



www.eslpod.com

---

## **GLOSSARY**

**back seat** – the rear (second row) seats in a car, where passengers (not the driver) sit

\* On the long drive across the country, they took turns driving. While one person drove, the other slept in the back seat.

**cup holder** – a round hole on the inside of a car for holding cups or cans of soda

\* He tried to put his can of soda in the cup holder while he was driving and ended up spilling it all over the floor.

**ignition** – a small opening near a steering wheel into which one puts a key to start the car

\* They accidentally locked their car while the keys were still in the ignition!

**gas pedal** – a piece of metal that a driver pushes with his or her foot to give the car more gas and to make it go faster

\* She pushed the gas pedal to the floor because she was in a big hurry.

**rearview mirror** – a rectangular mirror near the driver's head that allows the driver to see behind the car

\* I stopped my car when I saw the police car in my rearview mirror.

**side mirror** – a small mirror outside the car near the front windows that allows the driver to see the side of the car and behind the car

\* Grandma drove too close to the building and hit her side mirror against the wall.

**drive-time traffic report** – a radio announcement during rush hour (times of heavy traffic) that tells drivers where there are accidents and slow traffic

\* According to the drive-time traffic report, there were three accidents on the freeway, so we drove home using Main Street instead.

**transmission** – the system that passes energy from the car's engine to its wheels

\* I couldn't believe it when the mechanic said that I needed to replace my car's transmission and that it would cost more than \$2,000!

**out of park** – to take the car out of an unmoving position into a moving position

\* I took the transmission out of park, but nothing happened because there wasn't any gas in the car.



www.eslpod.com

---

**ESL Podcast 6 - The Commute to Work**

**reverse** – backward motion; going back

\* Driving in reverse is always more difficult than driving forward.

**driveway** – a short length of road leading from the main road to the entrance or garage of a house or office building

\* When she gets home from work everyday, she walks down the driveway to pick up the mail from her mailbox.

**drive** – forward motion; going forward

\* He put the car into drive and started to leave, but then he stopped because he remembered that he had left some important papers at home.

**stick shift** – manual transmission; a car in which the driver uses a lever to put the car in gears 1 through 5 or in reverse

\* Driving a stick shift requires a lot of concentration for me because I'm always worried that I'll shift into reverse by accident.

**automatic transmission** – a car in which gears 1 through 5 change automatically without the driver needing to do anything

\* Many people prefer driving automatic transmissions because it leaves them with one hand available to change radio stations or to hold a cell phone.

**onramp** – a short road for cars to speed up and enter a highway or freeway

\* The first onramp was closed due to an accident so we had to drive to the next onramp to get on the freeway.

**exit** – a short road for cars to leave a highway or freeway and connect to other roads

\* Do you know which exit we need to take to get to the beach?

**parking garage** – a large building with many floors for cars to park

\* This parking garage only charges \$5 for three hours, so let's park here.

**to swipe** – to quickly pass a card through a machine that reads it

\* I tried to swipe my credit card several times before realizing that it was broken.

**key card** – a plastic card that tells a machine whether a person has permission to enter a building

\* When he lost his key card, he had to talk to security for two hours before they would let him into the building.



www.eslpod.com

---

English as a Second Language Podcast

## ESL Podcast 6 - The Commute to Work

### CULTURAL NOTE

#### High School Teachers

High school teachers help prepare students for life after “graduation” (completion of their degree). They teach “academic” (related to reading, math, science and other traditional school subjects) lessons and various skills that students will need to attend college and to enter the “job market” (group of people available and looking for work).

High school teachers generally teach students from the ninth through twelfth (9-12) grades to students between 13 and 19 years of age. They usually teach one or two of the subjects or classes a student has throughout the day. For example, they may teach U.S. government and history.

Most high school teachers work in either public or private schools. All states require teachers in public schools to be licensed, which is frequently referred to as a “certification.” Those who teach in private schools are not required to be licensed.

