Coffee and Conversation for ESL Listening

with Donielle and Khrystyna

Episode 41: Memory Tips & Tricks

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.

In today's episode Donielle and Khrystyna discuss memory tips and tricks that they have found useful for learning and remembering.

Here are some articles/videos related to the topic that you might find useful:

Memory Strategies from The Learning Center University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill	This article includes many of the tips and tricks that were discussed in this episode
The Walking Classroom	Results of research into the positive effects of walking while learning
TED Talk: Want to Be More Creative? Go for a Walk	Similar to the positive impact on learning, this video discusses the benefits of walking to improve creativity
Mind Tools: The Journey Technique	This memory technique is what inspired the grocery list experiment done during this episode. As a side note: Donielle had intended to prompt Khrystyna to start with the toes and move up the body to the head as she repeated the items on the grocery list, but she forgot to do that. Even so, Khrystyna did pretty well and was able to quickly recall 8 of the 10 items.

You can also read the transcript for this episode.

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

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Vocabulary: Words and Phrases Used in the Conversation

be fooled	be deceived or tricked into believing something that isn't true. • *She thought they were staying in a cabin, but she was fooled—it was a tent.*
trick someone into [doing something]	deceive someone so they do something they didn't plan to do. • *Her husband tricked her into going tent camping instead of staying in a cabin.*
roughing it	living or traveling without modern comforts or conveniences – this phrase is especially used for camping • *I'm not the kind of person who enjoys roughing it in a tent.*
glamping	combination of "glamorous" and "camping"; camping with comfortable, modern amenities. • *Glamping is the perfect option for people who like nature but still want a soft bed.*
go about [something]	approach or handle a task or situation in a particular way. • *Glamping is definitely the right way to go about camping.*
orchards	areas of land where fruit trees are grown • *They visited several orchards and tried apple cider and donuts.*
s'mores	a traditional camping treat made of roasted marshmallows, chocolate, and graham crackers • *We roasted marshmallows and made s'mores by the fire.*
-ish	a suffix meaning "approximately" or "somewhat." (sometimes used informally after words that don't normally take this suffix to add this meaning) • *The weather was cool-ish - not too cold.*
crabby	irritable or easily annoyed • *When she's hungry, she gets a little crabby.*
hence	for this reason; therefore • *I went for a long walk and took a shower right before recording, hence the wet hair.*
make it	manage or survive through something difficult • *I was so hungry I didn't think I'd make it until dinner.*
hangry	a mix of "hungry" and "angry"; bad-tempered due to hunger • *Don't talk to me before lunch—I'm hangry.*
know by heart	have something completely memorized • *I still know all 50 U.S. states in alphabetical order by heart because of that song.*
guinea pig	*Informal; often said as a joke:* someone who is used for a test or experiment • *Her co-host was the guinea pig for their memory experiment.*
AKA (also known as)	used to give another name or nickname for someone or something • *The guinea pig—AKA the test subject—had to remember the grocery list.*
on [one's] **tiptoes**	standing on the front part of your feet to reach higher • *She stood on her tiptoes to grab the tomato soup from the top shelf.*
produce section **(pronounced PRO-duce)**	the part of a grocery store where fruits and vegetables are located • *The strawberries were in the produce section near the apples.*
kneel down	lower your body so that one or both of your knees are resting on the ground • *She had to kneel down to look under the bed for the missing toys.*

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Vocabulary: Words and Phrases Used in the Conversation - Cont'd

