



ESL Podcast 713 – Being Physically Strong

GLOSSARY

piano – a large musical instrument that one sits in front of, pressing many white and black keys with one's fingers

* "Moonlight Sonata" by Beethoven is one of my favorite pieces for the piano.

as strong as an ox – very strong; with the ability to move very heavy things

* Arnold is as strong as an ox! Did you see him pick up that tree?

built – with well-defined muscles; with a strong, beautiful body that is very powerful and can lift heavy things

* If you spent that much time in the gym, you could be built, too!

to have (something) coming out of (one's) ear – to have a lot of something; to have more of something than one needs

* Poor Margaret has work coming out of her ears! She really needs to hire an assistant.

muscle – a part of one's body under the skin that connects pieces of bone and allows one to move in certain ways; the internal parts of one's body that provide strength and movement

* Sheila painted the outside of her house over the weekend and her muscles really hurt today.

to work out – to exercise; to do a lot of physical activity to improve one's physical health and/or lose weight

* Even if you dislike running, there are lots of other ways to work out, like swimming, dancing, and playing sports.

up to the job – prepared and ready to do something; feeling competent and able to do something

* None of these applicants seem up to the job. Let's keep looking for someone with more experience.

to cut (someone) some slack – to make a situation easier for another person, so that he or she does not have to work as hard; to make something easier for someone

* Do I really have to fix the plumbing right now? Cut me some slack! I've been at work all day and I really just want to rest for a few minutes when I get home.



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there's no way around it – it's unavoidable; a phrase used to show someone that there is no way to change something, because it is real or actual

* If Viktor doesn't find a job soon, they'll have to sell their home and move into an apartment. There's no way around it.

be a man – a phrase used to tell a man that he needs to be braver or stronger and stop complaining or crying

* What are you crying for? Be a man!

suck it up – a phrase used to tell someone that he or she needs to stop complaining and do what is needed, even if it is difficult

* Just one more mile and then we'll be at the top of the mountain. Suck it up! You can do it!

to put (one's) back into it – to work very hard while performing some physical action that demands a lot of strength

* These boxes are pretty heavy, but if we put our backs into it, I think we can move them together.

deluded – fooled, tricked, and confused; believing something that is not true

* Some people are deluded into thinking that taking vitamins is a substitute for a good diet.

I, for one – a phrase used to emphasize one's position or opinion about something

* I, for one, think she would be a very good president.

to not put (one's) back out – to not injure one's back by doing too much difficult, physical labor

* When Hugh turned 70, he finally agreed to hire a gardener so he wouldn't put his back out.

to do the work of (a number) – for one person to do the same amount of work that is normally performed by a larger number of people

* Randall is very efficient and can easily do the work of two or three people.



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COMPREHENSION QUESTIONS

1. What does Paula mean when she tells Takeshi he has muscles coming out of his ears?
 - a) He isn't a good listener.
 - b) He has big ears.
 - c) He is very strong.
2. What does Paula mean when she says, "I'm willing to put my back into it"?
 - a) She's willing to pay him to move the piano.
 - b) She's going to help him move the piano.
 - c) She's ready to bet that he can move the piano.

WHAT ELSE DOES IT MEAN?

built

The word "built," in this podcast, means with well-defined muscles, or with a strong, beautiful body that is very powerful and can lift heavy things: "Elvira dreams of dating a male model who is tall, dark, and built." A "built-in" is something that is part of something else and cannot be moved: "They bought a 1929 house with beautiful built-in bookcases." The phrase "built-up" refers to an area that has a lot of buildings and not very many natural areas: "We lived in a built-up area for years before we finally realized that we wanted to live in a more rural area." Finally, the phrase "jerry-built" or "jerry-rigged" refers to something that is built very poorly and will not last for very long: "The tornado victims are living in jerry-built shelters until they can find permanent housing."

suck it up

In this podcast, the phrase "suck it up" is used to tell someone that he or she needs to stop complaining and do what is needed, even if it is difficult: "Stop complaining! Just suck it up and get the work done!" Normally the verb "to suck" means to use pressure to pull a liquid into one's mouth: "The thicker a milkshake is, the harder it is to suck it up the straw." The verb "to suck" is also used informally to talk about something that seems unfair and unpleasant: "You lost your keys right before your job interview? That sucks!" Finally, the phrase "to be/get sucked in" means to become involved in something, especially if one didn't really want to become involved in it: "How did you get sucked into watching that TV series?"