Requirements for certification vary by state. All states require public high school teachers to have at least a bachelor’s degree. Most states require high school teachers to have “majored in” (had as the focus of their university study) a content area, such as chemistry, English, or history. While majoring in a content area, future teachers typically also “enroll in” (register for) a teacher preparation program and take classes in education while in college.



www.eslpod.com

---

English as a Second Language Podcast

## ESL Podcast 6 - The Commute to Work

### COMPLETE TRANSCRIPT

Welcome to English as a Second Language Podcast number 6: The Commute to Work

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

In this episode, the fifth of our 10-part special series on daily English, I'll talk about commuting or traveling to work.

Let's get started!

[Start of story]

I open my car door and throw my briefcase in the back seat, and get comfortable for my drive. I put my coffee mug into the cup holder, put the keys in the ignition, find the gas pedal, and start the car. My wife drove the car last night, so I have to re-adjust the rear view mirror and the side mirrors. I turn on the radio to listen to the drive time traffic report. I take the transmission out of park and into reverse, back out into the driveway into the street, close the garage door, and put the car into drive. I used to drive a stick shift, but as I get older, I like my automatic transmission more and more.

I usually take the freeway to the office, so I get on the onramp for the freeway and drive to where I have to get off. My office is only a few miles from the exit. I pull into the parking garage, swiping my key card to get in. I park, grab my briefcase and coffee, and head toward the elevator. And that only took 40 minutes!

[End of story]

Part five is called "The Commute to Work." "Commute" (commute) can be both a noun and a verb. It means to go from your house to your work. Usually, if you live a long distance from your work, you would say, "I have a long commute." Or, if you live close to work, you would have a short commute. If it's a very long commute with lots of traffic, you might say, "I have a terrible commute" - a very bad commute.



www.eslpod.com

**ESL Podcast 6 - The Commute to Work**

---

The story begins by me saying that “I open my car door and throw my briefcase in the back seat.” So, I open my “front door” - the door that we would call the driver's side, where the driver gets in, and in an American car, that is on the left side. Cars in Britain are on the right side, is the driver's side. So, I get into the left side in the front door. If you have a car that has a back seat, you could have a two-door car or a four-door car. “Four doors” means that you have separate doors for the back seat.

The “seat” (seat) is what you sit in. So, the back seat is where people can sit behind you - behind the driver and behind the person next to the driver. We call the seats the passenger seats and the driver's seat. The right side of the car is usually called the passenger side of the car.

I “get comfortable for my drive” - for my commute - notice we use drive there as a noun; it can be a verb and a noun. “I put my coffee mug into the cup holder.” A “mug” (mug) is just a big cup. We talk about coffee mugs, they're big cups that you put your coffee into. In many cars, there is a special place for a cup or a bottle, and that's called a “cup holder” (holder). It holds the cup so you can have your coffee in your car.

I “put the keys in the ignition.” The “keys” are, of course, what starts your car. It's the piece of metal that you open your car door with - you unlock it. Well, you also start the car with your keys, and you put them into something called the “ignition.” And, the “ignition” (ignition) is the part of the car that starts the engine. Usually it makes a certain sound - a certain noise, and once the engine starts, then you don't have to put the key forward, you just leave the key there, you take your hand off of it. The word ignition comes from the verb “to ignite” (ignite) which means to start a fire - to start something burning, and of course, a car burns gasoline, that's what the engine does in order to make the car move.

After I put the keys into the ignition, I “find the gas pedal.” A “pedal” (pedal) is something you use to control with your feet usually the speed of something. So the gas pedal is the pedal that you press down to go faster, it gives the engine more gas. That word, pedal, can also be used as a verb. If you are on a bicycle, in order to make the bicycle move, you have to pedal because the things that your feet are on, on a bike, or a bicycle, are called pedals. Well, you don't pedal your car, but you do have a gas pedal.

