon.

Andrea suggests 1 p.m. I check my schedule again, meaning that I look at my calendar to confirm that 1 p.m. on Wednesday is free and clear. To “confirm” means to verify something, or to say that something is correct or true based on the information that you have. We often confirm appointments to make sure that the people we're supposed to have a meeting with still have time to meet with us. Doctors' and dentists' offices usually call their patients to confirm their appointments to make sure that they will be coming at the scheduled time, often calling the day before, for example. When I say I'm “free and clear,” that's just another way of saying I am open, I don't have any meetings or other obligations during that time. I'm looking at my calendar to confirm, or check, that 1 p.m. on Wednesday is free and clear. It is free and clear, so Andrea and I agree to meet at 1:00 on that day.

Andrea says that she will send me an email Wednesday morning as a reminder. A “reminder” is something that is said or written so that the other person doesn't forget about something important. So, when the dentist or doctor's office calls you to confirm your appointment, they're really giving you a reminder. Andrea doesn't want me to forget our meeting, so she's going to send me an email as a reminder. Many people write notes for themselves, for example, as reminders of the things they need to do. I thank Andrea for offering to send a reminder. After all of that back and forth, we finally have a meeting set for next week. “Back and forth” is a conversation where two people alternate in speaking, first I speak, then you speak, and so on and so on. We usually use this expression when there is a long conversation or we need to negotiate something. In this case, we're trying to find the best time that will be good for both of us, so we go back and forth. I say something, she says a date, I say, “No, how about that date?” she says, “No, how about this date?” and so forth. Andrea and I have been going back and forth looking at our calendars, trying to find a time when we can both meet. Finally we have a meeting set for next week.

That's a good example of how meetings are scheduled at work in the U.S. Now that we've talked about this part of my workday, let's listen again as I describe how we scheduled the meeting, this time when I'm speaking at a normal pace.

[start of script]



**Using English at Work**  
Lesson 7 – Scheduling a Meeting

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At 3 p.m., I get a call from one of our vendors who wants to set up a meeting for the following week. Since I was away from my desk at the time, she left a voicemail message. When I get back to my desk, I retrieve the message and listen to it, and then return her call. I call her twice, but she isn't there, so I leave a voicemail message for her. We're playing phone tag. Finally, at 4 p.m., she calls again and since I am at my desk, we can talk at last.

Andrea asks me if it is possible for us to meet early in the week next week. I check my calendar and I tell her that I'm tied up Monday and Tuesday, but that I'm free Wednesday afternoon or Thursday morning. She says that Wednesday afternoon suits her and asks what time would be good for me. I tell her the earlier the better, since I will be entertaining clients that night and need to leave work a little early that day. She suggests 1 p.m. I check my schedule again to confirm that 1 p.m. Wednesday is free and clear and it is. She says that she will send me an email Wednesday morning as a reminder and I thank her. After all of that back and forth, we finally have a meeting set for next week.

[end of script]

I hope that listening to me schedule a meeting with Andrea has taught you some new vocabulary that you can use in your own job the next time you need to set up a meeting. In our next lesson, lesson eight, I'm going to talk about a meeting with my boss.

This course has been a production of the Center for Educational Development, in beautiful Los Angeles, California. Visit our website at [eslpod.com](http://eslpod.com).

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**Using English at Work**  
Lesson 8 – Meeting with the Boss

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**SCRIPT**

Before leaving work for the day, I want to stop by my boss's office to give him an update on my progress. I know he's expecting the report on Monday and I want to let him know that it will be finished on schedule.

Before I can do that, he calls me into his office and tells me to sit down. He tells me that the regional manager is impressed with my work and is considering me for a promotion. He says that this information is hush-hush, but he wants to give me the heads up. He says that the promotion would give me a new title and a small raise, but the most important thing is that it will put me in line to eventually become a regional manager myself. He praises me for my hard work and encourages me to keep my head down and to keep plugging away.

I'm so surprised, I don't know what to say. I've never thought of myself as a corporate climber and I didn't think that my work was a standout from my coworkers'. Of course I thank my boss, shake hands with him, and leave his office.

It's nice to get a pat on the back from him and I hope that the promotion does come through. I don't want to jump the gun, though, so I'm not going to think about it too much in case it doesn't happen.

---

**GLOSSARY**

**update** – the newest information about something; information about how something has changed since the last time someone spoke or read about it  
\* Some banks offer to send their customers daily email updates about their bank accounts.

**progress** – how well and how quickly something is moving forward toward completion; the amount of work that has been done to get something finished  
\* Val made a lot of progress on building his boat and plans to be finished by summer.

**on schedule** – as planned; on or before the deadline; on or before the due date  
\* The hospital can't be built on schedule because it has been raining too much.



**Using English at Work**  
Lesson 8 – Meeting with the Boss

**to call (someone) into (one's) office** – to ask someone to come into one's office for a private conversation

\* The school principal called Monica into his office to talk about her bad grades.

**impressed with** – pleased with; happy with

\* Everyone was impressed with Jeremy's performance in the play.

**promotion** – a move from an less important job to a more important job within the same company, usually because one has done his or her work very well

\* Did you hear that Gael received a promotion from Director of Sales to Vice President of Sales?

**hush-hush** – secret; something that should be kept secret; something that shouldn't be shared with other people

\* Ranya is pregnant, but it's hush-hush for now because she wants her husband to be the first person to know.

**the heads up** – advance notice; information that is received ahead of time or earlier than usual

\* Baily got the heads up about the new project when he walked by the president's office and accidentally heard her private phone conversation.

