



ESL Podcast 86 – Asking About Jobs

GLOSSARY

public relations officer – an employee who creates a good relationship between the business he or she works for and the people outside of that business, including the public and the media

* As the company's public relations officer, Marge needed to find a way to improve the local community's opinion of the company.

to work toward – to prepare for a job or other position that one wants; to do work so that one can achieve a goal

* Chris had to work more hours than normal, but he was working toward a raise and a better job within the company.

non-profit – not done to earn money, but to help others; not done to earn money, other than the money one needs to support the organization

* The employees of the non-profit organization knew they would not earn much money, but they were loyal to the organization because they believed it helped many people.

to make a move – to change jobs; to move from one's current job to a new job

* After working at a job that she did not like for six years, Lucia thought it was time to make a move and start doing a job she loved.

do you mind if – is it fine if; a phrase used to ask if one is allowed to do something

* Emil asked his brother, "Do you mind if I eat the last piece of pizza?"

go ahead – start; a phrase used to tell someone to start doing an action he or she wants to do but needs permission to do it

* When Agnes asked her parents if she could visit her friend's house, they told her, "Sure, go ahead, but be home by 8:00."

salary – wages; the amount of money one earns for working

* Even though he was a strict boss, Mr. Oropeza kept his employees happy by paying them a large salary.

I can't speak for – I do not represent; a phrase used to say that one's experience or opinion may not be the same as the experience or opinion of others

* I can't speak for the rest of my friends, but I enjoy going to the library after school.



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comparable – able to be compared; being similar enough to be thought of as alike

* The food at the college cafeteria was comparable to the food at the high school cafeteria, and many of the dishes were actually the same.

perk – benefit; something one gets that is not part of the money one earns working in a job

* Permission to use the exercise room and swimming pool were perks that the hotel employees got.

yes and no – true and not true; a phrase used to say that a statement or idea had both good and bad parts, or that it has both true and false parts

* Brigitte asked Wesley if he had a good trip, and he answered, "Yes and no. The weather was bad and I was stuck inside, but I was at least able to visit some interesting indoor attractions."

to suit (someone) – to be a good match for someone; to meet someone's wants, needs, or personality

* Al is good with animals, so a job at the animal shelter really suits him.



CULTURE NOTE

Jobs in “STEMs”

Since at least the 1980s, politicians and businesspeople have complained that America’s schools were not producing enough “STEMs” graduates – those in science, technology, engineering, and math-related “fields” (areas of work). They say that schools are “failing us” (hurting us by not doing their job), that if only teachers would do a better job at teaching students in these subjects, all of our problems would be solved.

A 2010 study by researchers at Georgetown University analyzed the number of STEMs workers the U.S. will need in the next few years, as well as the situation of the students who study STEMs in college. Here are some of the things they report, along with some numbers from a few other sources:

- America will need approximately 2.4 million new workers in STEMs during the 10-year period from 2008 to 2018 (the data (facts) for the study are a few years old).
- Of 100 people who graduate from college each year, 19 are in STEMs fields.
Of those 19 people, only 10 will work in a STEMs field after graduating. The rest will work in other areas – finance and other business areas.
- Of those 10 people who do work in STEMs jobs, only 8 will still be working there 10 years later.

Why do so few STEMs graduates work in STEMs fields? Part of the answer is “job satisfaction” (how happy you are with something). Many say they want to do other kinds of work that they find more enjoyable. But a big reason is probably related to money.

According to a 2010 article in the *Wall Street Journal*, STEMs graduates who decide to “go into” (work in) engineering, for example, will “make” (earn) around \$78,000 a year, which is a good “salary” (money one gets for working). But consider this: the average salary for STEMs graduates who work in other professional areas, such as “finance” (work related to managing money) and as managers is \$102,000. If you “do the math” (perform the calculations), you can understand why many college graduates in STEMs – almost half – are not taking jobs in those areas.



COMPLETE TRANSCRIPT

Welcome to English as a Second Language Podcast number 86: Asking About Jobs.

This is English as a Second Language Podcast episode 86. I'm your host, Dr. Jeff McQuillan, from the Center for Educational Development in beautiful Los Angeles, California. Be sure to visit our website at www.eslpod.com.

Today's podcast is about asking someone politely about their job. Let's go!

[start of dialogue]

I was at the store the other day. I saw a former co-worker, Michael, across the room. He used to work at my company until he quit a few months ago to start a new job as a public relations officer at Missouri University. It's a job he's been working toward for years. He wasn't happy working for a corporation and wanted to get into either a non-profit organization or a university. I wanted to see how he was doing. The truth was, I was thinking of making a move myself.

Becky: Hey, Michael. Remember me? I'm Becky. We used to work at Lekmans together.

Michael: Oh, sure. How are you? Long time, no see. How are things at Lekmans?

Becky: It's about the same. I've been thinking of making a change myself. Do you mind if I ask you a few things about your job at the university?

Michael: No, not at all. Go ahead.

Becky: Well, I was wondering what the salaries are like. I mean, are they much lower than the corporate world?

Michael: Well, I can't speak for all universities, but my salary is a definitely lower than at Lekmans. I just don't think the salaries are comparable when you leave a major corporation.

Becky: Yeah, that's what I thought, but I've heard that the perks are better. I was wondering if that was really true.



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Michael: I'd have to say yes and no on that. I don't get a big end-of-the-year bonus like I did at Lekmans but I get to take classes for free if I want to. I've always wanted to get a graduate degree so I'm taking classes now to do that.

Becky: Oh, that's great. It sounds like you're really happy with your move.

Michael: Yeah, I guess I am. Working at a university really suits me.