I “start the car,” and because “My wife drove the car last night, I have to re-adjust the rear view mirror.” “To re-adjust” means to adjust again. That prefix (re) means again in English, usually. “To adjust means” to-to move them so that I



www.eslpod.com

---

**ESL Podcast 6 - The Commute to Work**

can see properly - I can see into the mirror. There are two types of mirrors on your car: there's the "rear (rear) view (view) mirror" and that is in the front of the car, on the front window of the car. The front window of your car is called your "windshield" (windshield) – the windshield. So, on your windshield, on the top in the middle, is your rear view mirror, and that allows you to see cars behind you. There are also mirrors on the side of the car, usually on both sides, and those are called the side mirrors.

"I turn on the radio to listen to the drive time traffic report." "Drive time" is the time of day when most people are either going to work or coming back from work. So, in the morning the drive time in Los Angeles, for example, is 7:30 to 9:30. Most people are going to work during those hours. In other cities it could be different; in some cities, it's earlier than that. There's also a drive time at the end of the day, between 5:00 and 7:00 here in Los Angeles, that's when people are coming home from work.

So, the drive time traffic report is an announcement on the radio telling you if there are any accidents on the roads, if there is any "construction" - that is the government is fixing the road and it may be closed. And, it tells you if you are going to take a long time or not a long time. So, traffic reports tell you how fast the cars are moving on different, usually, freeways in American cities.

"I take the transmission out of park and into reverse." The "transmission" (transmission) is the part of the car that determines how fast you go. It also determines if you go forward or backwards - if you're going straight ahead or behind; that's the transmission. Sometimes it's called a "transmission box" (box) and inside of that box there are little wheels called "gears" (gears) and depending on the gear you are in, we would say, depending on the gear you are using, you will either go very fast or not very fast, or you will go in "reverse" (reverse). To go into reverse means to go backwards - the car moves backwards.

Well, before I go anywhere, I have to "take the transmission out of park," (park). "Park" is when the car is not going forward or going backwards. We say you put the transmission into park, and you take it out of park. And when you take it out of park, you either go forward or backwards. Well, here I'm going in reverse, and I "back out into the driveway." "To back out" means to go backwards. Usually that verb, to back out, is used when you are talking about a car or a truck that is leaving a garage, and it's going in reverse - you back out of the garage. "I back out into the driveway" onto the street, or "into the street." The "driveway" (driveway) is what connects the garage to the street. It's the space that is in between your street and where your car is parked, your garage.



www.eslpod.com

---

English as a Second Language Podcast

## ESL Podcast 6 - The Commute to Work

Some people actually don't have a garage, and so they park in their driveway. They drive off the street and they park their car in the driveway, that piece of land where you can put your car. I like to park my car on my neighbor's driveway so I have more room on my driveway. He doesn't like it though. So, I back out of the garage, and then I "close the garage door, and put the car into drive." Here's another use of that word, drive. In this case, it means I'm putting it in a gear that will take me forward. So, to put a car into drive means that you change the position of the transmission so that your car will go forward and not backwards.

"I used to drive a stick shift, but as I get older, I like my automatic transmission more and more." There are two kinds of transmissions - two kinds of cars. One is what we call an automatic transmission, where you put your car either into reverse or into drive, and that's it. You don't have to change anything.

Another kind of car is called a stick shift, or a manual transmission. "Manual" (manual) is the opposite of automatic; it means by hand. So, if you have a manual transmission, or a stick shift, you have to move the transmission each time you want to go faster or slower. The word "stick (stick) shift (shift)" (two words) is the same as a manual transmission. Some people say, "I drive a stick," they mean, "I drive a stick shift."

The word "shift" is also a verb, "to shift," and that means to change. So, if you have a manual transmission - a stick shift - you shift from one gear to another. If you want to go faster, you have to shift into a higher gear. Well, if you don't have a manual transmission, you don't have to worry about it.