**title** – the name of one's job

\* When Vanna changed jobs, she got more money and a new title as the regional marketing coordinator.

**raise** – an increase in one's salary; an increase in the amount of money that one earns at work

\* What's the best way to ask the boss for a raise?

**to put (one) in line** – to set someone up for something; to put someone on the path toward a personal or professional success; to help someone prepare for something in the future

\* Tabitha has worked at the company for 15 years and that experience puts her in line for a top management position.

**to praise** – to say good things about what someone has done; to give someone compliments

\* A good boss praises the people who work for him or her, thanking them for the good work they do.



**Using English at Work**  
Lesson 8 – Meeting with the Boss

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**to keep (one's) head down** – to not draw attention to oneself; to say or do very little so that one can avoid attention, arguments, or problems

\* Mickey is always asking questions about other people's work. I wish he would just keep his head down and concentrate on what he's supposed to be doing.

**to keep plugging away** – to continue to work hard at something

\* Ramona keeps plugging away to try to finish her college degree, so that she can get a better job.

**corporate climber** – someone who wants to move upward quickly at work, getting better jobs, more responsibility, and better pay

\* If you want to be a corporate climber, you need to learn how to get along with people.

**a standout** – something or someone who is better than everything else; the best

\* Jasmine's dance performance was a standout and she won first place in the competition.

**to shake hands** – to have two people hold each other's right hand and move their arms up and down, usually to say hello, make an agreement, or say goodbye

\* In the United States, people usually shake hands when they meet, but in parts of Europe, people usually kiss each other on the cheek.

**to get a pat on the back** – to receive praise; to have someone say nice things about one's work; to receive congratulations; to be thanked for doing something well

\* Persephone got a pat on the back from her boss last week when he thanked her for all her hard work in front of all the other employees at the staff meeting.

**to jump the gun** – to do, think, or say something too soon, before it has happened

\* Octavia jumped the gun when she told her family that she was going to marry Richard, even before they were officially engaged.



**Using English at Work**  
Lesson 8 – Meeting with the Boss

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**COMPLETE TRANSCRIPT**

You're listening to ESLPod.com's "Using English at Work." I'm your host, Dr. Jeff McQuillan, from the Center for Educational Development.

In our seventh lesson, we learned vocabulary that is related to scheduling a meeting. In this eighth lesson, we're going to have a meeting with the boss.

Let's begin by listening to the story read at a slow speed.

[start of script]

Before leaving work for the day, I want to stop by my boss's office to give him an update on my progress. I know he's expecting the report on Monday and I want to let him know that it will be finished on schedule.

Before I can do that, he calls me into his office and tells me to sit down. He tells me that the regional manager is impressed with my work and is considering me for a promotion. He says that this information is hush-hush, but he wants to give me the heads up. He says that the promotion would give me a new title and a small raise, but the most important thing is that it will put me in line to eventually become a regional manager myself. He praises me for my hard work and encourages me to keep my head down and to keep plugging away.

I'm so surprised, I don't know what to say. I've never thought of myself as a corporate climber and I didn't think that my work was a standout from my coworkers'. Of course I thank my boss, shake hands with him, and leave his office.

It's nice to get a pat on the back from him and I hope that the promotion does come through. I don't want to jump the gun, though, so I'm not going to think about it too much in case it doesn't happen.

[end of script]

Before leaving work for the day, I want to stop by, or visit quickly, my boss's office to give him an update on my progress. An "update" is the latest, newest information about something. When you give someone an update, you're providing information about how your project or something else has changed since the last time you two spoke about it. Before you start on a trip, for example, you might want to get an update on the weather; if the weather is bad, you may change your trip. "Progress" is how quickly something is moving



**Using English at Work**  
Lesson 8 – Meeting with the Boss

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forward toward completion, or how quickly it is getting better or getting finished. If someone asks about your progress in learning English, they want to know if your English is getting better. I hope it is, after listening to this course!

I go to my boss's office to give him an update on my progress, meaning that I want to tell him the latest news about how the report is coming along – how it is developing, how it is going. I know my boss is expecting the report on Monday and I want to let him know that it will be finished on schedule. "On schedule" means on time or as we originally planned. My boss tells me he needs the report on Monday. Fortunately, I am going to be able to give it to him that day, so the report is on schedule. If we say something isn't on schedule, then we mean we have to find more time to work on it, or else it won't be finished by the date when it's needed. We may say, "Are the trains running on schedule?" meaning are they arriving to the stations – the train stations at the time that was originally planned. If they're not on schedule, we would say, also, they are "behind schedule." "Behind schedule" would mean, in this case, they are late. If I'm behind schedule on my project that means that it will not be finished when I planned it to be finished.

Before I can go into my boss's office, however, he calls me into his office. "To call someone into your office" means to ask someone to come into your office, usually for a private conversation that wasn't scheduled or planned. Sometimes when a boss calls an employee into his or her office, the person gets nervous and scared because the boss may be mad or angry about something. But in this case, I find there's nothing to worry about.

I go into my boss's office and he tells me to sit down. My boss tells me that the regional manager is impressed with my work. The "regional manager" would be the manager of a certain large area. For example, if a company sold products to all 50 states in the United States, there might be different regional managers: one for the western region, one for the southern region, and so forth. My boss says that the regional manager is impressed with my work. "To be impressed with something" means to be very pleased or very happy with something that has happened or with something that another person has done. Parents are usually very impressed with the things that their children do; even the smallest things, sometimes. The regional manager is impressed with my work, which means that she likes the work I've been doing.

