



**ESL Podcast 463 – Washing the Car**

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**GLOSSARY**

**to hold up** – to use one’s arms and hands so that something is in the air, not touching a surface, usually so that other people can see it

\* Sara held up her child in the air so that her husband could take a good photo.

**fundraising** – an event where people try to make money for an organization or program

\* The library has had many fundraising events in the past year: a dance, a cookie sale, and a book sale.

**car wash** – a place or event where people pay to have their cars and trucks cleaned by other people or machines

\* We can save money by washing our own car instead of going to a car wash.

**wax** – a layer of a solid, fatty oil that is rubbed over a car to make it shine and to protect it from the rain

\* Our car would look a lot better with some wax on it.

**enthusiasm** – eagerness, excitement, interest, and enjoyment; a feeling of wanting to do something

\* They gave the job to her because she showed a lot of enthusiasm in the interview.

**hose** – a long tube made of plastic that water moves through, usually used to water plants in a garden or to fight a fire

\* On hot summer days, the children like to play outside with water from the hose.

**bucket** – a large container with a handle and without a lid, used to store or carry something

\* They picked enough apples to fill three large buckets.

**soapy** – with a lot of soap or detergent on something

\* I was still soapy when we ran out of hot water, so I had to rinse off with cold water!

**sponge** – a soft, rectangular piece of thick, soft material with many holes in it that absorbs water, used to wash things

\* What kind of sponge do you want me to use on this dirty pan?

**dirt** – anything that makes something unclean, like small pieces of soil or dust

\* Your shirt is covered with dirt! Let me wash it for you.



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**to miss a spot** – to accidentally not cover the entire area of something, so that one needs to go back and re-cover that small area

\* We didn't sweep the floor very well. Look, we missed a spot here.

**to rinse** – to pour water over something to remove soap or something else from it

\* Shane washed the dishes while Marleah rinsed and dried them.

**towel** – a large piece of thick, soft fabric that absorbs water, used to dry things

\* Which towel should I use to dry the dog after its bath?

**to vacuum** – to use a large machine that cleans carpets by picking up dirt and air with suction

\* Could you please vacuum the living room before our guests arrive?

**interior** – inside; on the inside

\* What would happen if I used interior paint on our home's exterior?

**spotless** – perfectly clean, without any dirt at all

\* Margot's house is always spotless, even though she has three kids. She must spend hours cleaning each day.

**to polish** – to rub something until it shines and reflects the light

\* How often do you polish your silverware?

**to inspect** – to look at something very carefully, usually looking for mistakes or problems

\* Each new radio is inspected carefully before it leaves the factory.



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**COMPREHENSION QUESTIONS**

1. Which activity would you need water for?
  - a) Rinsing.
  - b) Vacuuming.
  - c) Polishing.
  
2. What did the teenagers do best?
  - a) Wash the car.
  - b) Vacuum the interior.
  - c) Wash the windows.

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**WHAT ELSE DOES IT MEAN?**

**to hold up**

The phrase “to hold up,” in this podcast, means to use one’s arms and hands so that something is in the air: “The tour guide held up a red flag so that everyone in the large group could see her and follow her.” The phrase “to hold up a bank” means to rob a bank, or to demand that bank employees give one money: “This bank has been held up five times in the past two years.” The phrase “to hold down (something)” means to not let something increase: “What can the government do to hold down the price of food?” Finally, the phrase “to hold down a job” means to be able to keep a job for a period of time: “He has never been able to hold down a job for more than two weeks.”

**to polish**

In this podcast, the verb “to polish” means to rub something until it shines and reflects the light: “When was the last time you polished your shoes?” The verb “to polish” also means to refine, or to change something a little bit to make it even better: “She polished her speech by practicing in front of a mirror.” The phrase “to polish up (something)” means to try to learn to do something better: “He’s polishing up his violin-playing skills by practicing for one hour each day.” Or, “What are you doing to polish up your English?” Finally, the phrase “to polish (something) off” means to finish some food very quickly: “Who polished off the rest of my pizza while I was in the other room?”



