



ESL Podcast 97 – Checking Into A Hotel

GLOSSARY

to hail – to put one's hand high up in the air to communicate something, usually to ask an empty taxi to stop so that one can get in and go somewhere

* During rush hour, it can take a long time to hail a taxi in downtown New York.

doorman – a person whose job is to hold the door open so that people can enter and exit a building, possibly providing information and security services, too

* Let's stop and ask that doorman for directions to the nearest pharmacy.

luggage – baggage; suitcases; the bags and boxes that one travels with

* You are allowed to bring one piece of small luggage onto the airplane. Larger pieces of luggage must be checked.

check-in desk – the large table or counter near the entrance of a hotel where employees wait to greet new guests, give them the keys to their room, and accept their payment

*The woman at the check-in desk said they didn't have any rooms available, but that there might be some empty rooms at the other hotel across the street.

front-desk – related to the large table or counter near the entrance of a building where people can get information and directions from employees

* When you come into the office building, ask the front-desk employee for an identification badge.

to check in – to go into a hotel after one has made a reservation in order to get one's room assignment and key

* Hi, we're checking in for the honeymoon suite this weekend.

reservation – an arrangement to use a service or have something made available at a certain time in the future

* Could you please make a reservation at the restaurant? We need a table for five people at 6:30 this Thursday.

standard – basic; normal; ordinary; without anything special or fancy

* This computer comes with a standard software package, but you can buy additional programs as needed.

suite – a set of connected rooms in a hotel, usually more expensive than a basic guest room

* Whenever they travel with their children, they get a suite so that they can sleep in one room and their kids can sleep in the other room, but they'll still be nearby.



ESL Podcast 97 – Checking Into A Hotel

to book – to reserve something; to make arrangements to have or use something at a certain time in the future

* They booked their trip online, paying for two airplane tickets and a rental car.

non-smoking king – a room with the largest (king-size) bed, where no one has ever been allowed to smoke a cigarette, so the room doesn't smell like smoke

* They had asked for a non-smoking king, but the room smelled like smoke, so they went back downstairs to ask for a different room.

on file – in one's written records; with information written down and stored for future use

* Whenever we hire new employees, we get a copy of their driver's license and social security card to keep on file.

room charges – the money that must be paid to stay in a hotel room, including any taxes

* Room charges are much more expensive at this hotel than at the other one.

incidentals – small, unrelated expenses that must be added to the overall total

* Watching a pay-per-view movie or ordering room service in a hotel can be fun, but don't forget that you'll have to pay for all those incidentals when you leave.

room rate – the amount charged to stay in one hotel room for one night

* Downtown hotel room rates are usually higher during the week, when there are a lot of business travelers, than during the weekend.

to initial – to write the first letter of one's first name and the first letter of one's last name, usually to indicate that one agrees with part of a contract

* If you need to change the amount on a check you've written, just initial next to the new amount.

key – a cut piece of metal or a plastic card with an electronic chip that can be used to open a door or start a car

* We need to make an extra copy of our house key for out-of-town guests.

stay – the period of time when one is sleeping in a hotel or spending time at a resort

* They're planning a four-night stay at a tropical resort for their anniversary.



ESL Podcast 97 – Checking Into A Hotel

CULTURE NOTE

Types of Hotel Rooms

All hotels have standard rooms, and most nice hotels have suites, but this is “just the beginning” (only a basic description, not describing everything). There are many different types of hotel rooms.

Most “luxury” (very nice and expensive) hotels have a “presidential suite” or a “royal suite,” which is the group of the most expensive and “fanciest” (with many nice things) rooms in the hotel, usually on the top floor. These suites were first created for U.S. President Woodrow Wilson who had “strict” (very specific and not flexible) requirements for hotel rooms. However, presidential suites are not only for presidents or other politicians. Many celebrities and “wealthy” (rich) businesspeople can choose to stay in a presidential suite.