If you have a stick shift, you have an extra pedal in the car. Remember, we said that a pedal can be a gas pedal - something that makes you go faster. You also have a brake pedal that will slow or stop your car. And, if you have a stick shift, you have a third pedal, which we call the "clutch" (clutch). And in order to change from one gear to another, to go faster or slower or to go into reverse, if you have a stick shift, you have to press on or put your foot on the clutch so that you can change, or shift, gears.

"I usually take the freeway to the office, so I get on the onramp for the freeway." The "onramp" (onramp) is what connects the street to the freeway. So, just like a driveway connects the street to your garage, an onramp connects the street to the freeway. The opposite of an onramp would be, of course, an off ramp, and that's where you go off of the freeway and back to the street.





www.eslpod.com

---

English as a Second Language Podcast

## ESL Podcast 6 - The Commute to Work

---

Well, I get onto the onramp, or “I get on the onramp and I drive to where I have to get off. My office is only a few miles from the exit.” The “exit” (exit) is where you leave the freeway. It can be a noun or it can be a verb. “To exit” means to leave, and normally, in a public building, a hotel or other areas, they have a sign that says, “exit,” so you know in case there is an emergency how to leave the room or leave the building. On an airplane, we have something called the emergency exits, and those are doors that you use if the plane is having problems. I hope you never have to use the emergency exits.

Well, this is an exit from the freeway, and “my office is only a few miles” after I get off of the freeway. “I pull into the parking garage,” the place at my work where you park or keep your car, and I swipe my key card to get in. A “key card” (key card) – two words – is like a credit card. It’s an electronic card that the company gives you that allows you to get in and out of a garage, in and out of the building, maybe even in and out of your office, and it’s an electronic card, like a credit card. To swipe is the verb we use when we talk about credit cards or key cards. “To swipe,” (swipe) means to take the card and put it into what we would call a reader very quickly. So, for a credit card, the clerk will swipe the card - will put it through the machine very quickly. For a key card, you put it through the machine so you can get into somewhere. It’s a key - an electronic key.

I “park my car,” I “grab my briefcase and my coffee” - very important, my coffee - and I “head toward the elevator.” “To head toward something” means to walk in that direction or move in that direction. So, I walk toward the elevator, and my whole trip “only took 40 minutes.”

Americans love to complain about how terrible their commutes are. In some cities, 30 or 40 minutes is considered a long commute, and in some cities, like Los Angeles, it’s considered an average commute. In other countries, some people commute an hour or an hour and a half in order to get to their work.

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

[Start of story]

I open my car door and throw my briefcase in the back seat, and get comfortable for my drive. I put my coffee mug into the cup holder, put the keys in the ignition, find the gas pedal, and start the car. My wife drove the car last night, so I have to re-adjust the rear view mirror and the side mirrors. I turn on the radio to listen to the drive time traffic report. I take the transmission out of park and into reverse, back out into the driveway into the street, close the garage door, and put





www.eslpod.com

---

English as a Second Language Podcast

## ESL Podcast 6 - The Commute to Work

the car into drive. I used to drive a stick shift, but as I get older, I like my automatic transmission more and more.

I usually take the freeway to the office, so I get on the onramp for the freeway and drive to where I have to get off. My office is only a few miles from the exit. I pull into the parking garage, swiping my key card to get in. I park, grab my briefcase and coffee, and head toward the elevator. And that only took 40 minutes!

[End of story]

That concludes part five of “A Day in the Life of Jeff: The Commute to Work.” In part six, we actually get to work and go to lunch.

This course has been a production of the Center for Educational Development, in beautiful Los Angeles, California. Visit our website at [eslpod.com](http://eslpod.com).

This course was produced by Dr. Jeff McQuillan and Dr. Lucy Tse. Copyright 2006.

---

Contributors to this series are Jeff McQuillan, Lucy Tse, and Jessica Brown.