



ESL Podcast 165 – A Practical Joke at Work

GLOSSARY

I've had it! – to be tired of a situation, to be unwilling to tolerate something
* I've had it with the poor service at this restaurant and I don't plan to come back.

take it – tolerate, to put up with
* I can't take it when the weather is so hot.

What's the matter? – What is the problem?, What is wrong with...
* What's the matter with Doug? He is normally so happy.

being the butt of – to be the person or thing that people are making fun of or laughing at
* Her bad singing is the butt of a lot of jokes among her friends.

practical jokes – playing a trick on someone that usually involves some physical action
* I am planning to play a practical joke on my friend when comes for a visit.

What has he done now? – what mistake has this person done, what problem have they created; usually said of someone who has had problems in the past
* Those kids are always getting into trouble. What have they done now?

giggling – to laugh, but not too loudly
* The movie was so funny, I couldn't stop giggling the whole time.

sticker – a piece of paper that has glue on one side to make it stick or adhere to something else
* Some students like to decorate their school folders with stickers.

stuck – difficult to remove; past tense of to stick
* I got gum stuck to the bottom of my shoe and I couldn't get it off.

red hot mama – a sexually attractive woman; an expression common in the 1960s, but not as popular today
* She must think she's a red hot mama to dress like that.



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papa - informal for father; a word sometimes used by children instead of “dad”

* She said, “Papa, when will you be home from work?”

he’s going to get it - to get into trouble, to be punished

* If he borrowed her car without asking, he’s going to get it when he comes home.

revenge - to do something wrong to someone who has done something wrong to you

* After her best friend stole her boyfriend, she wanted to get revenge.

COMPREHENSION QUESTIONS

1. Joey thought the practical joke was:
 - a) very funny and plans to play one on Chandler.
 - b) the best practical joke in the world.
 - c) not funny and plans to play one on Chandler.

2. When Phoebe saw Joey walk out of his office, she:
 - a) told him he had a sticker on his pants.
 - b) laughed.
 - c) told him she wanted a sticker, too.



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WHAT ELSE DOES IT MEAN?

stuck

The word “stuck,” in this podcast, means to have something that’s difficult to remove. It can be something physical, like a sticker or a body part: “My foot got stuck in the hole and I couldn’t get it out.” We can also use stuck to mean having difficulty getting out of a situation: “Because I don’t have enough training, I’m stuck in a low-paying job,” or “I promised to help my friend and I got stuck helping move all weekend.”

take it

In this podcast, the phrase “take it” means to tolerate something: “My neighbor’s TV is on all day and I can’t take it anymore.” We can also use “take it” when we want to make clear something that’s uncertain: “I take it that we need to arrive by 7:45 if we want to see the 8:00 movie,” or “I take it you’ll read the instructions before trying put together the new desk, right?” It is similar to “I understand that...”

CULTURE NOTE

People often play practical jokes at work. They sometimes play jokes because they are bored or want to make fun of other people. In some companies, there is a “culture” of playing jokes on the other employees. Many people expect it and aren’t bothered by it. In other companies, playing these kind of practical jokes is considered inappropriate or wrong.

Some common practical jokes in a business office include hiding something from someone, putting signs on someone’s back without the person knowing, taking off a part of someone's clothing, or using a squirt gun to shoot water at someone. (A squirt gun is a small plastic toy in the shape of a gun that shoots water.) Practical jokes can also include telling someone a false story in order to get them to do something. Perhaps the most famous type of practical joke is using a “whoopee cushion.” A whoopee cushion is a small pillow that makes a funny noise when you sit on it.

One of the most common days to play a practical joke on someone is April Fools' Day. April Fools' Day is April 1, a day traditionally that people play practical jokes on each other.



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



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COMPLETE TRANSCRIPT

Welcome to English As A Second Language Podcast Number 165, “Practical Jokes.”

This is English as a Second Language Podcast Episode 165. I'm your host, Dr. Jeff McQuillan coming to you from the Center for Educational Development in beautiful Los Angeles, CA.

