



## ESL Podcast 745 – Welcoming a Houseguest

### GLOSSARY

**to rearrange** – to change the position of objects, especially furniture; to change the layout of where things are placed in a room

\* Connie wants to rearrange the office so that her desk faces the window instead of the door.

**houseguest** – a person who stays in someone's home for a period of time, sleeping there at night

\* Gerardo is a great houseguest, because he always offers to wash the dishes and he usually takes us out for dinner at least once.

**to talk to (oneself)** – to speak quietly without expecting anyone else to listen or answer one's questions; to think aloud

\* Phiyao often talks to herself at work, because it helps her concentrate.

**don't be like that** – a phrase used to ask someone to stop acting a certain way, used when one disapproves of his or her attitude or behavior

\* I know you're upset about the presentation, but please don't be like that. I hate to see you so depressed.

**eccentric** – with unusual or strange behavior that isn't normal in society

\* Reya is quite eccentric, wearing unusual clothing and often singing loudly in public.

**heart of gold** – nice, sincere, and friendly toward other people; a good person

\* Walter often looks angry, but once you get to know him, you'll realize he has a heart of gold.

**vague** – not clear or precise; hazy; undefined or difficult to understand; not exact

\* Justin tried to give vague answers about where he had been, but his parents kept asking more questions.

**to play (something) by ear** – to do whatever feels right at the moment, proceeding without a clear plan; to be spontaneous

\* This is a wedding! You can't play it by ear. We need to pick invitations, music, food, flowers, and so much more.

**open-ended** – without a clear end or answer; not ending at a specific time or in a specific way

\* The meetings are open-ended, so they end whenever we run out of things to talk about.



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**to outstay (one's) welcome** – to stay in someone's home or office longer than the host desires

\* Frederic brought his kids over to play with our kids, but they stayed for eight hours and really outstayed their welcome.

**speak for yourself** – a phrase used to show that one's opinion is different from the opinion another person is expressing

\* - This is the cutest sweater ever!

- Speak for yourself. I think it's ugly and I wouldn't wear it if you paid me a million dollars.

**to hog** – to use something all the time and not let anyone else use it at all; to fully control the use of something

\* Cassie, your brother is complaining that you're hogging the bathroom in the morning.

**restricted** – unable to move freely; with limitations on one's movements or actions

\* This area is restricted. Only people with special permission can enter the building.

**small price to pay** – something that is mildly unpleasant or inconvenient, but must be done in order to obtain greater benefits

\* Having your teeth cleaned every six months is a small price to pay to avoid cavities and other dental work.

**company** – the presence of another person; having another person nearby

\* Edward really enjoys Katya's company, but he just isn't interested in her romantically.

**unwarranted** – without justification; without a good reason or explanation for doing something

\* I understand why Jacques is upset, but his rude behavior is unwarranted.

**assumption** – something that one believes is true, but may be wrong because one does not have any information about it or proof for that belief

\* When forecasting profits for the next year, we made an assumption that sales will increase by seven percent.



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### COMPREHENSION QUESTIONS

1. What does Rachel mean when she says, “We’ll just play it by ear”?
  - a) They’ll wait to see what happens.
  - b) They’ll listen closely when Susan talks about her plans.
  - c) They’ll listen to a lot of music during Susan’s visit.
2. What does Yousef mean when he says, “They hog the TV”?
  - a) Houseguests steal his television set.
  - b) Houseguests turn up the volume while watching TV.
  - c) Houseguests don’t let him decide what to watch on TV.

### WHAT ELSE DOES IT MEAN?

#### to talk to (oneself)

The phrase “to talk to (oneself),” in this podcast, means to think aloud, or to speak quietly without expecting anyone else to listen or answer one’s questions: “When Jan is upset, she talks to herself.” The phrase “to talk (one’s) ear off” means to talk too much: “Janice is nice, but she’ll talk your ear off for hours if you let her.” The informal phrase “to talk trash” means to say bad things about another person: “Did you hear Marcel talking trash about his cousins?” Finally, the phrase “to talk some sense into (someone)” means to say something that changes a person’s behavior and makes him or her act more reasonably or rationally: “Someone needs to talk some sense into that girl before she drops out of school.”

#### hog

In this podcast, the verb “to hog” means to use something all the time and not let anyone else use it at all, or to fully control the use of something: “Stop hogging the computer! I need to check my email, too.” The phrase “in hog heaven” means very happy and having a good time: “Klaus loves to travel, so he was in hog heaven when he won a free trip to San Antonio, Texas.” The phrase “to live high on the hog” means to have a lot of money and have a comfortable, enjoyable lifestyle: “Hermione dreams of winning the lottery and living high on the hog.” Finally, the phrase “to go hog wild” means to behave in an extreme, wild way without controlling oneself: “Some people go hog wild and eat way too much when they go to an all-you-can-eat buffet.”



