



Coffee and Conversation for ESL Listening



with Donielle and Khrystyna

Episode 5: Pets

Hi! If this is your first time listening to our podcast, this is an opportunity for upper level English learners to practice listening skills and learn new vocabulary by listening to authentic conversations. For more information about ways to use this podcast, download notes for [students](#) or [teachers](#).

In today's episode Donielle and Khrystyna discuss their love of animals and share stories about pets.

Here are a few words and phrases about the topic that you may find useful:

cat person dog person	Many pet lovers will describe themselves as either a "cat person" or a "dog person" which means that while they may like both cats and dogs, they have a strong preference for one over the other.
groom	to clean or care for an animal, including bathing, giving haircuts, or trimming nails. The person who does this for their job is a <u>groomer</u> .
breed (N.) breed (V.)	a particular type of dog, cat, horse, etc. (e.g. poodle or Siamese) to keep and produce animals of a particular breed to sell for profit. The person who does this for their job is a <u>breeder</u> .
stray	a type of animal such as a dog or cat that is generally kept as a pet, but does not have a home, is living on the streets, etc.
get [an animal] fixed	informal and common expression for spaying [female] or neutering [male] an animal so that it no longer reproduces
claw	a sharp curved part on the toe of an animal
paw	the foot of an animal that has claws
Check out this video from EngVid for even more vocabulary about cats and dogs	

Here are a few interesting idioms featuring cats and dogs:

let the cat out of the bag	reveal a secret carelessly or by mistake. <i>Ex: She knows about her surprise party. Someone must have <u>let the cat out of the bag</u>.</i>
in the doghouse	said about a husband whose wife is angry with him <i>Ex: He's <u>in the doghouse</u> because he forgot his wife's birthday.</i>
scaredy cat	teasing word to describe someone who is afraid of something <i>Ex: I had to take care of *the spider in the bathroom because my husband's a <u>scaredy cat</u>.</i>
work like a dog	work extremely hard, especially as compared to another or for dramatic effect. <i>Ex: I <u>work like a dog</u> every day and my co-worker spends all day on his phone.</i>

See the following pages for vocabulary and language focus from this episode.



Vocabulary: Words and Phrases Used in the Conversation

the overwhelming majority	not just a simple majority, but very clear and decisive (~75% and above, for example) <ul style="list-style-type: none"> The <u>overwhelming majority</u> of voters rejected the proposal.
take care of* (2 meanings)	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> keep (someone or something) safe and provided for. Ex. She <u>took care of</u> my cats while I was on vacation. deal with a situation or problem. Ex. from animal idioms: I had to <u>take care of</u> the spider in the bathroom because my husband is a scaredy cat.
when it comes to [something]	to identify or emphasize a specific topic being referenced. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <u>When it comes to</u> customer service, they are the best.
a ton of	[informal] a large amount or number of something <ul style="list-style-type: none"> I did <u>a ton of</u> research before choosing a car to buy.
there's something to it/that	To have some degree of importance, truth, or value <ul style="list-style-type: none"> It seems strange to me that there are diets designed for specific animal breeds, but <u>there must be something to it</u>.
make fun of [someone or something]	tease, laugh at, or joke about (someone) in a mocking way. It's important to note that context determines whether it is a mean way (like bullying) or if it's all in good fun. For example, when Khrystyna <u>makes fun of</u> Donielle for feeding the mouse she rescued, there was nothing mean about it; she was just playfully teasing her.
derogatory	offensive; showing a lack of respect for someone or something. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> The candidate made <u>derogatory</u> remarks about his opponent.
embrace [an idea, concept, etc.]	to accept (something or someone) readily or gladly <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Many cat lovers <u>embrace</u> the "crazy cat lady" nickname
a [whole] bunch of [something]	[informal] a large amount or number of something <ul style="list-style-type: none"> I still have <u>a whole bunch of</u> essays left to grade.
goofy (adj.) goofiness (N.)	silly and funny There's something about the <u>goofiness</u> of cats that connects with me.
run an errand/run [some] errands	to make a short trip to complete a specific task or chore <ul style="list-style-type: none"> I have to <u>run some errands</u> this morning, but I'm free in the afternoon.
sneak [something] in	bring something inside a place where it is not allowed <ul style="list-style-type: none"> My father <u>snuck</u> the cat <u>in</u> the house. (Note: <i>snuck</i> is the informal past tense variant of "sneaked" and is much more commonly used)
make a bee line for [something]	go quickly and directly towards something Whenever I go somewhere and see an animal, I <u>make a bee line</u> for it.
draw the line at [something]	set a limit on what one is willing to do or accept, and will not go beyond that <ul style="list-style-type: none"> I love animals but they are not all the same. I <u>draw the line at</u> snakes.
cuddle [with] [something]	to hold (someone or something) in your arms in order to show affection <ul style="list-style-type: none"> You can't really <u>cuddle with</u> a hermit crab.