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**CULTURE NOTE**

When people in the United States want to wash their car, they have many choices. They can use hoses and buckets in their “driveway” (the paved area between the street and a house or garage), but many Americans would “rather” (prefer to) pay someone else to do it.

The most basic type of car wash is the “self-serve car wash”. The car is driven to an area where there are many “coin-operated machines” (machines that do something when one puts round, metal pieces of money into them). One machine has a hose that will “produce” (make) hot or cold water, with or without soap, depending on which “buttons” (small things that are pushed to make a machine do different things) are pushed. Another machine is attached to a vacuum to clean a car’s interior. People often use self-serve car washes if they don’t have an area where they live to wash their car or it is inconvenient to do so there.

Automatic car washes are more popular because they are easier. The driver simply drives through the car wash, which is a small building. Hoses “spray” (send liquid into the air) water and soap onto the car. Then large “roller brushes” (long, round tubes with pieces of cloth that move quickly in a circle) rub the car until it is clean. The car gets rinsed and then hot air is used to dry it. Driving through the car wash takes only a minute or two and it usually works pretty well, unless the car is very dirty.

When people want their cars to be really clean, they pay more for a hand wash, where a person or a group of people wash the car “by hand” (manually, without a machine). A hand wash usually comes with a wax, too. A hand wash takes longer, but it is the best way to get a car really clean.

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



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**COMPLETE TRANSCRIPT**

Welcome to English as a Second Language Podcast number 463: Washing the Car.

This is English as a Second Language Podcast episode 463. I'm your host, Dr. Jeff McQuillan, coming to you from the Center for Educational Development in beautiful Los Angeles, California.

Our website is [eslpod.com](http://eslpod.com). You probably know that, you probably also know you can download a Learning Guide for this episode on our website to help you improve your English even faster.

This episode is called "Washing the Car." It's a story about what happened when I went to get my car washed, and of course, it will use a lot of vocabulary that is related to washing your car. Let's get started.

[start of story]

I was driving down the road when I saw a group of teenagers holding up signs for a fundraising car wash for their school. My car was very dirty, so I pulled over and paid for a car wash and a wax.

I think that the students had more enthusiasm than car washing skills. Yes, they had hoses, buckets filled with soapy water, and sponges, but they seemed more interested in getting each other wet than in getting the dirt off the car. I kept wanting to jump up and say, "Hey, you missed a spot!" but I didn't.

After washing the car, they rinsed it and dried it with towels. They also vacuumed the interior and washed the windows. At least the windows were spotless. Finally, they waxed and polished the car, and were finished.

I went over to inspect the washed car. All I can say is I'm glad this was a fundraiser to support their school. If these students do as well in their classes as they did on my car, they need all the education they can get!

[end of story]

This is an interesting story for me because I actually worked at a car wash when I was 15 years old; it was my very first paying job. I worked washing cars and drying them with towels. It was maybe one of the worst jobs I've ever had, but



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when you're 15 and want some money during the summertime that's the kind of job that you can get.

Our story begins by me saying that I was driving down the road when I saw a group of teenagers holding up signs for a fundraising car wash for their school. To "hold up" means to put your arms and hands in the air and you are holding something so that people can see it, usually. "Hold up" actually has a couple of different meanings in English, so take a look at that Learning Guide I talked about for some additional explanations.

A "fundraising event" is when people try to make money for an organization or a program – their school, perhaps, their religious or charitable organization – you have a fundraiser, a fundraising event. In this case, the fundraising event is a car wash. This is actually quite common in the U.S. during the spring and summer, or here in California, just about any time of the year because it is warm throughout the year. A group of students stands at the corner where they are watching cars and try to get people to come in and get their car washed. They are usually trying to raise money for some school organization that they are part of.

I say in the story that my car was very dirty – it's always dirty! So I pulled over and paid for a car wash and a wax. A "car wash" is either the place where people wash cars or it's, in this case, the event where people pay to have their cars washed by other people or by a machine. I say I also paid for a wax (wax). "Wax" is a layer of a type of oil that is put on your car so that it shines and that it is protected from the sun. Many people wax their car after they wash it; they put this wax – this material on the car.