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### CULTURE NOTE

#### Houseguest Etiquette

Americans often invite other people to stay in their homes, especially friends or relatives who are visiting from far away. Although there aren't any written rules, it is important for those visitors to be aware of houseguest "etiquette" (expectations for how someone should behave; polite behavior).

First, it is important for houseguests to "avoid" (not do; not let something happen) creating additional work for their "hosts" (the people who live in the home). This means that "common areas" (areas of the home that are shared, such as the living room, kitchen, and bathroom) should be kept clean. The houseguests' "belongings" (things that one owns) should not be left anywhere outside of the bedroom where the houseguests are staying, and those belongings should be "stored" (put away) "neatly" (in a clean, organized way).

Houseguests should offer to help their hosts prepare and clean up meals. If they are staying for more than one night, they should offer to pay for "groceries" (food purchased in a store) or simply bring groceries into the home.

Houseguests also need to respect their hosts' "right to privacy" (ability to be alone). Houseguests should never enter the hosts' personal space, such as a bedroom or an office without asking or being invited. Houseguests also shouldn't "snoop" (read or look at things to learn about another person) by reading the hosts' mail, for example.

Finally, houseguests should be "grateful" (thankful) to their hosts. This might mean writing a nice thank you note and/or leaving a small gift. Many houseguests prefer to "take their hosts out for dinner" (invite the hosts to a restaurant and pay for their meal). It is also nice to "reciprocate" (do something for someone because he or she has done the same thing for you) by inviting the host to stay in the houseguest's home in the future.

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



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### COMPLETE TRANSCRIPT

Welcome to English as a Second Language Podcast number 745: Welcoming a Houseguest.

This is English as a Second Language Podcast episode 745. I'm your host, Dr. Jeff McQuillan, coming to you from the Center for Educational Development right here in beautiful Los Angeles, California. Yeah, that's where we are!

We have a website, it's eslpod.com. Go there and become a member already, will ya? You can get our Learning Guide, and help support this podcast. You can also follow us on Twitter. Wow, yeah, we're on Twitter! You can go to @eslpod on Twitter and get all the cool news.

This is an episode about welcoming a "houseguest," someone who is going to be staying at your house: a friend, a family member, that sort of thing. Let's get started.

[start of dialogue]

Yousef: Why are you rearranging the furniture?

Rachel: My Aunt Susan called and she's coming for a visit. It'll be so nice to see her. It's been a while since we've had a houseguest.

Yousef: Your crazy Aunt Susan? The one who talks to herself all the time and makes funny noises?

Rachel: Don't be like that. She's a little eccentric, but she has a heart of gold.

Yousef: How long is she staying?

Rachel: She was a little vague about that. We'll just play it by ear.

Yousef: I don't like the sound of that. Open-ended invitations are a bad idea.

Rachel: She won't outstay her welcome. As far as I'm concerned, she can stay for as long as she wants. You don't mind, do you?

Yousef: Speak for yourself. I don't like having houseguests. They hog the TV and I can't walk around the house in my underwear. I feel restricted.



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Rachel: That's a small price to pay for her interesting company, don't you think? We'll have so much fun listening to her stories.

Yousef: I think you're making some unwarranted assumptions here. First, you assume that I enjoy her company. Second, you assume that I'll be here.

Rachel: What do you mean? You won't be here next week?

Yousef: Next week, I'll be visiting my brother in Toronto. Didn't I already mention it?

[end of dialogue]

Our dialogue begins when Yousef says to Rachel, "Why are you rearranging the furniture?" "To rearrange" means to change the position of different objects; we especially use this verb with furniture: coaches, chairs, desks, sofas, that sort of thing. To rearrange them means to put them in different places in the room.

Rachel says, "My Aunt Susan (you could also say 'My Aunt Susan,' either pronunciation is correct) called and she's coming for a visit. It'll be so nice to see her. It's been a while since we've had a houseguest." A "houseguest" is a person who stays in your home for a certain amount of time, usually a friend or a family member.

Yousef says, "Your crazy Aunt Susan? The one who talks to herself all the time and makes funny noises?" "To talk to yourself" is to speak quietly to yourself without expecting anyone to be listening or anyone to answer you. Sometimes that's considered a sign of a crazy person, a person who is mentally ill; they talk to themselves, when, in truth, almost everyone talks to themselves. I talk to myself. We don't tell other people we talk to ourselves, but it's part of the thinking process I think. We all do it.

Anyway, Yousef thinks that the aunt is crazy. Rachel says, "Don't be like that." The expression "don't be like that" is used when you are asking someone to stop behaving in a certain way; you are not happy with the way they are talking or acting. Rachel says her aunt is a little eccentric. "Eccentric" (eccentric) means a little unusual, something that is a little strange, not normal. It's not a sign of being crazy. It's a way that we may describe someone who acts very differently, not the way other people act in that society, but they're not mentally ill, we might just say they're eccentric. This aunt of Rachel's is eccentric, but she has a heart of gold. To say someone "has a heart of gold" is to mean they're very nice; they're very friendly; they're good people.



