



## ESL Podcast 694 – Going to the Emergency Room

### GLOSSARY

**emergency room** – the part of a hospital that is always open for patients who have very serious, life-threatening problems and can come without an appointment

\* The nurse said we should monitor the baby's temperature, and if it reaches 105, we should take her to the emergency room.

**severed** – separated or detached, usually by cutting, often used to talk about a body part

\* His leg was severed in a horrible car accident.

**stitch** – a piece of thread sewn into one's skin to close a deep cut

\* When Nate dropped a sharp knife on his toe, he had to get three stitches.

**admissions desk** – the table or counter where one first goes when entering a facility or office to explain why one has come and request an appointment or visit

\* The man at the admissions desk gave us several forms to fill out and asked us to bring them back with a copy of our insurance card.

**waiting room** – a large area with many chairs where people wait until it is their turn to be seen by a doctor or dentist, often with magazines for people to read

\* I was in the waiting room for more than 20 minutes, so I asked the receptionist how much longer it would be before I would see the doctor.

**filled to capacity** – completely full, without room for anyone else or anything else

\* The auditorium was filled to capacity with people who wanted to hear her speak.

**ambulance** – an emergency vehicle used to transport people with serious medical problems to a hospital, filled with equipment and supplies so that they can receive medical treatment while traveling

\* Do you think you can drive yourself to the hospital, or should we call an ambulance?

**EMT** – emergency medical technician; a person whose job is to provide medical assistance in an emergency, especially taking care of that person until he or she can be brought to a doctor or hospital

\* The EMT kept Aunt Mildred alive while she was in the ambulance on her way to the hospital.



## ESL Podcast 694 – Going to the Emergency Room

**stretcher** – a narrow bed on wheels used to move a sick or injured person who cannot walk or sit

\* The nurses pushed Kara down the hall on a stretcher, because she was still unconscious.

**pileup** – a traffic accident involving many cars, each one crashing into the car in front of it

\* The ice storm caused a seven-car pileup.

**triage** – the process of determining which patients need medical treatment immediately and which ones can wait, based on how sick or injured they are

\* The nurses began performing triage as soon as they arrived at the site of the explosion.

**critical** – very serious, especially referring to a dangerous or life-threatening illness or injury

\* The wound is very painful, but it isn't critical.

**exam room** – a room where a doctor interacts with a patient to determine what is wrong and what type of treatment needs to be provided

\* They asked Walt to go into the exam room, take off his shirt, and wait for the doctor to come in.

**surgery** – a medical procedure that requires cutting open part of one's body so that a doctor can fix or remove something

\* The doctors said surgery is the only way to fix Xavier's knee.

**to give up** – to stop trying to have or do something, usually because it seems extremely difficult or impossible

\* Lauren tried to be an actress for 15 years before deciding to give up and try a different career.

**to bleed to death** – to die from a loss of blood; to die because one has lost too much blood through a cut or wound

\* Yes, you've cut your finger, but I don't think you'll bleed to death. Just put pressure on it.

**total loss** – something that had no useful purpose or result; something that was worthless or pointless

\* Attending that conference wasn't a total loss. Although we already knew most of the information we were given, we learned one or two new things.



## ESL Podcast 694 – Going to the Emergency Room

**voluntarily** – willingly; without being forced to do something; doing something because one wants to

\* Did you join Alcoholics Anonymous voluntarily, or did someone make you do it?

---

### COMPREHENSION QUESTIONS

1. Why did he have to spend so much time in the waiting room?
    - a) Because he forgot to call ahead to make an appointment.
    - b) Because there is a minimum waiting time before anyone can see the doctor.
    - c) Because other people had more serious injuries.
  2. What happened on Freeway 215?
    - a) There was a bad traffic accident involving many cars.
    - b) The EMT started offering medical services at a different hospital.
    - c) There weren't enough ambulances, so some people were treated on stretchers.
- 

### WHAT ELSE DOES IT MEAN?

#### **stitch**

The word “stitch,” in this podcast, means a piece of thread sewn into one’s skin to close a deep cut: “He’s had several broken bones, but he’s never needed to get stitches.” A “stitch” can also be a piece of thread to hold two pieces of fabric together: “Did you do those stitches by hand, or did you use a sewing machine?” “Cross-stitch” is a type of sewing used for decoration or adornment, making designs by sewing the thread in small “x” shapes: “She made a cross-stitch wall hanging for her newborn daughter.” The phrase “in stitches” is old-fashioned, but it describes someone who is laughing uncontrollably and cannot stop: “His jokes were so funny that we were all in stitches for hours.”

