



ESL Podcast 427 – Planning a Protest

GLOSSARY

protest – something that a person or a group of people do to show that they think something is wrong or unfair

* The students want to have a protest against the war.

hold on – an expression used to mean “wait a minute,” or to ask someone to slow down or stop for a short period of time

* Hold on! Could you please explain what you just said a little more before you continue?

to voice (something) – to express something through speaking; to let other people know what one thinks or what one’s opinion is about something

* If we don’t voice our opinion, no one will know what we think about the issue.

to oppose (something) – to be against something; to think that something is wrong or a bad idea and should be stopped or changed

* The senator is opposed to the new law and plans to vote against it.

rally – a large meeting with many people in a public place, usually so that those people can show their support or opposition to a law or a political idea

* There’s a big rally downtown today where hundreds of people have gathered to protest against the new immigration laws.

to take to the streets – to do something in public, usually to express an opinion; to do something that is very visible so that other people can see it, often a gathering or a protest

* The workers don’t like the new pay cuts and are taking to the streets to show the management how they feel.

to coordinate (something) – to organize something, especially an event that involves many people; to do all the preparation so that something else will happen

* Olivia’s parents coordinated most of the wedding, making the preparations for the flowers, food, musicians, and more.

to show up – to attend an event; to come to a place where one is expected

* How many people showed up at the lecture last night?



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to march – to walk down a street as part of a large, organized group, usually to send a message to other people

* Hundreds of women marched through the streets after dark in a “Take Back the Night” protest after there were a few nighttime attacks against women.

to hold up a sign – to use one’s arm to hold onto a stick attached to a large piece of thick paper with a message on it so that other people can read it, especially as part of a protest

* The little girl held up a sign that said, “Don’t fire our teachers!”

to pull it all off – to be able to do something that is difficult; to successfully complete something that is difficult

* Nobody thought that Ilia would be able to work, study, and raise her children at the same time, but somehow she pulled it all off.

Don’t get me wrong – a phrase used to show that one doesn’t want what he or she is going to say next to be misunderstood

* Don’t get me wrong. I like spending time with friends as much as anyone else, but it’s also nice to have some time alone.

in favor of – in support of; wanting something to happen or wanting to do something

* Would you be in favor of paying higher taxes so that the library can buy more books?

half-assed – mediocre; not well done; only partially done

* Steve did a half-assed job of washing the car, so his father made him wash it again.

media coverage – press coverage; news stories in newspapers, magazines, television, and the radio about a particular person or event

* This newspaper has a lot of media coverage of local events, but not very much about things that happen internationally.

counter protest – a protest that goes against another group’s protest; a protest where a group of people show that they disagree with another group that is already protesting

* The people who protested against scientists who were doing experiments on animals were surprised when the scientists had a counter protest of their own.



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to take (something) lying down – to accept something bad that happens without fighting against it or without showing that one disagrees with it
* The government wants to increase our taxes again, but we won't take it lying down!

let's get down to business – a phrase used to show that one is ready to start working on something important; a phrase used to show that one does not want to delay something any longer
* We have a lot of topics to cover in today's meeting, so let's get down to business.

COMPREHENSION QUESTIONS

1. Which of these is a type of protest?
 - a) A rally.
 - b) Media coverage.
 - c) A half-assed job.
2. What does Pedro mean when he says, "The other side isn't going to take things lying down"?
 - a) The other side will be standing up.
 - b) The other side will fight against the protest.
 - c) The other side will lay down on its counter protest.

WHAT ELSE DOES IT MEAN?

to voice

The verb "to voice (something)," in this podcast, means to express something through speaking, letting other people know what one thinks or what one's opinion is about something: "Have you voiced your concerns about the new employee to your manager?" The phrase "to give voice to (something)" means to share one's feelings or thoughts about something: "He uses poetry to give voice to his ideas and his imagination." The phrase "to speak with one voice" means



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for a group of people to all share the same opinion about something: “If we want people to take us seriously, we have to speak with one voice.” Finally, an “inner voice” is someone’s subconscious, or the thoughts and feelings that a person has about whether doing something is right or wrong: “If my inner voice is telling me not to do something, I probably won’t do it.”

rally

In this podcast, the word “rally” means a large meeting with many people in a public place, usually so that those people can show their support for or opposition to a law or a political idea: “Are you going to participate in the school rally?” A “pep rally” is an event at a high school where students try to get each other excited about their school and its teams, especially before a game: “At 2:30 today there will be a pep rally to support the high school’s volleyball team.” The phrase “to rally around (someone or something)” means to support someone or something, especially at a difficult time: “Her co-workers rallied around her when her supervisor said that she was doing a poor job.” Finally, a “rallying cry” is a phrase that people often repeat to show their support for an idea: “The phrase ‘Remember 9/11’ has become a rallying cry for many Americans.”