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Yousef says, “How long is she staying?” How long will she be at our house? Rachel says, “She was a little vague about that.” “To be vague” (vague) means that you aren’t very clear; you aren’t very precise. “What time are you going to be at the party?” “Oh, maybe two, three, possibly four.” You’re being very vague; you’re not giving a direct, specific answer. Rachel says, “We’ll just play it by ear.” That’s a popular expression. “To play it by ear” means to do what feels right at the moment. You don’t have a plan, you’re just going to sort of make up your plan as you go along, so it may change every hour; you may decide to do something different. You’re playing it by ear; you’re not making a plan. It probably comes from music, where you hear a song, and you don’t have what we would call the “sheet music,” a piece of paper with the notes written on it, so you have to play it just by listening to it. I’m guessing that’s where it comes from, but what do I know? I’m not a musician. I can’t sing, anyway!

Yousef says, “I don’t like the sound of that. Open-ended invitations are a bad idea.” “Open-ended” means there isn’t a clear end or, in this case, a clear answer. You don’t know when something is going to end. If you have an open-ended commitment to someone it could last a week, it could last a year, you don’t know. Yousef says that open-ended invitations are a bad idea, saying to someone, “Yes, come and stay at my house however long you want,” not giving them a definite time.

Rachel says, “She won’t outstay her welcome.” “To outstay” (outstay – one word) means to stay in someone’s home or office longer than that person wants you to. You think they’re going to be there for 2 days, and instead they’re there for 20 days. That would be outstaying your welcome. Rachel says, “As far as I’m concerned, she can stay for as long as she wants to. You don’t mind, do you?” Of course, Yousef does mind; he is bothered by that. He says, “Speak for yourself.” We use that phrase to show that our opinion is not the same as the opinion the person we’re talking to is expressing. So, Rachel is saying she can stay however long she wants. Yousef doesn’t agree; he says, “Speak for yourself. I don’t like having houseguests. They hog the TV and I can’t walk around the house in my underwear. I feel restricted.” “To hog (hog) (something),” as a verb, means to use it so that no one else can use it, to use it longer than you should. “To hog the TV” would be to watch what you want to watch on TV, and not let anyone else use the television to watch what they want. “Hog” has a couple of different meanings in English; take a look at our Learning Guide for some of those.

Yousef is complaining that he won’t be able to walk around the house in his underwear, which many people do. He says, “I feel restricted.” “To be restricted”





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means to be unable to move freely, to be limited. Rachel says, “That’s a small price to pay for her interesting company, don’t you think?” “A small price to pay” says that yes, something is going to be a little painful, a little unpleasant, but you’re going to get a lot back in return. So you might say, “Not smoking every day is a small price to pay for living a longer life.” It isn’t going to be that painful and you get a lot of benefit if you do it. Rachel thinks that her aunt is interesting company. “Company” can mean a business, but “company” can also mean the presence of another person, someone else in the same room or with you somewhere. “I’m going to keep (someone) company” is a common expression; I’m going to go and be there with them, talk to them, make sure they’re not alone. That’s the use of “company” that Rachel is employing here. She says, “We’ll have so much fun listening to her stories.”

Yousef says, “I think you’re making some unwarranted assumptions.” An “assumption” is something that you believe to be true, but it may be wrong. You don’t necessarily have all of the information necessary. “Unwarranted” means not warranted; “warranted” means justified, with a good reason. “Unwarranted” means not justified. You don’t have a good reason to make that assumption Yousef is saying. “First,” he says, “you assume that I enjoy her company. Second, you assume that I’ll be here.” Rachel says, “What do you mean? You won’t be here next week?” Yousef says, “Next week, I’ll be visiting my brother in Toronto. Didn’t I already mention that?” Of course, Yousef has decided to visit his brother because Rachel’s Aunt Susan is coming to their house. He, of course, wasn’t planning this when they started the conversation, but that’s how he’s going to get away from having to be in the house with Rachel’s aunt.

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

[start of dialogue]

Yousef: Why are you rearranging the furniture?

Rachel: My Aunt Susan called and she’s coming for a visit. It’ll be so nice to see her. It’s been a while since we’ve had a houseguest.

Yousef: Your crazy Aunt Susan? The one who talks to herself all the time and makes funny noises?

Rachel: Don’t be like that. She’s a little eccentric, but she has a heart of gold.

Yousef: How long is she staying?





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Yousef: Next week, I'll be visiting my brother in Toronto. Didn't I already mention it?

[end of dialogue]

Our scriptwriter has a heart of gold; it's the wonderful Dr. Lucy Tse. Thank you, Lucy.

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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