Next, my boss tells me that the regional manager is considering me for a promotion. A "promotion" is a move within one company from a less important job to a more important job, usually because someone has done his or her job very well. A promotion often leads to more money as well. People get



**Using English at Work**  
Lesson 8 – Meeting with the Boss

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promotions from Manager to Director, or from Vice President to President. Getting a promotion is usually very good news, unless it's more work with the same amount of pay. Then, not so good news!

My boss says this information is hush-hush. "Hush-hush" is an informal term that means that something is a secret, something that shouldn't be talked about with other people. "To hush" means to tell someone to be quiet, so "hush-hush" means being quiet about something – not telling anyone else. You might tell a friend, for example, that you're falling in love with the woman who works next to you, but you ask him to keep it hush-hush because you don't want other people to know – like her boyfriend! By saying that the information is hush-hush, then, my boss is asking me not to tell other people that I'm being considered for a promotion.

The boss shares this secret information with me because he wants to give me the heads up. A "heads up" is information that you receive before anyone else does. A "heads up" is an advanced notice. If you're a good customer at a clothing store, the store might give you a heads up about a sale that's going to start in a few days – they're giving you information in advance, before other people get it. In this case, my promotion hasn't happened yet, but now I have a heads up on it and I won't be surprised if it does happen. I hope it does!

My boss says that the promotion would give me a new title. A "title" is the name of your job, basically. Common titles include Customer Service Representative, Finance Director, Vice President of Marketing, or perhaps Senior Accountant. In addition to getting a new title, I'm also going to get a small raise. A "raise" is an increase in your salary, the amount of money that you earn for doing your job. Many people get a small, 2 to 3% raise at the end of the year to cover the high cost of living; but they can also get larger raises, maybe 5 or 10%, for doing their jobs very well. When we get a promotion, as I mentioned earlier, we usually get a raise because the new position is often more difficult and has more responsibility.

My boss says that the most important thing about the promotion is not the title or the raise, but that it will put me in line to eventually become a regional manager myself. "To put someone in line" means to help someone prepare for something in the future, especially for a personal or professional success. Doing more than your boss asks of you or perhaps doing it faster than other people may put you in line for a promotion; it's a way of preparing you for a promotion. Getting this promotion will prepare me to be a regional manager someday in the future, so it will put me in line to become that manager.



**Using English at Work**  
Lesson 8 – Meeting with the Boss

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Next, my boss praises me for my hard work. “To praise” someone means to say good things about what that person has done, to compliment him or her. It’s nice to hear someone praise us, because it lets us know that our hard work has been noticed and is being appreciated. It’s always a good idea to praise employees when they do something very well. In fact, there’s some research to suggest that praising employees will give you better performance than criticizing employees.

After my boss praises me for my hard work, he encourages me to keep my head down and to keep plugging away. There are a couple of interesting expressions there. First, “to keep your head down” means to concentrate on what you are doing, not saying or doing things that will draw attention from other people or create problems. To keep your head down means to be working seriously and hard. If you’re at the office and other people are fighting about something that doesn’t involve you, you might decide to keep your head down and continue working so that you don’t get involved in the argument. To keep your head down means to be focused on your work. If your wife is having a bad day, it might be good idea to keep your head down. I know it is, if that happens to me; that’s just a little advice!

“To keep plugging away” means to continue working very hard at something. For example, if you’re learning how to cook, but you’re having problems making good dishes, you decide to keep trying, however, you keep plugging away in order to become a better cook. My boss wants me to keep my head down and to keep plugging away – keep working hard until I get my promotion.

I’m so surprised by all of this that I don’t know what to say. I’ve never thought of myself as a corporate climber. A “corporate climber” is a person who wants to move up within a company or organization, getting better jobs, better pay, perhaps more power and responsibilities. A corporate climber is usually someone who is very ambitious, someone who is very focused on their work. I’ve never thought of myself as one of these corporate climbers. I don’t think that my work is a standout from my coworkers’ work. A “standout” (one word) is something that is the best, better than anything else. You might be a standout on the soccer team you play on; you score more goals or points than anyone else. You are the best player – you’re a standout. Apparently the boss and the regional manager think that my work is a standout, because they’re offering the promotion to me instead of to my poor coworkers.

Even though I don’t think of myself as a corporate climber and I don’t think that my work is a standout, I thank my boss, of course, and shake hands with him. “To shake hands” with someone means you turn to the other person, you put out your usually right hand (in the United States), you hold the other person’s right



**Using English at Work**  
Lesson 8 – Meeting with the Boss

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hand, and you move your arm up and down. In the U.S., we often shake hands when we meet someone for the first time and when we say goodbye, especially in a business situation. We also want to shake hands, or sometimes do shake hands, when we agree on something. In fact, we have an expression “Let’s shake on it,” meaning let’s shake hands as a way of showing that we are agreeing to something, we are coming to an official agreement. After shaking my boss’s hand, I then leave his office.

It’s nice to get a pat on the back from the boss. “To get a pat (pat) on the back” from someone means to receive praise from another person, or to have another person say nice things about something you’ve done. When someone thanks you for what you did, especially at work, you are getting a pat on the back. This is an expression that doesn’t mean the person actually touches your back; “to pat” something means to touch it, usually lightly. You can literally – actually – go up to someone and pat them on the back; that’s a way of congratulating or thanking them, but the expression is just used to mean you are getting praise, you are getting appreciation.