CULTURE NOTE

In the United States, “freedom of speech” lets Americans say almost anything they want to without needing to “fear” (be scared of) the government. Many Americans use this freedom of speech to protest things that they don’t like. Rallies are common, especially around “city hall” (the building where city government works), near “federal buildings” (buildings where the national government works), and on university “campuses” (the areas around university buildings). But there are many other ways for Americans to protest.

Often Americans write “protest songs,” which are songs about an important issue that Americans are opposed to. Some of these songs become very popular and are played on the radio for years, even after the things that they are written about are no longer important issues.

A “teach-in” is a type of “non-violent” (where no one is hurt or killed) protest where universities provide a “forum” (a place to share ideas) for people to discuss an important issue, sharing the reasons why they support or oppose something.



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A “sit-in” is another type of non-violent protest where people who are opposed to something sit down in a particular area, usually a government office or a business, and “refuse” (won’t do something) to leave until something is changed. For example, people might have a sit-in in the middle of a street in a poor neighborhood to show the need for more “affordable housing” (less expensive housing that people have enough money to pay for).

Sometimes protesters will have a “hunger strike” where they refuse to eat (or sometimes drink) until something is changed. They usually get a lot of media coverage and in that way they can bring attention to their “cause” (issue, or the thing that they are opposing).

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



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COMPLETE TRANSCRIPT

Welcome to English as a Second Language Podcast number 427: Planning a Protest.

This is English as a Second Language Podcast number 427. I'm your host, Dr. Jeff McQuillan, coming to you from the Center for Educational Development in beautiful Los Angeles, California.

Visit our website at eslpod.com. You can download a Learning Guide for this episode, an 8 to 10 page guide that will help you improve your English even faster. You can also take look at our ESL Podcast Store, which has some additional courses in business and daily English you may be interested in.

Our topic today is "Planning a Protest," when you want to tell people that you are against something in public. This is a dialogue between Becky and Pedro, and we'll listen to them discuss some common problems – some common issues when you are having a protest. Let's get started.

[start of dialogue]

Becky: I want to thank all of you for coming today. I think we all agree that we need to organize a protest...

Pedro: Hold on, Becky. We all want to voice our opinion that we oppose what is going on here, but I'm not sure a protest is the answer.

Becky: With all due respect, Pedro, I think a rally is the best way to do that.

Pedro: That may be, but I think we need to consider a few things first. Taking to the streets means coordinating a lot of people. That means getting them to show up, to march, and to hold up signs. I'm not sure we have enough time to pull it all off.

Becky: Don't get me wrong. I'm not in favor of doing anything half-assed. If we decide to protest, we want to do it right so that we get a lot of media coverage. I'm confident that we have enough people and time to get it all done.

Pedro: Okay, but another thing we should be ready for is a counter protest. The other side isn't going to take things lying down.



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Becky: You're right, and we'll take that into consideration. Is there any more discussion before we start on the planning? No? Okay, let's get down to business.

[end of dialogue]

Our episode begins with Becky saying, "I want to thank all of you for coming today." Becky is obviously talking to a group of people. She says, "I think we all agree that we need to organize a protest," something that you do to show other people you think a situation is wrong or unfair. Pedro says, "Hold on, Becky." This expression, "hold on," means wait a minute, or slow down, or stop for a certain amount of time. We use it when we want someone to stop what they are saying or to let you have a chance to say something. It's an informal expression, for the most part.

"Hold on, Becky," Pedro says, "We all want to voice our opinion that we oppose what is going on here, but I'm not sure a protest is the answer." Pedro says they all want to voice their opinion. To "voice" something means to express your opinions (your ideas) by speaking, letting other people know what you think. "Voice" has a couple of different meanings in English; take a look at our Learning Guide for some additional explanations.

