

EPISODE 385

When Travel Plans Go Completely Wrong

Full transcript · speaking practice · vocabulary review

Hi, everybody! I am Georgiana, your English teacher and founder of SpeakEnglishPodcast.com.

Today, we are going to talk about what happens when a carefully planned trip begins to **fall apart**.

Maybe your flight is **delayed** or cancelled. Perhaps you **miss your connection**, your suitcase disappears, or the hotel cannot find your reservation.

Lately, these problems seem to be **increasingly common**, especially during the **peak summer season**.

Airports are overcrowded, flights are full, and staff are **under pressure**. One small delay can quickly **disrupt** your entire journey.

Travelling is already tiring. You may have woken up at four in the morning, waited in several lines, removed your shoes at security, and paid far too much for a disappointing sandwich.

Then you look at the departures screen and see:

Cancelled.

Wonderful.

A cancelled flight is stressful in any language. But it can feel **overwhelming** when you also have to solve the problem in English.

Maybe you normally understand English quite well. But stress changes everything.

The airport is noisy. People are speaking quickly. There is a long line behind you, and you are worried about your hotel, your luggage, or your next flight.

Suddenly, **your mind goes blank**.

You know the words, but you cannot find them.

This does not mean that your English is bad. It simply means that your brain is trying to manage too many things at once.

In stressful situations, we often make another mistake: we try to explain everything.

Imagine that your flight has been cancelled. You approach the airline desk and begin telling the employee why you chose that flight, where your hotel is, and who is waiting for you.

But they probably do not need your entire life story.

Shorter is usually better.

First, state the problem clearly:

“My flight has been cancelled.”

Then ask:

“What are my options?”

This is one of the most useful questions you can learn.

“I missed my connecting flight. **What are my options?**”

“My luggage hasn’t arrived. **What are my options?**”

“The hotel cannot find my reservation. **What are my options?**”

Perhaps the airline can **rebook** you. Maybe your suitcase can be delivered to your hotel. The important thing is to discover the possible solutions.

You can also ask:

“What should I do now?”

This is useful when you feel confused or do not know the next step.

Another problem is that someone may give you too much information at once:

“Go to Terminal Two, collect a new boarding pass, pass through security again, and then go to Gate 47.”

After ten hours of travelling, this can sound like a complicated mathematical formula.

Do not be afraid to say:

“Could you say that more slowly, please?”

“Could you repeat the last part?”

Or:

“Could you write that down for me?”

This is especially helpful with gate numbers, times, addresses, and booking references.

Before you leave, make sure that you understood correctly.

You can say:

“Just to confirm, I need to go to Terminal Two?”

“Just to confirm, the next flight leaves tomorrow morning?”

“Just to confirm, my suitcase will be delivered to the hotel?”

The expression **“just to confirm”** sounds calm and polite. You are simply checking one important detail.

If there is a problem with a reservation or boarding pass, you can say:

“I seem to have a problem with...”

For example:

“I seem to have a problem with my reservation.”

This sounds less **confrontational** than:

“You made a mistake.”

Maybe someone did make a mistake. In fact, someone probably did.

But the goal is not to identify the guilty person. The goal is to reach your destination.

So remember three simple steps:

First, **explain the problem clearly.**

Second, **ask what your options are.**

Third, **confirm the next step.**

Your English does not need to be sophisticated when your suitcase is in another country.

It only needs to help you **move forward.**

Now, let’s continue with a Mini-Story about a man who wanted a relaxing weekend in Spain.

Naturally, his booking agency turned it into a complete ordeal.

Mini-Story

Speaking Practice

Answer each question out loud. Then listen to the answer and respond quickly. Don't worry about mistakes.



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Q&A

SPEAKING PRACTICE

Let's Start!

There's a man named Joe. He lives in the United Kingdom and wants a relaxing weekend in Málaga, Spain.

Joe books the flight, hotel, and airport transfer through an agency called No Problem Travel.

Joe expects no problems. That expectation will not last very long.

What is the agency called?

No Problem Travel.

Is that name ironic?

Oh yes. Very ironic.

On Friday, Joe receives an email. His flight has been cancelled.

Has Joe cancelled it?

No! Joe hasn't cancelled anything.

Joe calls No Problem Travel because he needs another flight.

Does he call to cancel his holiday?

No. The flight is already cancelled.

After forty minutes, an agent answers.

Joe says, "My flight has been cancelled."

What does the agent hear?

Apparently, she hears, "Cancel my whole trip."

The agent puts Joe on hold. Then she returns with "good news."

What is the good news?

She has cancelled Joe's entire booking.

Is that good news?

No! It is terrible news.

What has she cancelled?

The hotel, the transfer, and the whole holiday.

Did Joe ask for that?

No. She misunderstood him.

Joe says, "I need another flight. I don't want to cancel the trip."

The agent finds a new flight for Monday morning.

When is Joe's return flight?

On Sunday evening.

Will Joe return before he arrives?

Yes!

Is that possible?

No. Not unless Joe owns a time machine. Joe owns a suitcase, not a time machine.

The agent finds a Saturday flight, but Joe's hotel is now full.

Why is it full?

Because the agency cancelled his room.

Does she find another hotel?

Yes. A honeymoon suite in Málaga.

What is in the room?

A heart-shaped bed, rose petals, and two bathrobes.

How many bathrobes will Joe use?

Both. After this call, Joe deserves two bathrobes.

Before ending the call, Joe asks, "Just to confirm, you haven't cancelled anything else?"

Does the agent answer immediately?

No. She pauses.

Is the pause reassuring?

No!

What has she cancelled now?

Joe's return flight.

Wonderful.

Eventually, she restores it and emails the itinerary.

Is everything correct?

Almost.

What name appears on the booking?

John.

Is Joe's name John?

No! His name is Joe.

Joe calls again and says, "My name is Joe, not John. Please change nothing else."

On Saturday, Joe reaches Málaga and checks into the honeymoon suite.

What does the receptionist say?

"Congratulations!"

Later, the agency sends Joe an email.

Does it apologize?

No.

What does it say?

"We hope you enjoyed a stress-free experience."

Was Joe's experience stress-free?

No! It was a complete ordeal.

How many stars does Joe give the agency?

One star.

Why one?

Because the website does not allow zero.

And that's the end of the Mini-Story.

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Thanks for listening, and I'll see you in the next episode.

Review

Vocabulary from This Episode

Review the most useful words and expressions before listening again.

01 disrupt interrupt something and cause problems.	07 fall apart stop going according to plan.
02 overwhelming extremely difficult to manage emotionally.	08 under pressure feeling stressed because you must act quickly.
03 bewildered very confused.	09 your mind goes blank you suddenly cannot think or remember.
04 reassured less worried because you receive helpful information.	10 rebook change a reservation to another flight, time, or date.
05 stranded unable to leave a place.	11 what are my options? what possible solutions are available?
06 ordeal a very difficult or unpleasant experience.	12 just to confirm used before checking that you understood correctly.
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