#### **critical**

In this podcast, the word “critical” means very serious, especially referring to a dangerous or life-threatening illness or injury: “He has a critical illness, so the doctors are observing him in the Intensive Care Unit.” In other contexts, the word “critical” refers to strong criticism: “Why is she always so critical? I’ve never heard her say something nice about anyone else.” The word “critical” can also mean serious or important: “They’re facing a critical shortage of rice and wheat.” Or, “How much money you save each month is a critical factor in how



---

## ESL Podcast 694 – Going to the Emergency Room

---

comfortable your retirement will be.” Finally, the word “critical” can refer to one’s ability to make judgments or evaluate something: “The professor asked his students to write a critical review of the proposed new laws.”

---

### CULTURE NOTE

#### How to Get Treated in an Emergency Room

Emergency rooms are designed to provide “immediate” (very quick and responsive) treatment for “life-threatening” (risking death) injuries and illnesses, such as “heart attacks” (a condition where one’s heart stops beating) and “severe” (very serious and dangerous) car accidents. People who go to the emergency room for less serious conditions fill the waiting rooms and increase the average “waiting time” (the amount of time someone must wait to see a doctor) for all patients.

Emergency room “admissions clerks” (people whose job is to decide who gets to see a doctor and when) have a lot of experience separating the real emergencies from less serious conditions. Sometimes patients become upset when they have to wait too long, but if they “blow up at” (shout and act angrily, losing control of one’s emotions) the clerk, he or she might make them wait even longer, just out of “revenge” (wanting to do something bad or mean because one has been treated that way).

People who want to see a doctor more quickly “would be wise to” (should; would be smart to do something) go to the emergency room early in the morning, sometime between 3:00 a.m. and 9:00 a.m., when emergency rooms generally have fewer patients. Some people say that “vomiting” (throwing up; sending liquid from one’s stomach out of one’s body through one’s mouth) can also “reduce” (decrease; minimize) the waiting time, because the admission clerks don’t want to hear, see, or smell the vomit, they send those patients to see a doctor more quickly.

Patients who have conditions that are not life-threatening should “avoid” (not go to) the emergency room, instead going to an “urgent care clinic” (a medical facility that is open more hours than a regular doctor’s office and patients do not need appointments).

---

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



---

**ESL Podcast 694 – Going to the Emergency Room**

---

**COMPLETE TRANSCRIPT**

Welcome to English as a Second Language Podcast number 694: Going to the Emergency Room.

This is English as a Second Language Podcast episode 694. I'm your host, Dr. Jeff McQuillan, coming to you from the Center for Educational Development in beautiful Los Angeles, California.

Our website is eslpod.com. Go there to download a Learning Guide for this episode that will make you healthy, wealthy, and wise.

This episode is called "Going to the Emergency Room." This is the place you go in a hospital if you suddenly become sick or are hurt. Let's get started.

[start of story]

Saturday, 9:35 p.m.

I arrive in the emergency room. I had been at a party earlier in the evening when I accidentally cut my finger. My finger wasn't severed, but it did have a very deep cut and I thought I might need stitches. I check in at the admissions desk and I'm told to take a seat and wait.

Saturday, 10:40 p.m.

I'm still waiting to see a doctor. The waiting room is filled to capacity and I expect it to be a long night.

Saturday, 11:15 p.m.

Several ambulances pull up to the door and EMTs wheel in several people on stretchers. I hear that there had been a pileup on Freeway 215 and these were the victims. I can see a doctor performing triage and the most critical cases are taken into exam rooms and maybe directly into surgery.

Sunday, 1:25 p.m.

I decide to give up and go home. If I hadn't bled to death by that time, I could probably wait until Monday to see my regular physician.



## ESL Podcast 694 – Going to the Emergency Room

---

My evening in the emergency room wasn't a total loss, though. I learned a valuable lesson: Never voluntarily go to the emergency room!