Vocabulary: Words and Phrases Used in the Conversation

humane	kind or gentle to people or animals <ul style="list-style-type: none"> We used a <u>humane</u> mousetrap. [one that does not kill or hurt the mouse]
shut down	cause something to cease operation (usually with computers or a business) <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Stores were <u>shutting down</u> because of Covid.
anxiety	fear, nervousness, or stressful feeling about what may happen <ul style="list-style-type: none"> There's a lot of <u>anxiety</u> among the staff about possible job losses.
pop up	appear very quickly or suddenly Cat cafes have started <u>popping up</u> in the United States.
biased	having the belief that some people, things, ideas, etc., are better than others I included some dog facts (along with cats) so I don't seem <u>biased</u> .
turn up vs. show up	These are often interchangeable to mean "to appear somewhere", but (at least in the U.S.), <u>turn up</u> includes the idea that something appeared unexpectedly, suddenly, or after a period of being missing. <u>Show up</u> often means to appear in a place that was planned or scheduled, but often with a negative connotation. Ex. failed to show up or showed up late, etc.
a deal breaker	something that would cause a person to abandon a plan, mutual arrangement, agreement, or relationship <ul style="list-style-type: none"> It would be a <u>deal breaker</u> for me if [a potential partner] didn't like pets.
adjacent	next to something, especially when the items are connected or touching <ul style="list-style-type: none"> We work in <u>adjacent</u> offices.
have a lot of/too much time on [one's] hands	a way to indicate that a person has such an excess of free time that they don't know what to do with it. Often used to suggest that an activity is insignificant, or that a person's time would be better spent doing something else. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Whoever came up with this list of collective animal names must <u>have a lot of time on their hands</u>.

➡ In the episode, we mentioned the prison program that matches shelter cats with inmates. Read all about it [HERE](#). You'll likely discover new vocabulary, and the article would be great for a discussion.

➡ Click the links below for more information about some of the pets mentioned in this episode.

[hamster](#) [ferret](#) [guinea pig](#) [hedgehog](#) [hermit crab](#)

The Language of Conversation

One thing I've noticed while teaching English is that students often learn the basic meaning of certain words, but not the specific ways that they are often used by native speakers in everyday conversation. For example, most students know the basic meaning of the verbs: **throw**, **grab**, and **shove**.

To many English learners (and according to the dictionary definitions), these words have a strong or aggressive connotation. Depending on context, this can be correct, but there is also another way we use these words. We also use them to express something done quickly, casually, or without care or thought. Consider the following examples:

I could say, "I got dressed quickly", but it doesn't give the same image as "I threw on some clothes" because this gives the idea of quickly getting dressed but without putting any thought into what I'm wearing. In this case, I'm expressing the rush that I am in, and that I'm probably putting on the first thing I see. In this episode, I mention that I threw my cat into a room. This does not mean that I used force and literally threw her there; it simply means that I quickly picked her up and put her in the room.

Similarly, I could buy a sandwich for lunch, but if I "grab it" the listener understands that it was a quick, casual purchase. You might hear a character on TV who has romantic interest in someone, so they ask if they want to "grab a coffee" or "grab some lunch." This makes it sound so much more casual and less intimidating than to directly ask someone out for a date.

If I say I "shoved" something into my purse, the listener gets the image of me putting something into my purse without putting it into a wallet or pocket, etc. but just putting it without any thought, or that the bag is likely already quite full or disorganized.

Just for Fun

Riddle: What's the difference between a cat and a comma?

Answer: One has claws at the end of its paws, and the other has a pause at the end of its clause.

Part of the joke is that claws/clause & paws/pause are homophones, which means they have different spellings and meanings, but they are pronounced exactly the same.

Join the Conversation

- Do you like pets? What pets do you have or have you had in the past? Would you consider yourself a cat person or a dog person? What other pets do you think you would like to have?
- Even if you are **biased** and prefer cats over dogs (or vice versa), what do you think are the pros and cons of having a cat and the pros and cons of having a dog?
- Are there any animals that you would never want as a pet? Why?
- There are often funny or amazing pet/animal stories in the news. Discuss one that you have heard.
- In the U.S., it's common to **sneak** food **in** when we go to the movies to avoid paying the high prices for the snacks sold at the theater. Have you ever done this? What types of foods or drinks do you think people typically **sneak in**?

Thanks for checking out our podcast!

We are enjoying these discussions, and we hope that you are finding them helpful!



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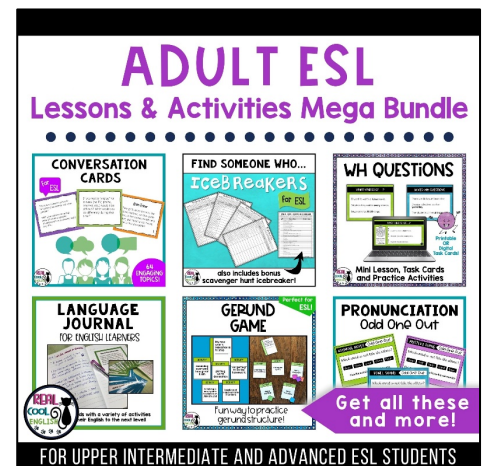

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