I say that I hope the promotion does “come through,” or happen, but I don’t want to jump the gun. “To jump the gun” means to do, think, or say something too early, before it is actually happened. I don’t know for sure that this promotion is going to happen, so I don’t want to jump the gun by thinking about it too much, because then I may be disappointed or embarrassed if the regional manager later changes her mind or decides to give the promotion to someone else. The expression “jump the gun” comes from running, such as races in the Olympics. The race begins – runners begin when they shoot a gun up in the air, and when you hear the gun then you can start running. To jump the gun means to start running before you hear the gun, to start running too early. Well, I don’t want to jump the gun, so I’m not going to think about the promotion too much, just in case it doesn’t happen, that way I won’t be disappointed.

As you can see, the meeting with my boss went very well. Let’s listen to the story again, this time at a normal speed.

[start of script]

Before leaving work for the day, I want to stop by my boss’s office to give him an update on my progress. I know he’s expecting the report on Monday and I want to let him know that it will be finished on schedule.

Before I can do that, he calls me into his office and tells me to sit down. He tells me that the regional manager is impressed with my work and is considering me



**Using English at Work**  
Lesson 8 – Meeting with the Boss

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for a promotion. He says that this information is hush-hush, but he wants to give me the heads up. He says that the promotion would give me a new title and a small raise, but the most important thing is that it will put me in line to eventually become a regional manager myself. He praises me for my hard work and encourages me to keep my head down and to keep plugging away.

I'm so surprised, I don't know what to say. I've never thought of myself as a corporate climber and I didn't think that my work was a standout from my coworkers'. Of course I thank my boss, shake hands with him, and leave his office.

It's nice to get a pat on the back from him and I hope that the promotion does come through. I don't want to jump the gun, though, so I'm not going to think about it too much in case it doesn't happen.

[end of script]

In this lesson, I met with my boss and received some good news. In lesson number nine, our next less than, I'm going to talk about leaving work at the end of the day.

This course has been a production of the Center for Educational Development, in beautiful Los Angeles, California. Visit our website at [eslpod.com](http://eslpod.com).

This course was produced by Dr. Jeff McQuillan and Dr. Lucy Tse. Copyright 2008.



## SCRIPT

I look at the clock and it's already 5:30. It's quitting time! I still need to put the finishing touches on my report, but I can do that on Monday morning before I submit it to my boss. Some weeks I have to take work home and burn the midnight oil, but not this week. I have everything under control and I don't need to work over the weekend.

I pack up my briefcase and shut down my computer. I put some important papers back in their folder and leave it in my desk drawer for safekeeping. I take the papers and files from my outbox and put them in my coworker's inbox. But when I get back to my desk, another coworker has put some new memos and papers in my inbox! I like to clear my desk as much as possible at the end of the week to avoid clutter, and I guess everyone else does, too!

I look at my desk one last time to make sure I haven't left anything behind, and I'm ready to head home. Weekend, here I come!

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## GLOSSARY

**quitting time** – time to leave the office at the end of the workday; the end of the workday

\* For some banks, quitting time is at 5:30, except on Fridays when they're open until 6:00.

**finishing touch** – a small detail that will complete something; a small change, addition, or deletion that will end something

\* The dessert looked delicious, but it got even better when Mariah put on the finishing touch – red cherries on top of the ice cream.

**to submit** – to turn something in; to give something to someone for review

\* Are we supposed to submit the application on paper or can we send it by email?

**to take work home** – to do one's work at home at night or on the weekend because there wasn't enough time to do it at the office

\* Craig has been taking work home all month because he's worried that the team won't be able to finish the project on time.



**Using English at Work**  
Lesson 9 – Leaving Work

**to burn the midnight oil** – to work or study late at night when other people are sleeping

\* Leticia must have burned the midnight oil to write such a long report in just two days.

**under control** – a manageable situation; something that one can handle; something that one is in control of

\* Excuse me. It looks like you're having trouble. Is everything under control or would you like some help?

**to pack up** – to put things inside of a suitcase, box, or another container to take them when one leaves

\* When the Kwon family was moving, Mr. Kwon packed up the dishes and Mrs. Kwon packed up the clothes.

**briefcase** – a rectangular box with hard sides and a handle, usually made from leather, that is used to carry work papers

\* If you work with a lot of private and confidential information, be sure to use a briefcase that locks.

**to shut down** – to turn off a computer or another machine

\* Did you remember to shut down your computer before you left the office?

**desk drawer** – a box that has a handle in front and can be pulled out of a desk or another piece of furniture to put things inside it

\* There are some extra pens and pencils in the second desk drawer on the right.

**safekeeping** – safety; protection from getting lost or stolen

\* Pilar made an extra copy of her house key and gave it to her aunt for safekeeping.

**outbox** – a small rectangular metal, wooden, or plastic box on one's desk where one puts papers that need to be given to other people

\* At the end of the day, I have to take the papers out of my outbox and give them to the people who need them.

**to clear** – to clean off; to organize and remove objects on the surface of a table, desk, or shelf

\* Can you please clear the table so that there's room to eat dinner?



**Using English at Work**  
Lesson 9 – Leaving Work

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**clutter** – many small things that are disorganized, messy, not being used, and not where they are supposed to be

\* There is so much clutter in Afra’s bedroom that it’s almost impossible to walk in without stepping on something!

**to leave (something) behind** – to forget something; to forget to take something when one leaves a place

\* When Angelo went to work this morning, he accidentally left his glasses behind, so he had to ask his brother to bring them to him.