I say that I think that the students had more enthusiasm than car washing skills. "Enthusiasm" means excitement, interest, a feeling of wanting to do something. They were very "enthusiastic" to use the adjective, but they weren't necessarily very good at washing cars.

"Yes," I say, "they had hoses, buckets filled with soapy water, and sponges, but they seemed more interested in getting each other wet than in getting the dirt off the car." They had "hoses," which are long tubes made of plastic that water moves through. You use a hose, for example, perhaps to put water on your plants or your garden. A firefighter uses a hose to put water on a burning house. A "bucket" is a large container with a handle on it that is used to store something; it can be used to move water from one place to another. In this case, the buckets were filled with "soapy water," that is, water with a lot of soap or cleaner in it. "Sponges" are soft pieces of thick material, with many holes in them that



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absorb the water. They are used for taking the water and using it to make something clean. A sponge “absorbs” water, we say; it sort of sucks up the water into it.

These students had hoses, buckets, and sponges, the things that you would use to wash a car, but they seemed more interested in getting each other wet than in getting the dirt off the car. That is, they were more interested in having fun by getting each other wet with the water than they were in cleaning the car – getting the dirt, anything that is unclean, small pieces of soil or dust for example, off of the car.

I say that I kept wanting to jump up and say, “Hey, you missed a spot!” but I didn’t. “I kept wanting to,” meaning I was wanting to for a long time. I wanted to stand up and say, “Hey, you missed a spot!” A “spot” is a small area of something. When we say “you missed a spot,” we mean that when you were cleaning something you didn’t get everything clean, there are certain small parts that are not clean. This can happen if you are washing your car. The car is big; you may not see all of the dirt.

I say that after washing the car, the students rinsed it and dried it with towels. To “rinse” (rinse) means to pour water over something in order to get rid of the soap. So when you wash a car by hand – by yourself, you take the sponge, you put it in the soapy water, you then clean the car with the soapy sponge, and when you’re done you take the hose and you put water on the car to remove the soap and the dirt. Removing soap and dirt from the car with water is called “rinsing.” After you rinse the car then you dry it – you make it dry with “towels,” large, soft pieces of fabric that are used to get water off of something.

The teenagers, I say, also vacuumed the interior and washed the windows. To “vacuum” means to use a large machine that cleans carpets by picking up dirt with strong air – suction. The air pulls the dirt into the machine. This is a “vacuum,” as a noun, and the verb is “to vacuum.”

So they vacuumed (past tense) the “interior,” the inside of the car. I say that at least the windows were spotless, meaning they didn’t do a great job, but at least the one thing they did right was the windows, because they were “spotless,” meaning they were perfectly clean – no dirt at all.

Finally, they waxed and polished the car, and were finished. To “polish” (polish) means to rub something until it shines, until it reflects light. Typically when you put wax on a car, you make the car shiny by taking a towel and rubbing and moving the towel over the car to make it shiny – to make it reflect light. “Polish”



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has a couple of different meanings in English; take a look at our Learning Guide for some additional explanations. Notice, also, this word is spelled the same as “Polish.” “Polish” refers to someone from the country of Poland. Even though it has the same spelling, it has a different pronunciation when used as a verb: “polish.”

I end of the story by saying, “I went over to inspect the washed car.” To “inspect” means to look at something very carefully, usually looking for mistakes or problems. “All I can say is I’m glad this was a fundraiser to support their school. If these students do as well in their classes as they did on my car, they need all the education they can get!” meaning they didn’t do very good job on my car, I hope they do a lot better in school than they did washing cars.

Now let’s listen to the story, this time at a normal speed.

[start of story]

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I went over to inspect the washed car. All I can say is I’m glad this was a fundraiser to support their school. If these students do as well in their classes as they did on my car, they need all the education they can get!

[end of story]

The script for this episode was written by someone full of enthusiasm, Dr. Lucy Tse. Thank you Lucy.

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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