



ESL Podcast 290 – Riding the Subway

GLOSSARY

token – a piece of metal or plastic that looks like a coin and is used to ride subways or buses, or to make a machine work

* Let's get some tokens so the kids can play that video game.

subway – metro; underground transportation; trains that move underground to move people from one place to another in a city

* Can I use the subway to get to the airport from downtown?

single – one; one and only one; no more than one

* A single scoop of ice cream costs \$1.50, but two scoops cost only \$2.00.

to expire – to no longer be valid; to not be good after a certain date and time

* Trey bought a 600-minute calling card, but the minutes expired before he could use them all.

to issue – to make an official document and give it to a person

* My driver's license was issued by the state of Arkansas in 2001.

unlimited – without limits; with no minimum or maximum

* If you become a member of the museum, you can make an unlimited number of free visits during the year.

otherwise – if not; if what was said earlier isn't true or correct; in any other case; in any other situation

* I need to wait until my lease expires for this apartment before renting another one. Otherwise, I'll be paying rent for both apartments.

MetroCard – a document that is like a credit card and can be read by a machine that "sees" how much money a rider has left for riding the subway

* There's only 65¢ left on my MetroCard so I need to put some more money on it.

worth – valued at X; with a dollar amount of X

* This artist's paintings are worth thousands of dollars.

discount – a reduction in the price of something; a price that is lower than usual

* If you open a credit card with our store, you'll get a 10% discount on everything that you buy here today.

transfer – to go from one route to another, or one type of transportation to another without paying extra, because one has already paid for the first ride



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* I rode the subway one hour ago. Can I still get a free bus transfer?

to deduct – to take something away from something else; to reduce the amount of money on a card or in an account

* The bank deducted \$17 from my account when I ordered new checks.

turnstile – a small machine that one must walk through while pushing a metal bar, so that the machine can count the number of people walking through it at a time

* It's difficult to walk through a turnstile when you're carrying your suitcases.

line – route; one path taken by subway cars, trains, or buses

* In Washington, D.C., most tourists ride the red line on the metro because it goes to the most interesting parts of the city.

platform – the area where people sit or stand while waiting for a train to arrive

* I told the children that when they're standing on a platform, always stay a few feet away from the train tracks.



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COMPREHENSION QUESTIONS

1. How many rides will Misha get if she buys a \$10.00 MetroCard?
 - a) Twelve.
 - b) Six.
 - c) A single ride.

2. What is a turnstile?
 - a) The man who will take Misha's money for riding the subway.
 - b) The machine that Misha will walk through to ride the subway.
 - c) The program that will give Misha a 20% discount.

WHAT ELSE DOES IT MEAN?

token

The word “token,” in this podcast, means a piece of metal or plastic that looks like a coin and is used to ride subways or buses, or to make a machine work: “Do public telephones accept coins or tokens in your county?” A “token” can also be a symbol of something: “They gave the presenter a book as a token of their gratitude for his speech.” Or, in a wedding ceremony, the people getting married might say: “I give you this ring as a token of my love and devotion.” As an adjective, “token” means not sincere, or done with very little effort, just so that other people will see that one has done something: “The government has made some token laws to protect children, but they aren’t strong enough to make a real difference.”

platform

In this podcast, the word “platform” means the area where people sit or stand while waiting for a subway train to come: “This platform has two exits: one for Washington Street and one for 14th Avenue.” A “platform” is also a raised surface that a person stands on so that he or she can be seen more easily: “The speaker stood on a platform and talked about her political opinions.” Another meaning of “platform” is the opinions of a politician, or the things that a politician promises to do if elected: “Health care is an important part of Senator Cantoni’s political platform.” Finally, “platform shoes” are shoes that have a very thick, tall bottom so that the people wearing them seem taller: “Reese is only five feet tall, so he always wears platform shoes.”



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CULTURE NOTE

Many large U.S. cities have subway systems, but one of the most “famous” (well known) is the subway in New York City. Riding on that subway is the fastest way to move through the biggest city in the United States.