**to head home** – to begin going home; to leave another place to go home

\* Scott meant to head home at 6:00, but then he decided to have dinner and go to a movie with some friends instead and he didn’t get home until almost midnight.

**here I come** – an expression used to show that one is excited to do something or go somewhere in the near future

\* Charlotte has been looking forward to her vacation for a long time, so everyone laughed when, on her last day of work, she said, “Miami, here I come!”



**Using English at Work**  
Lesson 9 – Leaving Work

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**COMPLETE TRANSCRIPT**

You're listening to ESLPod.com's "Using English at Work." I'm your host, Dr. Jeff McQuillan, from the Center for Educational Development.

In our last lesson, our eighth lesson in "Using English at Work," we learned vocabulary related to having a meeting with the boss. In this ninth lesson, we're going to talk about leaving work at the end of the day.

We'll get started by listening to the story read at a slow speed.

[start of script]

I look at the clock and it's already 5:30. It's quitting time! I still need to put the finishing touches on my report, but I can do that on Monday morning before I submit it to my boss. Some weeks I have to take work home and burn the midnight oil, but not this week. I have everything under control and I don't need to work over the weekend.

I pack up my briefcase and shut down my computer. I put some important papers back in their folder and leave it in my desk drawer for safekeeping. I take the papers and files from my outbox and put them in my coworker's inbox. But when I get back to my desk, another coworker has put some new memos and papers in my inbox! I like to clear my desk as much as possible at the end of the week to avoid clutter, and I guess everyone else does, too!

I look at my desk one last time to make sure I haven't left anything behind, and I'm ready to head home. Weekend, here I come!

[end of script]

When our story begins, I look at the clock and I see that it's already 5:30. It's quitting time! "Quitting time" is the end of the workday, the time when people are supposed to leave the office and go home. In reality, a lot of people work past the traditional quitting time, but in this story I'm able to leave at 5:30. I say I still need to put the finishing touches on my report. A "finishing touch" is a small change, detail, or perhaps addition that needs to be made in order to finish something. When you're cooking, for example, a finishing touch might be to add some salt and pepper right at the end of the cooking process. When your wife is getting dressed in the morning, a finishing touch may be a piece of jewelry, the last thing that she puts on. I'm talking about putting the finishing touches on my



**Using English at Work**  
Lesson 9 – Leaving Work

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report, which might be writing a little more text or perhaps formatting the document differently.

I say that I can put those finishing touches on the report on Monday morning before I submit it to my boss. “To submit” here means to turn something in to someone – to give something to someone, usually for them to look at and review. You can submit a job application if you are trying to get a job, or you can submit a drawing in a drawing or art contest to win a prize. Once my report is finished on Monday, I’ll need to submit, or give, it to my boss so that he can read it.

Some weeks I have to take work home. “To take work home” means to do work at home, either at night or on the weekends, because you didn’t have time to complete it at the office. I don’t like taking work home, but sometimes it’s necessary if I want to finish a project on time. When I take work home, I have to burn the midnight oil. “To burn the midnight oil” means to work or study very late at night when everyone else is asleep. Most people are sleeping by midnight, but if I am burning the midnight oil, I am working at that time. The expression comes from when lamps had oil in them, and you would light that; the oil would burn so that you would have light.

Fortunately, this week I don’t have to take work home and burn the midnight oil. I have everything under control. The phrase “under control” means that something is manageable, or that you can handle or control it. The opposite would be to say that things are “out of control,” meaning that you can’t handle or manage the situation. When things are out of control, I have to take work home and burn the midnight oil. But this week I have everything under control, so I don’t need to work over the weekend.

In order to get ready to go home, I pack up my briefcase. “To pack up” means to put something inside a briefcase, or a suitcase, or perhaps a box so that you can take it with you when you leave a place. If you move to a new apartment or house, you have to pack up everything so that you can move it to the new place. A “briefcase” is a rectangular box, usually with hard sides and a handle that businesspeople traditionally use to carry their work papers. These days, a lot of briefcases also have a place for your laptop computer. We can still call these “briefcases,” or some people prefer to call them “computer bags.” When I pack up my briefcase, I am putting papers and other things into this small container – this case that I can use to carry things to and from work.

The next thing I do is shut down my computer. “To shut down” a computer means to turn off a computer or to turn off some other large device or machine; we use the same expression, “to shut down.” Some offices shut down the copy



**Using English at Work**  
Lesson 9 – Leaving Work

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machine at the end of the day. After I shut down my computer, I put some important papers back into their folder and leave the folder in my desk drawer for safekeeping. A “desk drawer” is the part of your desk that is a box with a handle on the front so you can pull it open, put things inside, and then close it again. My desk drawers are full of pens, pencils, paper, files, perhaps some paper clips – I need to clean out my desk drawers is what I’m saying! “Safekeeping” means safety, security, or storage in a place where things won’t get lost, stolen, or damaged. For example, I may take my wedding ring off when I’m going swimming, and I will put it in my drawer for safe keeping so that it doesn’t get lost or stolen. We put our money in the bank for safekeeping, and you probably keep important documents in some place in your house or business for safekeeping; we often put them in a “safe,” which is a box, usually a metal box that is locked.

Next, I take the paper and files from my outbox and put them in my coworker’s inbox. An “outbox” is a small rectangular container made of metal, plastic, or perhaps wood that sits on the top of your desk and holds papers that need to be given to other people. During the day, as I finish working on papers, I put them in my outbox and then at the end of the day I take those papers and I put them in the inbox of the people who need to see them. In the story, after I do that, I get back to my desk and see that another coworker has emptied her outbox and put some new things into my inbox! The “inbox” is where you put things that you need to work on – it’s where other people put things that you need to work on. This, of course, means that I now have more work waiting for me when I come back the following workday.