thigh	the upper part of the leg between the hip and the knee • *She balanced the paper towels against her thigh while shopping.*
rap (on something)	knock or tap quickly • *She rapped on the watermelon to see if it was ripe.*
be out [of something)	have none of something left • *We're out of eggs, so add them to the grocery list.*
for Pete's sake	an expression used to show mild frustration or annoyance • *Oh, for Pete's sake, we forgot another item!*
sycophant	a person who flatters someone powerful to gain favor • *She used the image of sick elephants praising their boss to remember the word "sycophant."*
come across [something]	find or encounter something unexpectedly • *She came across the same word several times but couldn't remember its meaning.*
giggle	laugh quietly in a light, silly way • *The young girls talked and giggled in the back of the room.*
false friends	words in two languages that look similar but have different meanings • *English learners often make mistakes with false friends between their languages.*
have at it	*Informal:* encourage an attempt at something that is challenging • *Here is a list of the 50 states in alphabetical order to memorize; have at it!*
by hand	done manually rather than with a machine or computer. • *According to science, writing notes by hand helps you remember better.*
articulation	the physical movement of the mouth and tongue to produce speech sounds
cognizant	aware or conscious of something
mnemonic device	a memory aid that helps you remember information, often by linking it to words or images. (e.g. *My Very Educated Mother Just Served Us Nachos* to help remember the planet names that start with the first letter of each word in the sentence)
and so on and so forth	a phrase used to show that a list continues in a similar way • *Each word represents a planet—Mercury, Venus, and so on and so forth.*
Post-it Note	a small piece of paper with a sticky strip on the back used for writing quick reminders. (brand name often used generically) • *My desk was covered in colorful Post-it Notes to help me remember tasks.*
decor	the style or appearance of a room or space, especially its decorations • *She joked that all her Post-it Notes had become part of her office decor.*

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Language/Cultural Note

In the episode, Khrystyna shared a story about accidentally saying her grandparents were *retarded* when she meant *retired.*

These two words are very different in meaning:

Retired means a person has stopped working, usually because of age.
Example: My grandfather is retired, so he has time to travel.

Retarded is an **outdated and offensive** word that was once used in medical or educational settings to describe intellectual disabilities.

It is important to understand that it is **no longer acceptable** to use this word and should never be used to describe a person. In fact, you may hear or see references to "the R word" to describe someone's offensive use of the word.

Join the Conversation

- Is there something you learned years ago that you can still remember easily today? Why do you think you can still remember it?
- What helps you remember new words in English: writing, saying them aloud, visualizing, or something else?
- Have you ever used a mnemonic device to remember something? (like the examples in the discussion about creating a silly phrase or sentence to remember the location of countries or the order of planets?)
- Do you ever use music or songs to help you remember something? Share your own examples of how you used them.
- Have you ever used a visualization technique to help you remember something? Share your own examples of techniques you have used.
- How many examples of **false friends** can you think of between your native language and English? For example, the word *actual* is a false friend in Spanish and English because although the word looks exactly the same, and it would be logical to assume it has the same meaning in both languages, the meaning is completely different for each language.
- Think of something (either in everyday life or with learning English) that you have difficulty remembering, and use one of the techniques mentioned in the episode: mnemonic device, music (e.g. rewrite lyrics to the tune of a song you know well), visualization, or a memory journey (like the grocery store trip) to remember it. Share with a partner or in a group your technique and discuss how it worked for you.
- Try listening to a learning app or podcast while taking a walk, and discuss your experience. Do you feel that walking helped you remember more?

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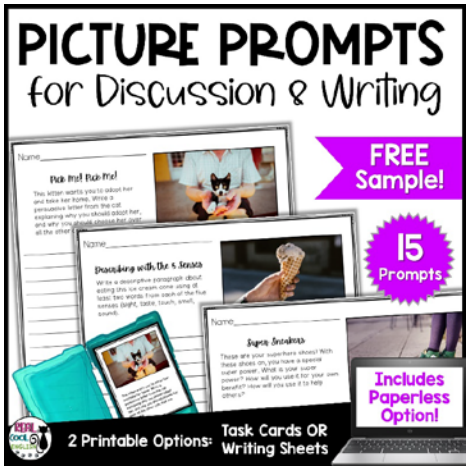

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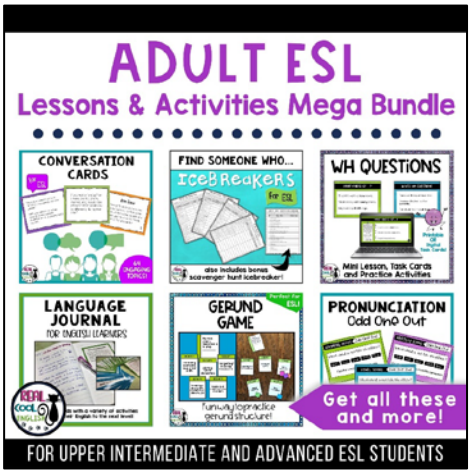

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