[end of story]

Our story begins on a Saturday night, about 9:35 in the evening, 9:35 p.m. I say, "I arrive in the emergency room." The "emergency room," sometimes called by its initials "E.R.," is the part of a hospital that is always open to people who are very sick and who may die if they don't get medical treatment – medical help – soon. You can go to any emergency room in an American hospital and if you have a serious sickness or illness or injury they will help you. There was a famous American TV show called E.R. back in the 1990s.

My story continues: I say that I had been at a party earlier in the evening when I accidentally cut my finger. So, I'm at a party with friends, and by mistake – by accident, not on purpose – I cut my finger. Actually, I did once cut my finger. I wasn't at a party; I was cooking, and then I had to go to the emergency room for help. But in our story, I'm at a party, which sounds a lot funner. I say, "My finger wasn't severed, but it did have a very deep cut and I thought I might need stitches." "To sever" (sever), as a verb, means to separate, usually by cutting. We often talk about that when it happens to one of the parts of your body: "His leg was severed in a car accident." "Severed," then, means separated or detached. So, my finger was not severed, I still had my finger on my hand, but I did have a very deep cut and I thought I might need stitches. I thought it was possible that in order to make myself better I needed to get stitches. "Stitch" (stitch) is a piece of very thin material, "thread" it's called, that goes into your skin in order to close a very wide or deep cut. "Stitches" are sort of like when you have a rip in your piece of clothing; if you rip your shirt you might take some thread and stitch up the rip so that it's together, the shirt doesn't have a hole in it anymore. Well, the same thing happens with your skin – with your body, you can stitch it up with this special thread, and that's what I mean here when I say "I might need stitches." "Stitch" has a couple of other meanings in English as well; take a look at our Learning Guide for those.

So, I say that I check in at the admissions desk and I'm told to take a seat and wait. The "admissions desk" is the place where you first go in a hospital, or perhaps just an office, and you are asking for an appointment; you're asking to see the doctor; you're asking to be admitted. "To be admitted" means to be let in, you can go into wherever you want to go. Colleges and universities have admissions offices that are in charge of, or responsible for, deciding which students will get to study at that college. An admissions desk at a hospital is where you go when you get there to tell them your name, your telephone



## ESL Podcast 694 – Going to the Emergency Room

number, your insurance information, and so forth. Well I check in, I go to the admissions desk, and they tell me to wait, to “take a seat,” that is, to sit down in a chair.

Saturday at 10:40 p.m. I’m still waiting to see a doctor, more than an hour after I arrive. This is not unusual in an emergency room; they take the most serious cases first. If you cut your finger, as I did, well, you’re going to have to wait sometimes a couple of hours before you can see a doctor, because you’re not going to die if you don’t see a doctor in the first couple of hours. So, that’s what is happening; I am sitting in the emergency room, it’s Saturday night, and the waiting room is filled to capacity. The “waiting room” is a room – an area where you have a lot of chairs and are asked to wait in for your appointment. This is especially common for doctors; dentists, other medical professionals have waiting rooms. These are places where you are going to wait for the doctor to finish playing golf and come back to the hospital. “To be filled to capacity” means to be completely full, there isn’t room for anyone else, in this case, to sit. On a Saturday night, emergency rooms are often filled to capacity; the waiting room is full of people who have had accidents. The weekends are times when more people drink alcohol, and that usually leads to more problems medically speaking; people get into car accidents and that sort of thing – shootings with guns, you know, the stuff you watch on TV.

Well, on Saturday at 11:15 p.m., now an hour and 45 minutes or more since I first arrived, I see several ambulances pull up to the door. An “ambulance” is a special car – a special vehicle that transports people who have medical problems. So, there are several ambulances that “pull up,” or drive up to the door of the emergency room, and EMTs wheel in several people on stretchers. An “EMT” is an emergency medical technician, someone who gives medical assistance when you are hurt. They’re not doctors, but they do help people who are injured get from their home or wherever they were hurt to the hospital. So they know some things in order to try to keep you alive if it’s a serious injury. My brother-in-law is an EMT in Minnesota. So, if you’re ever in an ambulance in Minnesota, you should say, “Hey, do you know Jeff McQuillan from ESL Podcast?” and if the person says yes, then that could be my brother-in-law. Probably not, though. A “stretcher” (stretcher) is a long, portable bed, really, that we use to carry people in when they are sick or hurt. In a hospital, the stretchers are usually on wheels, that’s why the story says the EMTs “wheel in” several people. They bring several people in on these portable beds called “stretchers.”