I like to clear my desk as much as possible at the end of the week. “To clear something” means to organize and remove objects that are on the table. Parents may ask their children to clear their toys from the floor, or to clear their books from the table. Clearing my desk at the end of the week helps me avoid clutter. “Clutter” (clutter) means many small things that are unorganized, not being used, or not where they’re supposed to be. The bedroom of a teenager is often full of clutter. I don’t like my desk being full of clutter, and that’s why I cleared it off, or cleared it, but when I came back there were more papers in my inbox, so I guess everyone else likes to clear their desks to avoid clutter, also!

Finally, I look at my desk one last time to make sure that I haven’t left anything behind. “To leave something behind” means to forget to take something when you are leaving a place. When I leave the office on a hot afternoon, I may accidentally leave my jacket behind and then I don’t have anything warm to wear on my walk back to work the next day when it’s cold in the morning. It’s always a good idea to look around and make sure that you haven’t left anything behind when you leave a place. This happens to me when I go to a hotel; I always forget



**Using English at Work**  
Lesson 9 – Leaving Work

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something because I don't look around to make sure I haven't left anything behind.

In our story, I don't see anything that I've forgotten, so I'm ready to head home. "To head home" means to leave a place and start to go home. You may head home at 5:30 and on a day when there isn't very much traffic, you may arrive home, or get home at 6:00, assuming you don't have a long commute or drive, a long bus ride, or train ride home. If you live in Los Angeles, you can expect to get home another hour and a half later. The verb "to head," here, means to go in that direction, to move in that direction. "To head east" means to go in an easterly direction. "To head to the beach" means to start driving or walking or taking a bus toward the beach.

As I'm leaving the office, I think, "Weekend, here I come!" The phrase "here I come" is used to show that you are excited to do something or to go somewhere in the near future. In this case, I'm excited to begin the weekend. You might say, "California, here I come!" when you're excited about visiting or moving to California. In fact, there was a famous song; "California, here I come" was one of the lines or sentences in the song.

Now that we've talked about the new vocabulary, let's listen to the story again, this time at a normal speed.

[start of script]

I look at the clock and it's already 5:30. It's quitting time! I still need to put the finishing touches on my report, but I can do that on Monday morning before I submit it to my boss. Some weeks I have to take work home and burn the midnight oil, but not this week. I have everything under control and I don't need to work over the weekend.

I pack up my briefcase and shut down my computer. I put some important papers back in their folder and leave it in my desk drawer for safekeeping. I take the papers and files from my outbox and put them in my coworker's inbox. But when I get back to my desk, another coworker has put some new memos and papers in my inbox! I like to clear my desk as much as possible at the end of the week to avoid clutter, and I guess everyone else does, too!

I look at my desk one last time to make sure I haven't left anything behind, and I'm ready to head home. Weekend, here I come!

[end of script]



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**Using English at Work**  
Lesson 9 – Leaving Work

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That brings us to the end of our ninth lesson. In our tenth and final lesson, I'm going to talk about socializing with coworkers.

This course has been a production of the Center for Educational Development, in beautiful Los Angeles, California. Visit our website at [eslpod.com](http://eslpod.com).

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## SCRIPT

When I walk past Van’s desk on my way out of the office, I see that he’s talking to a group of people. He stops and asks if I want to go with them to happy hour at the restaurant and bar down the street. It has been a busy week and I need to blow off some steam. On top of that, I don’t have any big plans for the evening, so I say, “yes.”

Eight of us walk down the street to Steve’s Cantina. We find a table in the back of the bar and look at the drinks menu. Happy hour is from 4 to 7 p.m., and the drinks are half price. We order our drinks and I go to get some snacks and appetizers. I look at the food that’s available and I see a lot of deep-fried foods and chips and dip, so I load up and go back to the table.

One of the guys, Brian, starts to grumble about work and to bad-mouth the boss. I’m in no mood to talk about work, so I change the subject. I ask everybody what his or her plans are for the weekend. Diana says that she’s planning to kick back and relax. Rodrigo said he has a hot date. Van tells us a funny story about the last date he went on that didn’t go very well. We have a good laugh over it.

We all have a great time at happy hour and it’s a good way to kick off the weekend!

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## GLOSSARY

**happy hour** – a time in the late afternoon on weekdays at many bars where drinks and food cost less than usual

\* Hank’s Pub has a great happy hour at 6:00 on Thursdays where beers are only \$1.50 each.

**to blow off some steam** – to let go of emotions and stress that have been building up over a period of time; to relax

\* Derek goes for a run whenever he needs to blow off some steam.

**on top of that** – in addition; furthermore; moreover; also

\* When Eleanor asked me to go to the movies tonight, I said “no” because I was really tired, the movie theater is too far away, and on top of that, I didn’t like the movie she wanted to see.



**big plans** – exciting and interesting arrangements for doing something; plans to do important or interesting activities

\* Moira has big plans for opening a business and working independently.

**half price** – costing 50% less than usual

\* Normally this necklace costs \$60, but today it's half price so I'm going to buy it for only \$30.

**snacks** – food eaten between regular meals

\* Since I'm trying to lose weight, I'm trying to eat healthy snacks like fruit, vegetables, and yogurt.

