



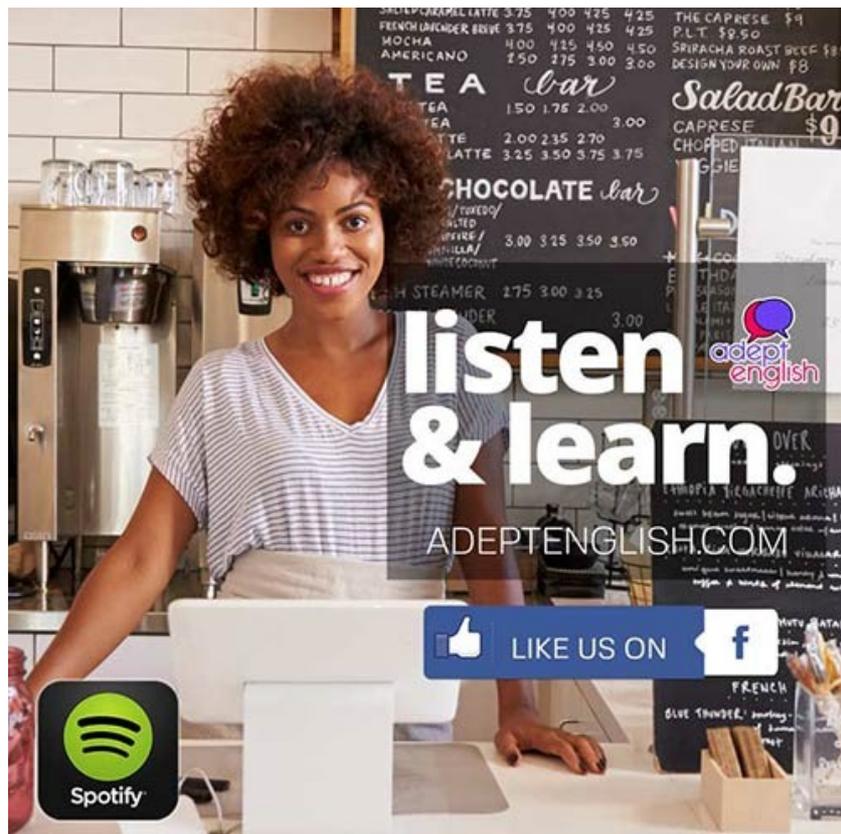
About the Author

Hilary P. is a professional psychotherapist and has practised in the United Kingdom for over 15 years. Hilary has a keen interest in language learning, with a classical language educational background. Hilary's particular interests & experience is in psychology, education & learning, especially online learning and language acquisition.

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Transcript Learn English Article 134



Summary

This English conversation lesson talks about UK minimum wage jobs and talks about topical issues faced when working for minimum wage. You will find this English speaking conversation useful if you ever look for work in the UK. The lesson is designed to help you understand the regular everyday English language used and some of the issues faced by students who often work for minimum wage. Listen to the audio, read the transcript, and you will benefit from this English conversation practice.



English Speaking Conversation Practice About UK Student Jobs

Transcript

Hi, I'm Hilary and welcome to this latest podcast from Adept English. This is the Monday podcast, the longer of our two weekly podcasts, and I hope you enjoy it.

First of all, an apology! That means I'm saying sorry to some people. In the podcast on the teams in the World Cup last week, I said that Nigeria was a country in North Africa! Well, quite a few of you got in contact to correct me – and to say that Nigeria is in fact a country in West Africa! So apologies to you, I'm sorry for getting this wrong. I'm afraid geography is not my strong point – and at least now I know. I have looked at the map of Africa, and I can see that you're right of course! It's definitely in West Africa. So thank you to everyone for pointing this out – I won't make that mistake again!

Sometimes in the podcasts, I think it's useful for you to hear a topic for which I've done quite a bit of research – maybe like last week, which contains lots of facts. And at other times, I think that it's useful to hear something which is more about every day concerns, things which are part of normal life, being talked about in English, with a transcript, more like a normal conversation. Remember, all our material has a written transcript, which you can find on the website at www.adeptenglish.com.

Daily English Conversation Practice About UK Jobs

One of my daughters, as you probably know if you listen regularly, is a student at university. So of course, currently she's home for the summer holidays. One of her projects for the summer, has been to pass her driving test – and to earn enough money to buy a car. She's hoping that when she returns to university in the autumn that she'll be able to drive herself there.

Now your driving test is the exam which you must pass, before you are permitted to drive on your own. In the UK, this means that you must pass a theory test, a written test first of all, which ensures that you know all the rules

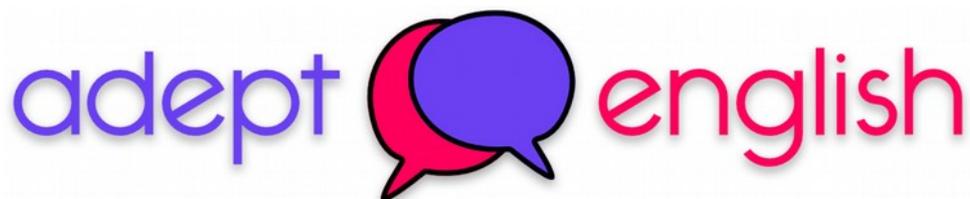


of the road. What the road signs mean, what the laws around for traffic, speed limits – all of that. And in the UK, once you've passed your driving theory test, your written test, then you have two years to pass your practical test.