Pedro says they want to voice their opinion that they "oppose," or are against, what is going on here, but he's not sure a protest is the answer, meaning is the right thing to do for this situation. Becky says, "With all due respect, Pedro." That expression, "with all due respect," means I don't want to offend you – I don't want to make you angry, but I have to disagree with you. Becky says, "With all due respect, Pedro, I think a rally is the best way to do that" – the best way to show people we oppose this situation. A "rally" is a large meeting with many people in a public place, usually so they can show their support or opposition to something or someone. For example, a politician may visit a city and have a rally, where thousands of people come, and applaud, and listen to the politician speak.

Pedro says, "That may be (meaning you might be correct that a rally is the best way to do this), but I think we need to consider a few things first. Taking to the streets means coordinating a lot of people," Pedro says. The expression "to take to the streets" means to do something in public, usually to express an opinion, to do something so that everyone else can see it, usually a rally or a protest or sometimes a "march," which is when people walk down the street carrying signs to protest something.



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Pedro says the action of taking it to the streets means “coordinating,” or organizing, a lot of people. “That means getting them to show up, to march, and to hold up signs.” To “show up,” is a two-word phrasal verb meaning to attend an event, to come to a place where you are expected to be. So if you are supposed to meet your friend at the movies and you never go, we would say you didn’t show up. You may not have your friend much longer, either! Pedro says that you need to get people to show up, to march (to walk with these signs in the street), and to hold up signs. To “hold up” a sign means to use your arms to put a sign, usually a large piece of paper that has a message on it about what you are protesting about. Often these signs will have a piece of wood (a wooden stick) that we use to hold the sign up so that you can get it higher into the air. Pedro says, “I’m not sure we have enough time to pull it all off.” To “pull (something) off” means to be able to do something that is very difficult, to successfully complete something that is difficult.

Becky says to Pedro, “Don’t get me wrong.” This is a phrase used to show that you don’t want what you are about to say (what you are going to tell someone) to be misinterpreted or misunderstood. Usually this means you’re going to say something that the other person will disagree with. It’s similar to the expression Becky used earlier: “with all due respect.” Becky says, “Don’t get me wrong. I’m not in favor of doing anything half-assed.” To be “in favor of” something means to be in support of something, wanting something to happen. The expression “half-assed” is a very informal expression, something that is a little bit vulgar. The word “ass” refers to what you sit on in your chair, but it’s not a nice word – not a word you would want your children to use. The expression “half-assed” means not done very well, mediocre, only done partially. Someone who doesn’t do everything they’re supposed to do, we might describe that as “half-assed.” But again, it’s a little bit vulgar, not something you would want to say to your boss – if you wanted to keep your job!

Becky says, “If we decide to protest, we want to do it right (we want to do it correctly) so that we get a lot of media coverage.” “Media” refers to newspapers, television stations, radio stations, magazines, Internet websites; all of these are part of the media. “Coverage” is when they print or air or publish something related to your story. So, press coverage or media coverage is when the media publish a story about your event.

Becky said, “I’m confident that we have enough people and time to get it all done” – to get everything accomplished. Pedro says, “Okay, but another thing we should be ready for is a counter protest.” A “counter protest” is when one



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group is protesting for something, and then there's another group in the same place that is protesting against something, that same thing. So the two protest groups are facing each other. Sometimes this is a problem, especially if they start fighting – physically fighting. Pedro says, "The other side (the people who disagree with them) isn't going to take things lying down." To "take (something) lying down" means to accept something bad that happens without fighting it, without disagreeing with it; to be "passive," we might say.

Becky says, "You're right, and we'll take that into consideration (we'll think about that). Is there any more discussion before we start on the planning?" she says to the group. "Okay, then let's get down to business." The phrase "let's get down to business" is used to show that you are ready to start working on something important, that you don't want to wait any longer; you want to get started on what you are working on: "let's get down to business."

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

[start of dialogue]

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[end of dialogue]

The script for this episode was written by someone who knows how to get down to business, Dr. Lucy Tse.

From Los Angeles, California, I'm Jeff McQuillan. Thank you for listening. Come back and listen to us next time on ESL Podcast.

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