**appetizer** – a small amount of food eaten at a restaurant while one is waiting for the main course to be served; the first course in a meal

\* Grandma doesn't eat very much, so when we go to restaurants she usually just orders an appetizer while the rest of us order bigger meals.

**deep-fried food** – food that has been cooked in oil for a long time and has a lot of fat

\* A lot of Americans grew up eating deep-fried foods like French fries and fried chicken.

**chips and dip** – a large plate with potato or corn chips (thin pieces of potato or corn that are fried in oil and salted) that are served with a small cup of dip (a thick, creamy sauce) so that people can put the dip on the chips to eat them

\* Whenever Wayne has friends come to his house, he makes a big plate of chips and dip for everyone to share.

**to load up** – to put a lot of something on one's plate or in a container

\* Miguel is on a diet, so he loaded up his plate with lots of fruits and vegetables, ignoring the cheese, meats, and bread.

**to grumble** – to complain quietly about something

\* The man sitting next to me on the bus was grumbling about all the noisy teenagers who were riding in the bus with us.

**to bad-mouth (someone)** – to say bad things about another person; to say all the reasons that one does not like another person

\* Lana was bad-mouthing the professor, telling us that he isn't fair when he grades the tests.



**in no mood** – not wanting to do something; not interested in doing something

\* After working for 12 hours without a break, I was in no mood to come home and make dinner, so we went to a restaurant instead.

**to change the subject** – to say something that gets people to stop talking about the current topic and begin talking about something else

\* When the family started to argue about politics, I wanted to change the subject, but I didn't know how to do it.

**to kick back** – to relax; to stop working and start having fun

\* Jen likes to kick back on Friday nights by watching a movie and eating pizza with her roommate.

**a hot date** – a romantic meeting with someone who is very attractive and sexy

\* Brandon went on a hot date last night, so we're all looking forward to hearing about it later today.

**to have a good laugh** – to laugh loudly and for a long time about something that was very funny; to have a lot of fun

\* Everyone had a good laugh when we went to see the new comedy at the movie theater last night.

**to kick off** – to start something, usually with a ceremony or an event

\* Let's kick off our vacation by going surfing when we arrive in Hawaii.



## COMPLETE TRANSCRIPT

You're listening to ESLPod.com's "Using English at Work" lesson 10. I'm your host, Dr. Jeff McQuillan, from the Center for Educational Development.

In the ninth lesson of "Using English at Work," we learned vocabulary related to leaving the office at the end of the day. In this 10<sup>th</sup> and final lesson, we're going to talk about socializing with coworkers.

We'll get started by listening to our story first at a slow speed.

[start of script]

When I walk past Van's desk on my way out of the office, I see that he's talking to a group of people. He stops me and asks if I want to go with them to happy hour at the restaurant and bar down the street. It has been a busy week and I need to blow off some steam. On top of that, I don't have any big plans for the evening, so I say, "yes."

Eight of us walk down the street to Steve's Cantina. We find a table in the back of the bar and look at the drinks menu. Happy hour is from 4 to 7 p.m., and the drinks are half price. We order our drinks and I go to get some snacks and appetizers. I look at the food that's available and I see a lot of deep-fried foods and chips and dip, so I load up and go back to the table.

One of the guys, Brian, starts to grumble about work and to bad-mouth the boss. I'm in no mood to talk about work, so I change the subject. I ask everybody what his or her plans are for the weekend. Diana says that she's planning to kick back and relax. Rodrigo said he has a hot date. Van tells us a funny story about the last date he went on that didn't go very well. We have a good laugh over it.

We all have a great time at happy hour and it's a good way to kick off the weekend!

[end of script]

Our final story begins with me walking past Van's desk as I'm leaving the office. I see that he is talking with a group of other people. He stops me as I walk by and asks me if I want to go with them to happy hour at a restaurant and bar down the street. A "happy hour" is a short period of time, usually one, two, perhaps three hours in the late afternoon and weekdays when many bars have drinks and food that costs less than usual. Bars have happy hours to get more customers to



come in for a drink after work. Most happy hours are in the early evening, around quitting time between, for example, 5 and 7 or 5:30 and 7:30.

It's been a busy week for me and I need to blow off some steam. "To blow off some steam" means to get rid of strong emotions and stress that have been building up over time. After the end of a long, stressful week, many people need a way to blow off some steam and relax. That's one of the reasons I'm interested in going with Van and the other people to happy hour. If you and your wife have been fighting a lot recently, for example, you may want to play some sport with your friends to blow off some steam – to get rid of that stress. Usually that doesn't work, but you can try it!

I agree to go to happy hour so I can blow off some steam, but I also have another reason. I say, "On top of that, I don't have any big plans for the evening." The phrase "on top of that" means in addition, also, or moreover. In other words, it's been a busy week, I need to blow off some steam, and in addition, I don't have any big plans. When we say we have "big plans," we are talking about something that would be exciting or interesting to do. You may have big plans for your career or you can have big plans for building a new house – something big and exciting. But I don't have big plans for this evening, so I say "yes" to Van's invitation to go to happy hour with him and my other coworkers.

There are eight of us in the group and we walk down the street to a bar called Steve's Cantina. "Cantina" is a Spanish word used to mean a bar. We find a table in the back of the bar, away from the door (far from the door), and we look at the drinks menu. At this bar, Steve's Cantina, happy hour is from 4 to 7 and the drinks are half price. When we say something is "half price," it's being sold at 50%, or one-half of the normal price. For example, a \$20 shirt at half price is \$10.