That's the exam you take in the car, out on the road. So buying a car, is probably what most people, most young people anyway, dream of. And to drive a car, you must have insurance. This means that you buy an insurance policy for your car, so that if you have an accident, your insurance pays for the car to be repaired. And also perhaps for any other cars that were damaged in the accident. They'll also pay you, if your car is stolen or damaged in some way. Now if you're young and especially if you have just passed your test, the cost of the insurance is high. The cost of the insurance for a year may be more than you pay for the car! That is a ridiculous situation. Ridiculous means it's so bad, that it's laughable – you have to laugh, or maybe you would cry about the situation. So typically, on quite an old car, the cost of insuring if you are 20 years old and you've just passed your driving test – well, you're looking at about £900 a year! £900 - that's a lot! And of course, there is the cost of buying the car itself – and of paying tax on the car – and petrol and any repairs to the car as well. So it's all quite expensive. But at the same time, if you're young and you've just passed your driving test, having a car can be a wonderful thing. You've suddenly got a lot of freedom. No more waiting for the bus. No more travelling on the train, or waiting for your parents to give you a lift.

You Can Use This Audio To Help Answer English Conversation Practice Questions About UK Minimum Wage Employment

So in order to be able to do all of this, my daughter is using her holidays from university to work, to pay for a car and for car insurance. Her chosen work is in pubs. You perhaps know the word 'pub' in English. It's specific to UK English – and it's short for 'public house'. It's kind of like a bar, where you can buy alcohol or coffee. And we have a lot of pubs in the UK, which are really old. The equivalent is the word taverna or taberna in other parts of the world. So my daughter is doing pub work, to save up for her car and her car insurance. I think that doing this kind of work quite an interesting experience if you are young – and you learn a lot. It's good for your self-confidence and you learn



how to talk to all sorts of people.

So far so good. However, if you work behind the bar in a pub, you work in a cocktail bar, you serve coffee in Costa Coffee or Starbucks, or burgers in McDonalds, then you're not being paid very much per hour. Most people are probably on what is known as 'minimum wage'. It may be if you're young and you've come from another country to live for a time in the UK or the US for a time, that you're also doing this kind of work - minimum wage work. In the UK and the US, minimum wage is a set amount. It means that there is a lowest amount of money which you can be paid per hour. You cannot be paid less than this amount. And the amount is rising, which is good - but it's still difficult to live on minimum wage. People in this situation usually end up working a lot of hours in order just to eat and have somewhere to live.

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My daughter is of course in more fortunate situation - she's living at home with us, so she's very lucky to be able to earn money and save up for her car and her insurance. My daughter started off with three pub jobs. It sounded too much. I said 'How are you going to do three jobs?'. But actually in the end, it's been an interesting experience and probably the best way to do it, to start off with three.

The first of the jobs was in a little tiny old pub near to where we live, which seemed very nice. However, the problem with this pub, is that it is not very busy. Not that many people go to it. So my daughter found that they were not able to give her very many hours of work at this pub. Sometimes this pub is so quiet that they close at 9.30pm! I've never heard of a pub doing this before. So for my daughter, who has a target in mind, a goal of what she would like to earn, this pub isn't ideal.

Her second job was very different. Again the job was in a pub, but this time, it was a very busy pub, in a village near to where we live. This village is quite posh - there's another whole podcast perhaps, just to explain what we mean in English when we use the word 'posh'. For now, let me just say that the pub was expensive and served very nice, but expensive food. And so this job was very



demanding. Demanding means it asked a lot from the people working there, given that the job paid barely more than minimum wage. They had to arrive 15 minutes early to the shift for a 'briefing'. Now the word 'briefing' is what the army or the military might use of a meeting before they go into battle, before they go into combat. So this seemed a little too much for working in a pub! My daughter's experience working there was that the people were not very nice! She said that there were a lot of things to learn about serving the food - and they didn't give her any instructions or training. And then when she made mistakes, they shouted at her and were critical. She was quite upset after the second time working there. And this doesn't happen easily, she's quite tough. And when she asked other people who worked there - and they all said they had the same experience. They were all upset and found it difficult and the managers were horrible, when they started. So there seemed to be something there about making people feel bad about themselves as a way to keep them 'in line', doing the work. Because my daughter was lucky enough to have a third pub job, she decided in the end that this job wasn't worth it, it wasn't for her.

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So she's been doing lots of hours at the third pub and it's been going well. She likes the people and is getting to know the locals, which is important in a country pub. When I say 'the locals' that means the regulars, the people who regularly go to the pub, maybe every day. Often these are elderly people, old people who perhaps live on their own and they like the pub, partly because they can get a drink, but also because there's someone to talk to there. But even here, there has been an issue with my daughter being paid less than she was promised. Hopefully, they are going to sort that out and pay her the proper amount.

So really, the outcome of all of this - I'm just wanting to say to you, that if you find yourself living in the UK, and you are earning what is known as 'minimum wage' or not much more - in a restaurant, maybe in a pub, or a shop or a coffee shop - then you have my sympathy, it's not easy. You might be a student, who finds that they have to work in one of these jobs to fund their studies. Or you



might be wanting to work up, to get a promotion to a better job. It can be also a really good way to improve your English. Either way if you're in the UK, please bear in mind - employment here is high. Most people who want a job can get a job, especially if it's minimum wage. So if you find yourself working for an employer who is horrible to you, unpleasant to you, critical of you in a way that you don't deserve, I hope you have the confidence to speak up. And maybe if it's really not good and it's very difficult, then in most areas of the UK, you can just go and get a different job. Have confidence, know your value - go and get another job, if you need to. Don't stick with a horrible job on minimum wage, if you don't have to. The next place you find to work at might be much, much better.

Goodbye

Anyway, enough for now. Have a lovely day. Speak to you again soon. Goodbye.

PS

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