The New York City subway system is the biggest one in the world. It has 26 subway “lines” (routes) and 468 “stations” (underground buildings where the trains stop and people can get on and off). You’ll need to have a map to know where you’re going. There are maps “hung” (put on the walls) in each subway train and in the stations. You can also get free maps at the stations, or you can download and print one from the Internet.

It’s important to pay attention to where the different lines go – and which trains stop at which stations. If you don’t know which train to get on, you can ask for help at the station’s “customer information booth,” or a place where a person will give you information. But sometimes these people are too busy to be very helpful, so it’s a good idea to learn how to read the maps on your own.

Once you know which way to go, stand on the platform to wait for the train. Be careful to stand behind the yellow line that’s painted on the floor, so that you aren’t too close to the trains as they “approach” (come near).

Watch your “personal belongings” (the things that you are carrying). As in many big cities, there are “pickpockets” (thieves who steal money, jewelry, or other valuables people are carrying or wearing) riding the trains, looking for people who aren’t paying attention.

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



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COMPLETE TRANSCRIPT

Welcome to English as a Second Language Podcast number 290: Riding the Subway.

This is English as a Second Language Podcast episode 290. I'm your host, Dr. Jeff McQuillan, coming to you from the Center for Educational Development in beautiful Los Angeles, California.

Remember to visit our website at eslpod.com, and download a Learning Guide for this episode. The Learning Guide contains all of the vocabulary, definitions, sample sentences, additional explanations of the idioms and terms we use in the dialogues, cultural notes, and a complete transcript of this episode.

This episode is called "Riding the Subway." Let's go!

[start of story]

Misha: I'd like to buy a token for the subway.

Clerk: The subway doesn't use tokens anymore.

Misha: Oh? I didn't know that. It's been a few years since I visited New York. How do I pay for the fare?

Clerk: You can buy a ticket for a single ride that expires two hours after it's issued. If you're going to be here all week, I'd suggest getting a seven-day card that gives you unlimited rides. Otherwise, I'd recommend getting a MetroCard.

Misha: I'm only here for two days. How much is each ride?

Clerk: It's \$2.00. If you buy a MetroCard worth more than \$10.00, you get a 20% discount. So with a \$10.00 card, you get six rides instead of five. The card allows you to transfer to buses, too.

Misha: Okay. I'll take a MetroCard worth \$10.00. How is the money deducted from my card?

Clerk: The turnstile automatically deducts the fare each time you go through it. Here's your card.

Misha: Thanks, but I'm not sure which line to take to Queens.



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Clerk: Here's a subway map. Follow the signs to the platform of the train you want.

Misha: Okay, thanks.

[end of story]

Our dialogue begins with Misha asking the subway clerk – the employee, the worker – “I’d like to buy a token for the subway.” A “token” (token) is a small, round piece of metal or plastic that looks like a coin, a small coin. It’s sometimes used on subways and buses instead of coins. So, you buy these little tokens and use them to get on the bus or get on the subway. This was a very common way of doing things in the U.S. transportation system in some cities, but more recently it has not been as popular. The word “token” has a couple of other meanings; take a look at the Learning Guide for some additional explanations of those.

Well, Misha wants to buy a token for the subway. The “subway,” sometimes called the “metro” or the “underground transportation,” it’s when you have trains that move, usually, underground. “Sub” is a prefix that generally means under something, so the “subway” is an underground railroad a the city that takes people from one point to the other. In London, they call it the “Tube.”

The person working for the New York subway says, “The subway doesn’t use tokens anymore.” Misha says, “Oh? I didn’t know that. It’s been a few years since I visited New York. How do I pay for the fare?” she asks. The “fare” (fare) is the price of the ticket or the price of a ride. You can have airfare, bus fare, or in this case, the fare for the subway. You could also have a taxi fare; it’s the money that you pay for that kind of transportation.