After we order our half-price drinks, I go to get some snacks and appetizers. An "appetizer" is a small amount of food that is usually eaten at a restaurant before your main meal, or your entrée. It's usually something small like a cup of soup, a salad, if you at a bar, perhaps some chicken wings. I go get snacks and appetizers while we're waiting for drinks to arrive. I look at the food that's available and I see a lot of deep-fried foods and chips and dip. "Deep-fried food" is food that has been cooked in a lot of hot oil for a certain time. Usually, it has a brown color after it's been cooked and is crunchy or slightly hard on the outside. Deep-fried food tastes very good, I think, but it can also be somewhat unhealthy (not good for your health – for your body). "Chips and dip" is a plate with a lot of potato chips or perhaps tortilla chips that are fried in oil and salted. The dip is a creamy sauce; for example, the sauce may be made with onions and sour



cream. There are many different types of dip. We use the chips to pick up a little bit of dip and then we eat the chip and the dip together. I love chips and dip!

When I see a lot of deep-fried foods and chips and dip, I load up and go back to the table. “To load up” means to put a lot of something on your plate, or perhaps in a container, or something that can hold other things. For example, if I’m moving from one apartment to another, I would load up my car with things from my old apartment to take to my new apartment. I’m putting as many things as I can into my car. When I get to my new apartment, then I would “unload,” or take those things out of my car and put them in the apartment. In this lesson, I’m loading up by putting a lot of food on my plate. Then I go back to the table where my coworkers are and I say, “I’m going to eat this all by myself. You can’t have any!” No, I don’t say that! I’m a nice person so I let them eat the food also.

One of the guys, or male coworkers, is Brian. We use the word “guy” to informally refer to a man. Brian starts to grumble about work. “To grumble” means to complain quietly, or sometimes not so quietly, about something. You’re not saying it very loudly so that everyone can hear you, but you’re indicating that you are unhappy by the things you say. In this case, Brian is grumbling, probably talking about the reasons why he doesn’t like his job. Brian also starts to bad-mouth the boss. “To bad-mouth (someone)” means to say bad things about another person. It’s never a good idea to bad-mouth someone, because that other person may hear you, or people that you are talking to might tell that person – especially if that person is your boss!

When Brian starts to grumble about work and bad-mouth the boss, I’m in no mood to talk about work. If someone is “in no mood” to do something, it means that he or she does not want to do something, they’re not interested in doing something. If you feel sick, for example, you probably are in no mood to go outside and play in the snow, or simply to go outside. I’m in no mood to talk about work, meaning I don’t want to talk about work since it’s Friday and it’s the beginning of the weekend, so I change the subject. “To change the subject” means to say or do something that gets people to stop talking about whatever they’re talking about now and begin talking about something else. If your wife or husband asks you to do something that you don’t want to do, you may change the subject so perhaps they’ll forget about it. That’s what I’m doing here; I’m changing the subject so we can talk about something else, not work.

To do that, I ask my coworkers about their plans for the weekend. Diana says that she’s planning to kick back and relax. “To kick back” means to stop working and start having fun. I like to kick back after a long day by sitting on my couch and watching a baseball game, at least during the summer. “To kick back” is a



somewhat informal expression. In our story, Diana is going to kick back and relax. Rodrigo says that he has a hot date. A “date” is a romantic meeting between two people, and a “hot date” is a date with a very attractive or sexy person. Unfortunately, not all dates can be hot dates!

Next, Van tells a funny story about the last date he went on that didn’t go very well. Van’s story is about something that went wrong on his date. We have a good laugh over his story. “To have a good laugh” means to laugh very loudly and for a long time about something that is funny. Many people go to comedy clubs or watch funny movies because they want to have a good laugh.

We all had a great time at happy hour and it was a good way to kick off the weekend. “To kick off” means to start something with some action or event. You might kick off a party with some good music, or kick off a conference with a keynote or introductions. We’ve kicked off, or begun, the weekend by going to this happy hour and having a lot of fun.

Now let’s listen as I describe how I socialize with my colleagues again, this time speaking at a normal speed.

[start of script]

When I walk past Van’s desk on my way out of the office, I see that he’s talking to a group of people. He stops and asks if I want to go with them to the happy hour at the restaurant and bar down the street. It has been a busy week and I need to blow off some steam. On top of that, I don’t have any big plans for the evening, so I say, “yes.”

Eight of us walk down the street to Steve’s Cantina. We find a table in the back of the bar and look at the drinks menu. Happy hour is from 4 to 7 p.m., and the drinks are half price. We order our drinks and I go to get some snacks and appetizers. I look at the food that’s available and I see a lot of deep-fried foods and chips and dip, so I load up and go back to the table.

One of the guys, Brian, starts to grumble about work and to bad-mouth the boss. I’m in no mood to talk about work, so I change the subject. I ask everybody what his or her plans are for the weekend. Diana says that she’s planning to kick back and relax. Rodrigo says he has a hot date. Van tells us a funny story about the last date he went on that didn’t go very well. We have a good laugh over it.

We all have a great time at happy hour and it’s a good way to kick off the weekend!



[end of script]

That's the end of our 10<sup>th</sup> and final lesson; it's also the end of our course. I hope you've enjoyed listening to this course as much as we did putting it together. Please visit our website at [eslpod.com](http://eslpod.com) to find other courses to help you improve your English.

From Los Angeles, California, I'm Jeff McQuillan. Thanks for listening.

This course has been a production of the Center for Educational Development, in beautiful Los Angeles, California. Visit our website at [eslpod.com](http://eslpod.com).

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