Many hotels also have a “honeymoon suite,” which is a very nice group of rooms “intended” (planned) for “newlywed” (recently married) couples who are on their “honeymoon” (a romantic trip taken after a wedding). People who stay in a honeymoon suite often get a special “honeymoon package” that might include romantic music, flowers, bottles of champagne, and chocolate-covered strawberries.

Hotel guests can also request “handicapped-accessible” rooms that are designed for people with physical “disabilities” (problems with one’s body that prevent one from moving as most other people do, or from doing things that most other people do). A handicapped-accessible room is often on the first floor, so that the guest doesn’t have to take the stairs or elevator. Handicapped-accessible rooms also have wider “doorways” (the opening to get into a room) so that “wheelchairs” (chairs with wheels, used by people who cannot walk) can fit through them. Handicapped-accessible bathrooms have lower toilet seats and bathtubs. There are also special “bars” (horizontal pieces of metal attached to walls) for disabled people to hold onto, especially as they move between their wheelchair and the bathtub.



ESL Podcast 97 – Checking Into A Hotel

COMPLETE TRANSCRIPT

Welcome to English as a Second Language Podcast number 97 – Checking Into a Hotel.

This is English as a Second Language Podcast episode 97. I'm your host, Dr. Jeff McQuillan, coming to you from the Center for Educational Development in beautiful Los Angeles, California.

Today's episode is about checking into a hotel. Let's get started.

[start of story]

I flew into Atlanta the afternoon before a big meeting. I hailed a taxi at the airport and told the driver the name of the hotel. I asked him how long it would take to get there. He said it would only be 20 minutes. I sat back and relaxed.

We got to the hotel and the doorman helped me take my luggage to the check-in desk, where I spoke with the front desk clerk.

Rob: Hi, I'm checking in. The last name is Rama.

Clerk: Yes, here is your reservation. You have a standard room reserved for two nights. Is that right?

Rob: Actually, no. It should be a suite. I had booked a non-smoking king.

Clerk: Oh, my mistake. The reservation is for a suite and it is a non-smoking room with a king bed. I'm sorry for the error.

Rob: That's okay. I'm here a little early. Is it possible to check in right now?

Clerk: Sure, that's no problem. May I have your credit card? We need a credit card on file for your room charges and incidentals.

Rob: Here it is.

Clerk: Okay, now if you could please verify the room rate here – initial next to the X and sign right here. How many keys will you need?



ESL Podcast 97 – Checking Into A Hotel

Rob: Oh, just one.

Clerk: Okay, you're all set. You're in room 1201. Take the elevators to the 12th floor and it will be on your left. Do you need any help with your bags?

Rob: No, I'm fine. Thanks.

Clerk: Enjoy your stay.

[end of dialogue]

Our story begins with me saying, “I flew into Atlanta the afternoon before a big meeting.” “To fly into” somewhere means to take an airplane to that place. “I flew into New York.” “I flew into Paris.” “I flew into Heathrow in London.” That means I’ve taken a plane to those places. A “big meeting” can mean one of two things. It can mean a very important meeting. You might say, “This is a big meeting for me,” meaning it’s very important for me, important for my career. Or it can just mean a large meeting with lots of people. That would also be a “big meeting.”

“I hailed a taxi at the airport.” “To hail (hail) a taxi (taxi)” means to put your arm out in order to get a taxicab to stop and pick you up. So, if you’re in a big city, like New York City for example, you have to stand out in the road and put your hand up and wave to hail a taxi. I asked the taxi driver “how long it would take to get there.” “How long” means how much time, and the taxi driver said that “it would only be 20 minutes.”

After arriving at the hotel, “the doorman helped me take my luggage to the check-in desk.” A “doorman” (doorman) – all one word – is usually a man, though it doesn’t necessarily have to be, who greets you at a nice hotel and offers to help you with your luggage. “Luggage” (luggage) is what we call the bags where you keep the clothes for your trip. So, the doorman “helped me take my luggage to the check-in desk.” The “check-in (check-in) desk” is the same as the “front desk.” It’s the place where you go to register or to check in to a hotel.