Today's podcast is called “Practical Jokes.” Let's get started!

<start of story>

Joey: I've had it. I'm not going to take it anymore.

Rachel: What's the matter?

Joey: I'm sick and tired of being the butt of Chandler's practical jokes. One of these days, he's really going to get someone hurt.

Rachel: Oh no! What has he done now?

Joey: I went back to my office after lunch and sat down at my desk. After about a half hour, I got up to get some coffee. I walked out of my office and I hear Phoebe giggling behind me.

Rachel: What was so funny?

Joey: Chandler had put a sticker on my chair that stuck to my pants when I got up.

Rachel: What did it say?

Joey: It said, “I'm a Red Hot Mama.”

Rachel: That's terrible. I can see why you're mad. You may be a “Red Hot Papa,” but definitely not a “Red Hot Mama.”

Joey: Very funny. One of these days, he's going to get it. I'm planning my revenge.



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<end of story>

Today's podcast is called "Practical Jokes." A 'practical joke' is when you do something to someone, usually it's something that is not very nice, and it involves doing something physical. So, for example, you may take out the coffee in the coffeemaker and put in tea. Or you may take someone's pen and put glue on it so they can't open it. That would be a practical joke; nothing too serious, but something that other people might laugh at. Well, the word "practical," of course, usually means something that is very possible to do, but a practical joke means something that is supposed to be funny. But it's usually funny because someone has something negative or bad happened to them. It's very common on April Fool's Day, on the first of April, to play practical jokes. That's the verb we use, to "play" a practical joke.

Our dialogue begins with Joey saying, "I've had it. I'm not going to take it anymore." "I've had it" means I have had enough, I will not tolerate it anymore. "I've had it" - I want no more of this. It's something you say when you are angry about something or some situation, perhaps, that have been going on for a long time, and then you say, "You know what, I've had it. I've had enough." He says that he's not going to take it anymore. "To take it" means the same as "to put up with something." "To put up with something" means that you tolerate it, that you accept it, that you don't do anything about it. When something is wrong, when there is a problem, sometimes you just have to put up with it, you just have to take it. But when you say, "I'm not going to take it anymore," that means you are not going to accept the situation anymore.

Rachel asks Joey, "What's the matter?" And "what's the matter" is the same as "What's wrong?" "What's the matter?" is much more common, probably more informal. "What's the matter?" "What's wrong?" Joey says, "I'm sick and tired of being the butt of Chandler's practical jokes." A couple of expressions there that are common – "I'm sick" and "I'm tired." The expression "I'm sick and tired" is similar to I've had it or I've had enough. It's when you no longer want to accept a negative situation. "I'm sick and tired of people who do not park their cars on the street in the right way." "I'm sick and tired of watching television every night with the stupid shows on TV." "I'm sick and tired of eating hamburger everyday." That means I'm not - I don't want to put up with that situation anymore.

Well, Joey is sick and tired of being the butt of Chandler's jokes. To be the "butt of someone's joke" means you are the one who is made fun of, you are the one that the joke is played on. Someone plays a practical joke on you, you are the



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butt of the joke, you are the person who gets hurt of the joke, if you will. Well, Joey says that, “One of these days, he’s really going to get someone hurt.” “One of these days” means someday. “One of these days, I’m going to go to Montreal.” “One of these days, I’m going to buy a new car;” someday, but nothing specific.

Rachel says, “Oh no! What has he done now?,” means he’s been doing things for a long time that are probably bad and so, when we use the expression “What has he done now?” – meaning, he’s done other things bad in the past. Joey says that he went to his office after lunch and he sat down at his desk. To “sit down at your desk” means you sat down in a chair next to your desk, you don’t actually sit on your desk (well, you could!). He sat down at his desk and after about a half hour, he got up (meaning he stood up) to get some coffee. He walked out of his office, he left his office, and he heard Phoebe giggling behind him. To “giggle” as a verb, means to laugh. Usually, it means to laugh, not “hahaha,” but sort of “hm-hm-hm,” not very loudly, often so that other people don’t hear you. We, many times, use that term also for teenagers or young children who laugh at things, they giggle, but it can also be used for an adult. So, Phoebe is giggling at Joey, and that is the expression “to giggle at someone.”