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CULTURE NOTE

The Amateur Athletic Union

The Amateur Athletic Union (AAU) is one of the biggest “nonprofit” (an organization that does not try to make money; not a business) sports organizations in the United States. It “promotes” (encourages) “amateur” (not professional; without payment) sports and physical “fitness” (health; being able to perform physical activities).

The mission of the AAU is “to offer amateur sports programs through a volunteer base for all people to have the physical, mental, and ‘moral’ (ethical; relating to what is right and wrong) development of amateur athletes and to promote ‘good sportsmanship’ (honest, polite behavior while playing sports, whether winning or losing) and good ‘citizenship’ (being a good, responsible member of society).”

The AAU was “established” (created) in 1888 and used to help athletes prepare to compete in the Olympic Games. Today, the organization focuses on creating sports teams in local communities and arranging opportunities for people to compete against other amateur athletes “in their age group” (with the same age), although it primarily organizes sports teams and competitions and other events for children.

The AAU organizes teams for many different sports, including “the old standbys” (traditional, common items) like baseball, basketball, football, and soccer, as well as less common sports like “baton twirling” (throwing a small stick into the air, making it spin in circles), “jump rope” (holding the ends of a rope in each hand and jumping over it repeatedly as one swings it over one’s head and around one’s body), and “surfing” (standing on a small board as it travels over ocean waves).

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



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COMPLETE TRANSCRIPT

Welcome to English as a Second Language Podcast number 713: Being Physically Strong.

This is English as a Second Language Podcast episode 713. 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, and make your life a little easier by getting the transcript of everything we say on this episode.

This episode is called "Being Physically Strong." It's a dialogue between Takeshi and Paula. Let's get started.

[start of dialogue]

Takeshi: What do you want me to do with this piano?

Paula: I want you to move it from the living room to the family room. You're as strong as an ox and that's why I called you for help.

Takeshi: Lucky me. I don't think I can move that piano by myself, though.

Paula: You're built and have muscles coming out of your ears. Come on! Let's put those muscles to work!

Takeshi: I haven't been working out as much recently. I don't think I'm up to the job.

Paula: I'll cut you some slack. I'll help.

Takeshi: What I'm trying to tell you is that you'll need at least three big guys to move this piano. There's no way around it.

Paula: Come on. Be a man. Suck it up! I'm willing to put my back into it, so let's move this thing.

Takeshi: You are completely deluded if you think we're going to move this piano one inch. I, for one, am not putting my back out trying to do the work of three!



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[end of dialogue]

Takeshi begins by saying to Paula, “What do you want me to do with this piano?” A “piano,” you probably know, is a musical instrument that has white and black we call “keys” that you play on. Paula says, “I want you to move it from the living room to the family room.” Some big houses have two spaces where many people can sit down and talk or watch television. The family room is separate from the living room. I’m not sure exactly the difference, since my house is too small to have a family room and a living room, but basically it’s another living room. It’s a place where you have a sofa and perhaps some chairs. People often put their televisions, or in this case their piano in the living room or family room.

Paula says, “You’re as strong as an ox and that’s why I called you for help.” Takeshi is as strong as an ox. An “ox” is usually a male cow, what we call a “bull,” that has had some of its male sexual organs removed – the word is “castration” – and the animal is then trained to pull heavy things, to be a strong farm animal. So we have this expression “strong as an ox” to describe a very strong person – physically strong person, someone with a lot of muscles. Not like me!

Takeshi says, “Lucky me.” Now, there he’s being sarcastic; he doesn’t really mean he’s lucky. He’s saying that he’s not that happy that he has to come over and move this piano, that’s the idea. He says, “I don’t think I can move that piano by myself, though.” “Though” means however.