I say to the woman at the check-in desk, “Hi, I’m checking in,” meaning “I just arrived and I want to register and go to my room.” So, the woman says, “Yes, here is your reservation,” meaning she sees, either on the computer or on a piece of paper, the information about my reservation. She tells me that I have a “standard room.” A “standard room” is the regular or most basic kind of room in a hotel. There are different types of room. There’s the standard room, and then there are, in many hotels, rooms called “suites.” A “suite” (suite) is a bigger room, usually a nicer room, and a more expensive room.



ESL Podcast 97 – Checking Into A Hotel

I tell the woman that I should have a suite reserved for me, and then I say, “I booked a non-smoking king.” “To book” (book) means to reserve a room, or to make a reservation. “Non-smoking” means you can’t smoke in the room. Most public places in the United States do not allow smoking, although most hotels still have smoking sections or smoking rooms. I asked for a “non-smoking king.” The word “king” here refers to the size of the bed. A “king bed,” also called a “king-size bed,” is the biggest bed.

Actually, there is a bed bigger than a regular king bed. It’s called a “California King,” and it’s longer than the regular king bed. But a “king-size” is the biggest bed you will normally find. It sleeps two people very comfortably. A smaller bed that is also good for two people is a “queen bed.” The queen is smaller than the king, and smaller than the queen bed is the “double bed.” Two people can sleep in a double bed if they are very friendly or know each other really, really well.

The clerk then says, “Oh, my mistake,” meaning “I was wrong. I made a mistake.” She then asks me for a credit card. She says they need “a credit card on file for your room charges and incidentals.” To have something “on file” means to have a record of it; in this case, they need to have your credit card on file so they know what the credit card number is in case, for example, you leave without paying your bill. If you have your credit card on file, then they have the number and can still charge.

She mentions “room charges and incidentals.” “Room charges” are the amount that it costs you to rent the room, and “incidentals” (incidentals) are all the other things that you pay for to use in a hotel room. So, for example, a call on the telephone in your hotel room is an incidental. In many hotels, each call on the telephone is 50 cents or a dollar. They will charge you even when it’s what we call a “local call,” which is a call within the same city.

Another incidental would be the room’s minibar. In some hotels, they have what’s called a “minibar” (minibar), which is a small refrigerator that has food and drinks in it. Every day, the maid – the person who comes to clean your room – checks the minibar, and if you’ve taken something out, she marks that down on a piece of paper, and then when you check out, when you leave, you have to pay for whatever you took from the minibar. That’s another example of an “incidental.”

The woman then asked me to “verify the room rate.” The “room (room) rate (rate)” is the cost of the room, the price of the room. She tells me to “initial the next to the X.” “To initial” (initial) something means to write down the first letter of your first and last names. So, for Jeff McQuillan, I would initial “JM.” Often, on



ESL Podcast 97 – Checking Into A Hotel

very long official forms, instead of writing your whole name you will just write your initials. “Initial next to the X” means write your initials on the line next to a little X that is printed on the form.

Then she asked me how many keys I will need. Of course, in most modern hotels, they don't actually give you a key. They give you a little card that looks like a credit card, and that is your electronic key. The clerk asked me, “Do you need any help with your bags?” meaning did I want someone to carry my luggage to my room for me. And I say, “No, I'm fine.” “No, I'm fine,” or “No, I'm fine. Thanks,” are polite ways of saying, “No, I don't need any help, but thank you.”

Finally the woman says, “Enjoy your stay,” meaning my stay at the hotel. The time that you will be somewhere is your “stay” (stay). If someone asks how long is your stay, and you answer “three days,” that means you will be there for three days.

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

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ESL Podcast 97 – Checking Into A Hotel

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[end of dialogue]

Thanks to our wonderful script writer, Dr. Lucy Tse, for her wonderful script.

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

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