



ESL Podcast 735 – Getting a Visa to Travel

GLOSSARY

relative – a person who is part of one's family; a person who one shares a relationship with through birth or marriage

* Sheila doesn't have very many relatives, but her husband is from a huge family and he has more than 20 cousins.

on board – in agreement; ready and willing to be involved in something and support it

* If you can get the boss on board, I'm sure your idea will be a success.

to give (something) a shot – to try to do something, even if it does not seem very likely to succeed

* Kari asked me to make her birthday cake, and even though my cakes have always failed in the past, I agreed to give it a shot.

hitch – a minor problem; an obstacle; something that makes it more difficult to do what one wants to do

* The company wants to hire new employees, but there's just one hitch: there isn't enough money to pay them!

extended – referring to relatives who are not part of one's immediate family; aunts, uncles, cousins, etc. (not parents, brothers, sisters, or children)

* Most of his extended family lives on the West Coast, but he grew up in Tennessee because his parents moved there when he was a child.

visa – official permission for someone to enter a country and stay there for a certain period of time for a specific purpose, usually put in one's passport as a stamp or sticker

* Do U.S. citizens need a visa to travel to Brazil?

on short notice – without very much advance notice; without very much time to do something

* This restaurant is very popular, so it's impossible to get a reservation on short notice. You need to call weeks in advance.

citizen – a person who is identified with a particular country, with certain rights (like voting) and responsibilities (like paying taxes)

* U.S. citizens are taxed on their worldwide income, regardless of where they are living when they earn the money.



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border – the imaginary line separating two countries or states, showing where one begins and another one ends

* The Columbia River forms most of the border between Oregon and Washington.

exchange visitor visa – permission to enter the United States as a participant in an exchange program where one applies and meets certain criteria, usually to study or work for a certain period of time

* Seymour received an exchange visitor visa to study as a high school student in the United States for one year.

Visa Waiver Program – a program that allows citizens of 36 countries to enter the United States for up to 90 days without getting a visa

* Brunei, the Czech Republic, and Malta are three of the countries that participate in the Visa Waiver Program.

State Department – the part of the U.S. government that deals with international relations, passports, and visas

* Raoul is studying Arabic and international relations and hopes to work for the State Department after he graduates.

to get on the horn – to call someone; to use a telephone

* Please get on the horn and invite the heads of each department here for an emergency meeting.

embassy – the building where an ambassador and other staff members live in another country, officially representing their home country and maintaining the relationship between the two countries

* The embassy hosts a fun barbeque each year on Independence Day and invites all the U.S. citizens living in that country.

consulate – the building where staff members are officially representing their home country, but focus more on assisting individuals and businesses than on international relations

* We spent hours in line at the consulate, waiting for our visa interview.

to shape up – to begin to take form; to progress or advance

* The conference is really shaping up. More than 200 people have already paid the registration fee to attend.

party planning – the act of making arrangements and preparations for a party or gathering



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* Party planning is overwhelming! We still have to make the guest list, pick a band, decide what kind of food to serve, reserve a facility, and send out invitations.

(something) is (one's) middle name – a phrase used to describe how someone is very good at doing something and likes to do it

* If you need help baking for the party, give me a call! Baking is my middle name.

COMPREHENSION QUESTIONS

1. What does Julian mean when he says, “we can give it a shot”?
 - a) We can call Julio to talk about it.
 - b) We can ask Julio to host the party.
 - c) We can try to have the party.
2. What is Yesenia going to do in the morning?
 - a) She's going to make some phone calls.
 - b) She's going to do some internet research.
 - c) She's going to start choosing the music.

WHAT ELSE DOES IT MEAN?

to give (something) a shot

The phrase “to give (something) a shot,” in this podcast, means to try to do something, even if it does not seem likely to succeed: “I don't think we'll be able to persuade them to make a donation, but we'll give it a shot.” The phrase “to take a shot at (something)” has the same meaning: “I haven't studied math since high school, but I'll take a shot at helping Jeremy with his homework.” The phrase “to be a long shot” means that something is very difficult and unlikely to succeed: “When Franz lost his wallet, he started asking everyone if they had seen it, even though he knew it was a long shot.” Finally, the phrase “a shot in the dark” describes making a guess without the necessary information: “That test was so hard! I had to take a shot in the dark on some of the questions.”

to shape up

In this podcast, the phrase “to shape up” means to begin to take form, or to progress or advance: “It was really cloudy this morning, but now the day is shaping up beautifully.” The phrase “to shape up” can also mean to begin to improve one's behavior: “If your children can't shape up and quiet down, we'll



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need to ask you to take them home.” The phrase “to get in shape” means to become healthier and have a better fitness level: “If you’re serious about getting in shape, you should probably join a gym and buy some good running shoes.” Finally, as a verb, “to shape” means to influence or affect something in a certain way: “Which authors have shaped your writing style?”