I continue my story: “I hear that there had been a pileup on Freeway 215 and these were the victims.” A “pileup” (pileup – one word) is a traffic accident involving many different cars; one car hitting another, and then another car hitting





## ESL Podcast 694 – Going to the Emergency Room

---

that car, and so forth. That's called a "pileup." There had been a pileup on the 215 freeway, and these were the people who were hurt; these were the "victims." "I can see a doctor performing triage and the most critical cases are taken into exam rooms and maybe directly into surgery." "Triage" (triage) is the process of determining which patients are the sickest, who needs help first. "Critical cases" are very serious cases, usually ones that are what we would call "life-threatening," meaning you could die if you don't get proper help quickly. "Critical" has other meanings in English as well; take a look at the Learning Guide for those. An "exam room" is short for an examination room. This is not where you take a test; it's where the doctor looks at you to see what's wrong with you. The doctor "examines" you; he or she will look at you closely. "Surgery" is where they cut open some part of your body in order to fix something or to help you in some way. So, the doctors are performing triage, and the most critical – the most serious cases are taken into exam rooms for the doctors to look at them, and maybe directly into surgery, where the doctors will – we use the verb "perform" – perform surgery on them.

Sunday, 1:25 p.m. Remember, I arrived at 9:35 p.m. on Saturday night; now, it's already Sunday afternoon. I say, "I decide to give up and go home." "To give up" is a two-word phrasal verb meaning to stop trying to do something, usually because it's very difficult or impossible. "Don't give up," we sometimes say to people, meaning don't stop trying. Well, I decide to give up and go home. "If I hadn't bled to death by that time, I could probably wait until Monday to see my regular physician." "Bled" is the past tense of the verb "to bleed" (bleed). It's irregular, it's not "bleded" in the past tense, it's "bled" (bled). "To bleed to death" would mean to die because you are losing so much "blood," that red liquid that comes out of your body when you cut it. Well, I'm kind of making a joke here. I say because I haven't bled to death, I can probably wait another day and go see my regular doctor – my regular "physician" on Monday. This is not uncommon for emergency rooms to be very crowded in some hospitals in some cities in the U.S., especially public hospitals.

I conclude by saying that my evening in the emergency room wasn't a total loss. A "total loss" would be something that has no useful purpose or useful result, something that didn't give you anything. "I learned a valuable lesson: Never voluntarily go to the emergency room!" "Voluntarily" means no one is forcing you, you decide that you are going to go on your own. That's probably not very good advice, however. If you're really sick or hurt, you should definitely go to the emergency room. It's better than staying where you are and getting no help whatsoever. In my own case, I ended up staying at the hospital probably about three or four hours before I got to see a doctor who gave me some stitches in my thumb, and now I'm all better.





---

**ESL Podcast 694 – Going to the Emergency Room**

---

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

[start of story]

Saturday, 9:35 p.m.

I arrive in the emergency room. I had been at a party earlier in the evening when I accidentally cut my finger. My finger wasn't severed, but it did have a very deep cut and I thought I might need stitches. I check in at the admissions desk and I'm told to take a seat and wait.

Saturday, 10:40 p.m.

I'm still waiting to see a doctor. The waiting room is filled to capacity and I expect it to be a long night.

Saturday, 11:15 p.m.

Several ambulances pull up to the door and EMTs wheel in several people on stretchers. I hear that there had been a pileup on Freeway 215 and these were the victims. I can see a doctor performing triage and the most critical cases are taken into exam rooms and maybe directly into surgery.

Sunday, 1:25 p.m.

I decide to give up and go home. If I hadn't bled to death by that time, I could probably wait until Monday to see my regular physician.

My evening in the emergency room wasn't a total loss, though. I learned a valuable lesson: Never voluntarily go to the emergency room!

[end of story]

Even when she has a difficult topic, our scriptwriter never gives up. That's because it's Dr. Lucy Tse, who is helping us each week. Thank you, Lucy.

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



English as a Second Language Podcast  
[www.eslpod.com](http://www.eslpod.com)

## **ESL Podcast 694 – Going to the Emergency Room**

---

English as a Second Language Podcast is written and produced by Dr. Lucy Tse, hosted by Dr. Jeff McQuillan, copyright 2011 by the Center for Educational Development.