[end of dialogue]

We're talking about asking someone politely about their job in this podcast. That's always a sensitive subject, that is, some people don't like answering questions about their job so you want to do that very politely and there are several expressions that we use in relation or related to this topic. Let's begin at the beginning of the story. The woman in the story, Becky, says that she was in the store "the other day." That expression "the other day" means the same here as "recently." It could have been yesterday, maybe last week. She said she saw a "former co-worker" of hers. "Former" (former) means, here, a "ex-co-worker," someone who used to be a co-worker but isn't any longer. We talk about former presidents and former movie stars, people who used to be but aren't anymore. This former co-worker of hers, Michael, is now working as a "public relations officer" for a university. A "public relations officer" is someone who deals with or handles the media or the press for a company. "Public relations," in general, is making sure that your company or your business has a good image, that people get accurate information about you.

Becky says that it's a job he's been "working toward" for years. To say you are "working towards something" means that that is your goal, that you are trying to accomplish that goal. He said that he wanted to get in to either a "non-profit" organization or a university. A "non-profit" organization is one that doesn't try to make money but tries to help other people. It still has to have money, of course, but it's not a regular business in that sense. Becky then says, "The truth was, I was thinking of making a move myself." The expression "the truth was" or "the truth was that" is just a way of introducing some statement or some idea that indicates that you are going to be very honest with the person. "To make a move," here, means to leave your job and to go to a different company. Then in the conversation, Becky says, "Hey Michael. Remember me?" and Michael says, "Oh, sure. Long time, no see." That expression, "Long time, no see," is one we use for someone, of course, that we haven't seen in a long time. We could say, "It's been a long time since I've seen you," but we usually use that short expression, "Long time, no see." It's a very unusual expression because there's no subject in the sentence. We don't say, "Long time, I have not seen you," so



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I'm not sure quite why we use that. That's one of the few cases where you'll see that particular form or construction of the sentence, "Long time, no see."

Becky then says to Michael that she was thinking of "making a change" herself, making a move, changing jobs, and then she introduces a polite way of asking a question, "Do you mind if I ask you a few things about your job?" That expression "Do you mind if" followed by the question, "Do you mind if I ask you where you bought those shoes?" That is a polite way of introducing a question. Michael responds by saying, "No, not at all," meaning, "I don't mind." The response to the affirmative or positive or "yes" response to the question, "Do you mind?" is "No, not at all," or "No, I don't mind," meaning it doesn't bother me. When you say, "Do you mind?" you're asking, "does it bother you? Is it okay that I ask you this question?" We can also use this as a polite way of requesting something from someone. "Do you mind moving over to the left so I can see the movie screen?" For example, you're sitting in a theater and someone has a big hat sitting right in front of you. I should add that if you say "Yes" to the question, "Do you mind?" "Yes, I mind," that's considered rather rude to say "Yes" to that question. Even though you might want to. Maybe it does bother you but you have to know someone pretty well to answer "Yes" to the question. "Do you mind if I take all of your money?" Then, you might want to say, "Yes, I mind."

But Michael doesn't mind and he says, "Go ahead," meaning, "Ask your question." "Go ahead." And Becky says, "Well, I was wondering what the salaries are like." This is another case where you ask the question politely by putting another expression in front, "I was wondering." "To wonder" means "I was thinking about," meaning "I have a question. I'm not sure. I was wondering." This is an embedded question, which means that the subject and the verb are reversed as they would be from a normal question. For example, if you wanted to ask someone a question, "What are the salaries like?" You notice that "are" comes first, the verb, and then "the salaries," the subject, comes second. But if the question is inside another sentence, then we switch the subject in the verb to normal order. "I was wondering what the salaries are like." This is a very common expression, "I was wondering." Michael says, in response, "Well, I can't speak for all universities but my salary is definitely lower." That expression "I can't speak for everyone," meaning, "my views or my opinions don't represent everyone but," and then you give what your opinion is.

In this case, he says that the salaries are "comparable." I'm sorry, he says the salaries are "not comparable" at the university versus a major corporation and this is something I can say is definitely true, having worked at a university. The "salaries," or the amount that you get paid is "not comparable," meaning it's not the same. You can't compare one with the other. They're not equal. Becky then



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asks about the “perks” at Michael’s job. “Perks” (perks), or “perk” – a “perk” is a benefit. It’s usually a word we use associated with a job. “This job has lots of perks. I get to travel twice a year. I get a free Blackberry or Palm Treo or, you know, a new cell phone every six months.” Those would be perks. They’re not part of your regular salary but they are benefits that a company or organization gives you. Becky then uses the expression “I was wondering.” “I was wondering if that was really true.” Again, a polite way of asking, “Is that true?” And Michel says, “I have to say, yes and no.” That expression, of course, is when you want to answer a question both ways. It’s partly true; it’s partly not true. So, someone says, “Are you going to the store today?” And you say, “Yes and no. Yes, I’m going to the store but no, I can’t buy you anything.”

At the end of the dialogue, Michael says that working at a university “really suits” him. When we say something “suits” you (suits), we mean it’s a good fit for you. It’s something that is a good match for you. And you can say that about a job, but you could also say it about the color of your hair. You dye your hair green and you say, “Oh that green really suits you.” I wouldn’t do that but, you know, some people might. So, when something suits you, it’s appropriate for you. It’s good for you. Of course, the word, “suit” (suit), has other meanings in English. A “suit” is also what a man or a woman wears, a formal “business suit” with a jacket and a tie and pants, and a “suit” is also a legal term. When you sue someone (sue), the noun is a “suit” and that is a legal action you take against someone else. For example, someone hits your car and they don’t want to pay for the damage, you can “sue” them. You can file a “suit” against them so that the court will make them pay. Well, we won’t make you pay, but we will give you the dialogue again, this time at a native rate of speech.

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[end of dialogue]

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

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