The clerk tells Misha that she “can buy a ticket for a single ride” – for one ride – “that expires two hours after it’s issued.” When we say something “expires,” we mean it ends – it is no longer something you can use; it is no longer valid. “To issue,” as a verb” means to have an official document that is given to a person. Usually we talk about, for example, government documents; in this case, it’s just the ticket that is “issued,” that is given to the person who is buying it. We can also use that expression – that verb – for driver’s license: “Where was your driver’s license issued,” or, “Where was your passport issued” – where was it given to you, or from what state or country was it given to you?

The clerks says that “If you’re going to be here all week, I’d suggest getting a 7-day card that gives you unlimited rides.” “Unlimited” means without or no limits,



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meaning there's no maximum number of rides you can take. If you want to take ten, if you want to take a hundred rides, it's okay, it's "unlimited."

The clerk says, "Otherwise, I'd recommend getting a MetroCard." "Otherwise" here means "if not," if what was said earlier was not true, then you should do this other thing. It's often used at the beginning of a sentence to mean "in any other case," or, "in any other situation," or simply, "if not."

So, the clerk says, "Otherwise, I'd recommend getting a MetroCard." A "MetroCard" is used in the New York City subway system. It's like a credit card; it's a ticket that goes through the machine, the machine then "deducts," or takes away, from the value of the card so you can buy it and use it rather than getting a different ticket every ride, you just use this card like a credit card. Different cities call them different things; in New York it's called, I believe, a "MetroCard," "metro" for "metropolitan," the city.

Misha says, "I'm only here for two days. How much is each ride?" – how much is one ride. The clerk says, "It's \$2.00. If you buy a MetroCard worth more than \$10.00, you get a 20% discount." "Worth" (worth) means "valued at," or the amount of money that it represents. Well, if the MetroCard is worth more than \$10.00, you get a 20% "discount," or reduction in the price of something.

When I was in London, I used the metro – the subway – the "Tube," they call it – and a single ride, I believe, was 4£ (four pounds), which would be almost \$8.00. Fortunately, they had a discount card if you were going to be there for a week, so I did not have to pay \$8.00 each time I used the subway. In cities like London and New York, it is really impossible to move around easily if you don't use the subway, so it's a very convenient thing.

The clerk says that "you get six rides instead of five" if you buy a MetroCard worth more than \$10.00. "The card allows you to transfer to buses, too." "To transfer" means to go from one route to another or one type of transportation to another without paying anything extra. So, you get on bus "A", you are on it for ten minutes, you get off and you get on another bus that goes in a slightly different direction, that would be a "transfer," and in most cities in the U.S., you can transfer from one bus or one subway to another without paying extra, at least for a certain amount of time – two hours, for example.

Misha says, "Okay. I'll take a MetroCard worth \$10.00. How is the money deducted from my card?" "To deduct" means to take something away from something else; in this case, to reduce the amount of money on the card or that the card is worth.



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The clerk says that “The turnstile automatically deducts the fare each time you go through it.” The “turnstile” (turnstile) is a small machine that you have to walk through. Usually there's a metal bar, and you have to put a ticket in in order to walk through the little machine, the “turnstile.” You'll see these in big stadiums; you'll see them in subway systems.

Finally, Misha asks the clerk about “which line to take to Queens.” “Queens” is a section of New York City. “Which line” means route – which train. A “line” could also be for buses or trains, but here it means which number of subway or which letter of the subway – which train should I take. Some cities have numbers for each of the lines, others have names. In London, they have names for the lines; in New York City, they have letters and numbers.

The clerk gives her a subway map, and tells her to “Follow the signs to the platform of the train you want.” The “platform” (platform) is an area where you stand while you are waiting for a train to arrive. And that's one meaning of “platform.” There are a few other meanings; take a look at the Learning Guide today for some additional definitions.

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

[start of story]

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Misha: Thanks, but I'm not sure which line to take to Queens.

Clerk: Here's a subway map. Follow the signs to the platform of the train you want.

Misha: Okay, thanks.

[end of story]

The script for this podcast was written by Dr. Lucy Tse.

From Los Angeles, California, I'm Jeff McQuillan. Thanks for listening. We'll see you next time on ESL Podcast.

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