CULTURE NOTE

Visas for Temporary Visitors

There are many types of “non-immigrant” (not intended to live in the United States permanently) visas for people who want to visit the United States for a short period of time. Here are some of the most “common” (typical; usual) types.

Type J, “Exchange Visitor Visas,” allow people to enter the United States for a defined period of time, usually for an educational or cultural experience. People who receive these visas can include “au pairs” (nannies; people brought from another country to take care of a family’s children), “Fulbright scholars” (students who receive competitive scholarships from the U.S. government), professors and teachers.

Type B-1 visas are used for people who are traveling on business. These can include businesspeople, nannies, and “competitive athletes” (people playing sports to win something).

Type H visas are used to bring in people who have knowledge, skills, and abilities needed by the United States. For example, an H-1B visa is “issued” (given) to people who have “highly specialized knowledge” (expertise) in a field, such as computer science or engineering. H-2A visas are given to “migrant laborers,” or people who come into the country for a few weeks or months to work in agriculture, helping to plant or “harvest” (collect food from plants) “crops” (plants grown for food, clothing, or some other use).

Students generally have an F-1 or M-1 visa. An F-1 visa is for academic programs; an M-1 visa is for studying at nonacademic institutions, especially for “vocational” (hands-on; job-related) training. Students who will be studying less than 18 hours per week usually have a type B visitor visa instead.

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



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COMPLETE TRANSCRIPT

Welcome to English as a Second Language Podcast number 735: Getting a Visa to Travel.

This is English as a Second Language Podcast episode 735. I'm your host, Dr. Jeff McQuillan, coming to you from the Center for Educational Development in beautiful Los Angeles, California.

Go to our website at eslpod.com. Download this episode's Learning Guide, an 8- to 10-page guide we provide for all of our current episodes that will give you some additional help in improving your English.

This episode is a dialogue between Yesenia and Julian. It's going to be about traveling to another country and getting special permission, what we call a "visa," to go there. Let's get started.

[start of dialogue]

Yesenia: I have a great idea. Let's plan a big party for your mother's 70th birthday. We'll invite all of your relatives from all over the world.

Julian: I don't think very many of them can afford to travel half way around the world for a party.

Yesenia: I've already spoken to your rich brother and he's already offered to pay for your family's airfare and hotel. If we plan it, he'll pay for it.

Julian: Julio offered to do that? Well, if he's on board then we can give it a shot. But here's another hitch. My extended family lives in a lot of different countries and I'm not sure they'll get visas to visit the U.S., especially on short notice.

Yesenia: Let's try, anyway. Your cousins in Canada don't need a visa because most Canadian citizens don't need one to cross the border. What about your uncle in Korea?

Julian: He's already in the U.S. on an exchange visitor visa until June. He should be able to come.

Yesenia: What about your aunt in Greece?



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Julian: She won't need a visa because Greece is one of the countries in the Visa Waiver Program.

Yesenia: Do you think your nephews in South Africa will want to come?

Julian: I'm not sure what the visa situation is there. We'll have to check with the State Department.

Yesenia: I'll get on the horn first thing in the morning to see what I can find out. I might email them and ask them to check with the embassy or a consulate there to be sure. This party is really shaping up.

Julian: You seem to have it all under control.

Yesenia: Haven't you always said that party planning is my middle name?

[end of dialogue]

Our dialogue begins with Yesenia saying, "I have a great idea. Let's plan a big party for your mother's 70th birthday. We'll invite all of your relatives from all over the world." Your "relatives" are the people who are related to you either because you are their uncle, cousin, niece, nephew, brother, sister – any sort of relation that is by blood or by marriage. That is, because they are somehow connected to you biologically – genetically, or because you married someone that is related to them. So Yesenia wants to invite all of Julian's relatives. Julian says, "I don't think very many of them can afford to travel (have the money to travel) half way around the world for a party." We say "half way around the world," we often use that to indicate on another continent, in another part of the world.

Yesenia says, "I've already spoken with your rich brother and he's already offered to pay for your family's airfare and hotel. If we plan it, he'll pay for it." Must be a very rich brother! Julian says, "Julio offered to do that? Well, if he's on board then we can give it a shot." "To be on board" means to be in agreement with something, to support some project or to be involved in it. Julian says, "we can give it a shot." "To give (something) a shot" (shot) means to try something even when you are not sure if you are going to succeed – if you are going to be successful. He says, "But here's another hitch" (hitch). A "hitch" is a minor problem, something that makes it more difficult for you to do what you want to do. He says, "My extended family lives in a lot of different countries." Your "extended family" are the relatives that are not your brother, your sister, your son or daughter, or your parents. Everyone else is your extended family: uncles, aunts, cousins, great-grandfathers, and so forth. We call the people who are



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closest to you – parents, brothers, sisters, and children – your “immediate family.”