Rachel says, “What was so funny?,” meaning “What is the joke?” Joey says, “Chandler had put a sticker on my chair.” A “sticker” is something that sticks or stays on something. For example, little children often have stickers that they put in books, that are different colors and different shapes. To stick to something means to adhere something that stays on something. You can use glue, for example, to make something stick. Well, a sticker is a piece of paper that you put on something. People also put stickers on their car. We call those bumper stickers, because the “bumper” is the front and back part of the car that you have in case someone hits you, they hit your bumper. To “bump” means to hit something. Anyway, that’s a bumper sticker.

Joey says that the sticker stuck to his pants. To “stick,” of course, we already know. “Stuck” is the irregular past participle or a past tense, as well, “it stuck to my pants.” Rachel says, “What did it say?” And Joey says, “It said, ‘I’m a Red Hot Mama.’” Well, first of all, when we say something is “red hot,” it’s the same as saying they’re very hot, but when we say someone, a person, is red hot, we mean they’re very good looking, they’re very attractive. To be “hot” means to be very sexually attractive. To be “red hot” means to be very attractive. This expression is usually used with the word “mama.” “Mama” is one way of saying “mother” or “mom,” and in some parts of the United States, especially in



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Southern United States, they may refer to their mothers as “mama.” In most places, we just say “mom.” But, the use of “mama” here is very different. It doesn't mean your mother, it means a very attractive girl or a very attractive woman. So, we say, “she's a hot mama,” means she's very good looking girl or a very attractive woman. However, I have to say that this is not an expression we use anymore very commonly, and when someone does use it, like in the dialogue, they're using it kind of as a joke, this old expression, probably from the 50's or the 60's and 70's. Of course, a man is not a red hot mama, and that's the practical joke. Rachel says, “That's terrible. I can see why you're mad.” - I can understand why you're mad. “You may be a red hot papa, but definitely not a red hot mama.” Well, now Rachel is making a joke on Joey, making fun of Joey by saying that he may be a red hot papa. Of course, “papa” is the word informally for father, but again, it's not one that's used by most Americans. Some people and certain parts of the country, we would just say “Dad.” So, red hot papa would of course be the male part or the male equivalent of red hot mama. But that's not an expression...we don't use red hot papa. That's not an actual expression. Rachel is just making a joke.

Joey says, “Very funny.” Of course, he doesn't mean “very funny” seriously. Joey is kidding when he says, “Oh, very funny.” When someone says that, they mean that what you just said is not very funny. So, Joey is saying to Rachel that he doesn't like her joke. “Very funny. One of these days, “ Joey says again, “he's going to get it.” To “get it” actually has a couple of different meanings. It can mean to understand something, so, “Do you get it?” “Yes, I get it. Yes, I understand.” But here, it's used differently. When he says, “He's going to get it,” that means, he is going to get a joke played on him or he is going to be in trouble. The last sentence of the dialogue, Joey says, “I'm planning my revenge.” “Revenge” is something that you do to someone who has done something bad to you. So, if you hurt me, I'm going to get my revenge. I'm going to revenge what you did. You can use it as a noun and as a verb. Normally, we use it as a noun: “I'm going to get my revenge on you.” I'm going to do something bad to you because you did something bad to me. So, that's what Joey is saying here, “I'm planning my revenge.”

Now let's listen to the dialogue this time at a native rate of speech.

<start of story>

Joey: I've had it. I'm not going to take it anymore.

Rachel: What's the matter?



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<end of story>

Dr. Lucy Tse is the author of today's script. Remember to visit our website at eslpod.com for more information about this podcast. From Los Angeles, California, I am Jeff McQuillan. Thanks for listening. We'll see you next time on ESLPodcast.

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