Paula says, “You’re built and have muscles coming out of your ears.” To say that someone is “built” (built) in this context means they have very strong muscles, you can see them on their body. “Built” has a number of meanings in English, however; take a look at our Learning Guide for some additional ones. Paula says that Takeshi has muscles coming out of his ears, which is kind of a strange expression. To have something “coming out of your ears” means to have a lot of something, to have more than what you actually need. Paula says, “Come on! Let’s put those muscles to work!” Let’s start using those muscles.

Takeshi says, “I haven’t been working out much recently. I don’t think I’m up to the job.” “To work out” is a two-word phrasal verb that here means to exercise, to do physical exercise. Someone says, “I’m going to go work out at the gym.” I’m going to go do exercises at the gym; maybe run or lift weights, that sort of thing. Takeshi says that he’s not up to the job. The expression “to be up to the job” means to be prepared and ready to do something, to feel that you are able to



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do it. You might say about someone, “Well, she’s really not up to the job,” meaning she isn’t prepared to do this, whatever it is.

Paula says, “I’ll cut you some slack. I’ll help.” “To cut (someone) some slack” (slack) is an expression meaning I will make the situation easier for someone else, in this case so they don’t have to work as hard. “To cut (someone) some slack” can also mean not to require them to do as much as you want, to go easy on them, not to blame them, to give them some extra time for example, or whatever they need to finish a difficult job.

Takeshi says, “What I’m trying to tell you is that you’ll need at least three big guys (big men) to move the piano. There’s no way around it.” The expression “there’s no way around it” means that you cannot change something; this is the way it really is; it’s unavoidable; you have to do it this way or this has to be done. In this case, Paula needs to get three strong men, not just one.

Paula says, “Come on. Be a man. Suck it up!” These are all informal expressions. “Come on” means let’s go; let’s get started. It can sometimes be used to indicate that the other person is resisting what you are suggesting, doesn’t want to do what you are suggesting, and you are encouraging them – you are urging them to do what you want to do. Paula says, “Come on. Be a man.” “Be a man” is a phrase used to tell a man that he needs to be braver or stronger, and stop crying or complaining. “Suck it up!” is a phrase used to tell someone that he or she needs to stop complaining and do what is necessary, even if it is difficult. So, you may say, “Oh, it’s too hot. I can’t cut the grass today (the lawn today),” and your wife says, “Oh, just suck it up!” You need to go and do it; stop complaining. Paula says, “I’m willing to put my back into it, so let’s move this thing.” “To put your back into (something)” means to work very hard, especially at something that requires a lot of physical strength.

Takeshi says, “You are completely deluded if you think we’re going to move this piano one inch.” “To be deluded” (deluded) means to be confused, to believe something that is not true, or to be fooled. You’re really saying they have some sort of psychological problem; they think something that isn’t true. The noun would be “delusions.” Takeshi says to Paula, “You are completely deluded if you think we’re going to move this piano one inch (meaning even a very small amount). I, for one, am not putting my back out trying to do the work of three (or of three men)!” “I, for one” is a phrase that we use to emphasize your opinion about something, your position about something. It’s not as commonly used nowadays, but you will still hear it. “I, for one, am not going to go to the beach today, because it’s raining.” You can go, but I am not. It is often said when someone else wants to do something, or other people are doing something but



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you are not going to do it. So you're expressing somewhat more strongly, with emphasis, that you are not going to do this thing.

"I, for one," Takeshi says, "am not putting my back out trying to do the work of three (men)." "To put your back out" means to injure or to hurt the back. The back part of your body, usually between your shoulders and your waist or your buttocks, that's your back. "To put your back out" means to hurt it, to injure it, which, of course, can be very painful. Takeshi doesn't want to put his back out trying to do the work of three, in this case of three men. "To do the work of (a certain number of people)" means to do the same amount of work that is normally performed by three men or by whatever number you decide to use here. So Takeshi says no, he's not going to help Paula move – or try to move this piano. Paula will just have to go and pay someone, rather than asking her friend Takeshi to come over and do it probably for free, although we're not sure here.

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

[start of dialogue]

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[end of dialogue]

Our scriptwriter is always up to the job! That's because it's the wonderful Dr. Lucy Tse.

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

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