Julian says that his extended family lives in a lot of different countries, “and I’m not sure they’ll get visas to visit the U.S., especially on short notice.” A “visa” (visa) is official permission that a country gives you to visit and stay for a certain amount of time in that country. So if you are coming to the United States, from many countries you need a tourist visa or a student visa or a work visa to come here, depending on what you are going to do. The expression “on short notice” means without a lot of time to do something, without very much advance warning or advance notice. Julian is saying there isn’t a lot of time to get, perhaps, some of these visas, and since it can sometimes take a long time to get a visa to come to the United States this may be a problem.

Yesenia says, “Let’s try, anyway. Your cousins in Canada don’t need a visa because most Canadian citizens don’t need one to cross the border.” “To be a citizen” means to be someone who is officially part of a certain country. You have certain rights, like voting; you may have certain responsibilities, like paying taxes. That’s to be a citizen. I’m a citizen of the United States. Some people are “dual citizens,” that is, they are citizens of more than one country. The “border” (border) is the line – the imaginary line that separates two countries or two different parts of property. It could be two states, it could be two cities; here, it refers to two countries: the United States and the Country of Canada. Yesenia says most Canadian citizens don’t need a visa to cross the border to come to the United States, to go from one side to the other. “What about your uncle in Korea?” Julian says, “He’s already in the U.S. on an exchange visitor visa until June.” An “exchange visitor visa” is permission to enter the United States in some sort of exchange program, where some people from your country come here, some people from our country go to your country. Usually it’s to study or to work for a certain amount of time.

By the way, I am not an expert on visas and coming to the United States, so unfortunately if you email me questions I probably won’t be able to answer them. If you have real questions about visas, you should talk to the U.S. Embassy or a representative of the U.S. government in your country. Or even easier, go on the Internet and go to the website for that.

Anyway, back to our story. Julian has an uncle in Korea, who’s on an exchange visitor visa. Notice we say “on a visa,” not just “has a visa,” although you could say that. Yesenia says, “What about your aunt in Greece?” Julian says, “She won’t need a visa because Greece is one of the countries in the Visa Waiver Program.” The “Visa Waiver Program” is a special program the U.S. has that



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allows citizens of 36 countries to enter the United States for up to 90 days. That is, from 1 to 90 days without having to get a visa. There are many countries in this program. The Czech Republic, Malta, and Brunei are three countries in the Visa Waiver Program, and no, I don't know what the other ones are.

Yesenia says, "Do you think your nephews in South Africa will want to come?" Your "nephews" are, of course, the sons of your brother or sister. Julian says, "I'm not sure what the visa situation is there. We'll have to check with the State Department." "The State Department" is the oldest U.S. government department, I believe. It deals with international relations, with passports, with visas. As I record this, Hilary Clinton is the head of the State Department. The head of the departments we call "secretaries." She is the Secretary of State. The State Department is the organization that operates all of the U.S. Embassies and Consulates throughout the world. If you go to be their website, you will find information about visas, and they have their website in many different languages as well.

Julian says, "We have to check with the State Department." Yesenia says, "I'll get on the horn first thing in the morning to see what I can find out." "To get on the horn" means to call someone on a telephone. It's a kind of an old expression, but you'll still hear it: "Get on the horn and ask my brother when he's coming over for dinner." Yesenia says, "I might email them and ask them to check with the embassy or consulate there to be sure." An "embassy" is the official building where one country is represented in another country, usually in the capital city of that country. So the embassies from all the different countries of the world that have embassies in the United States are in Washington, D.C. The "consulate" is the office or building where a foreign government has representatives, but it's not in the main city of the country. It's something other than the embassy. So for example, here in Los Angeles we have a consulate for many different governments. The Mexican government, several Latin American and Asian governments have consulates here in the United States in different cities, and specifically here in Los Angeles. If you want to get a visa to come to the United States, you often have to go to an embassy or a consulate in your country.

Yesenia says, "This party is really shaping up." "To shape up" is a two-word phrasal verb that here means to begin to progress, to advance, to begin to start to take form. The word "shape" has several meanings in English, however; take a look at our Learning Guide for some additional explanations. Julian says to Yesenia, "You seem to have it all under control," meaning you seem to have everything worked out, you know what you're doing. Yesenia says, "Haven't you always said (haven't you always told me) that party planning is my middle



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name?” “Party planning” is just what it sounds like; making plans, making arrangements for a celebration – a party. We have this expression, “(something) is my middle name,” or “(something) is your middle name.” It means that you are very good at what you do and you like to do it. So we might say, “Podcasting is my middle name,” meaning I am so interested and so enjoy doing podcasting that it is as if it were part of my own name, part of my own identity. Whatever you love to do – skiing, or going on Facebook, or walking, or reading – you could say any of those activities are your middle name if you are good at them, and/or if you really enjoy doing them.

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

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[end of dialogue]

Scriptwriting is Dr. Lucy Tse's middle name. Lucy Scriptwriting 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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