

# Language for ...

## hiring a car

**Age:** Adult / Young adult

**Level:** Advanced

**Length:** 45–60 minutes

**Language Focus:** Key vocabulary for hiring a car and for talking about cars and driving

**Skills:** Speaking, reading, listening

**Materials:** One copy of the worksheet per student, one copy of the role card worksheet per four students (cut up), one copy of the audio (downloaded or played via onestopenglish)

**Aims:** To allow students to effectively understand and use common vocabulary related to cars, driving and insurance; to prepare students for real-life discussions and negotiations related to hiring a car



### What are red words?

Ninety per cent of the time, speakers of English use just 7,500 words in speech and writing. These words appear in the Macmillan Dictionary in red and are graded with stars. One-star words are frequent, two-star words are more frequent and three-star words are the most frequent. 'Language for' lessons are based on red words and encourage students to improve their English through communicative tasks using collocation and commonly used phrases.

out the student worksheets. Read aloud the instructions for Exercise 1, drawing attention to the two examples under the picture (*registration plate, steering wheel*). Set the timer and allow the students to start writing words. Once the 90 seconds are up, each team passes their sheet to a different team for correction. Students may use a dictionary to check unfamiliar words. Monitor the class closely as they correct, taking note of good suggestions. Write these suggestions on the board and elicit definitions for them. Make sure to include the words *gears, tyres* and *windscreen*, as these will be seen again later in the lesson. Finally, decide which team had the highest number of correct suggestions.

- 1 Start the lesson by writing the term *Hiring a car* on the board. Ask students to briefly discuss whether they have ever hired a car and to try to name some famous hire companies (*Hertz, Avis, Europcar, Sixt, Dollar, Thrifty, Alamo*, etc). If possible, elicit an anecdote from a student about a time he/she hired a car.
- 2 Put the students into teams of three or four. Each team needs a pen and a blank sheet of paper and must choose a secretary who is going to be in charge of writing for this task. Hand
- 3 Now ask students to work in pairs. Refer them to the *Car Hire Form* in the worksheet and ask them where they might see a form like this (it could be an online form or a paper-based form to be filled in at the car-hire office). Read aloud the instructions for Exercise 2. The form contains quite a lot of information, so allow the pairs a few minutes to complete the task. Monitor the class as they do this, helping weaker groups and correcting any pronunciation issues (e.g. *waiver* = /'weɪvə/). Finally, elicit the correct answers and check understanding with a few comprehension questions (e.g. *If your car runs out of petrol, what do you need to do?* [Refill it]; *If a little stone hits your window, what damage does it cause?* [A crack/scratch]; etc).
- 4 Students now work individually. Read aloud the instructions for Exercise 3, as far as the question *Which person describes the most positive experience?* Play the audio once and afterwards allow students to compare their answer with a classmate. Then elicit the correct answer and ask students to explain why.

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- 5 Read the instructions for the second part of the listening exercise. Highlight that students must write a word that they have heard in the audio. Allow them a minute to glance through the nine questions, then press play. After listening, students should compare their answers with a classmate. Finally, elicit the missing words.
- 6 Refer students to Exercise 4. Point out that the missing words can mainly be found in the previously-seen *Car Hire Form*, but a few are from the listening. Allow students to complete the task in pairs, monitoring them as they do so. If the class finds this task very difficult, you could write the ten possible words in random order on the board (see Key) and then allow them to decide which word goes where. Finally, elicit the correct answers.

(Note: Exercise 7 at the end of the worksheet is an optional *Further Practice* task based on language from the lesson. It could be completed at this point in the lesson if time permits, or it could be set as a homework task.)

- 7 If possible, show an image on the board of a car-rental agent assisting a customer. Ask students to suggest some of the topics which commonly get discussed in such a situation (price, insurance, technical issues, etc). Put the students into new pairs. Each pair must decide which student is going to be the assistant and which the customer. Hand out the role-cards accordingly, asking students not to show the card to their partner.
- 8 Read the worksheet instructions for Exercise 5. Allow a minute or so for students to glance through the form on this page so that they can get an idea of what they will need to discuss. Set a time limit for the discussions of perhaps seven to eight minutes. Monitor the pairs as they speak,

encouraging them to stick to the instructions from their role-card. Take note of good language and possible errors. Once the time is up, decide which (unfortunate!) student has ended up paying most for the rental. Then provide feedback on the discussions.

- 9 Refer students to Exercise 6. Again in pairs, give them a few minutes to talk together using the question prompts. Encourage them to use new language from this lesson. Monitor and take notes. Finally, provide feedback on impressive language that you have heard being used.
- 10 If you haven't already done Exercise 7, the further practise task, in class, you can set it for homework.

### KEY:

- 1 Some common car parts (US English in italics):

wheels	seat-belt
mirror	handbrake
door	horn ( <i>klaxon</i> )
bumper	accelerator ( <i>gas</i> )
headlights	brake
rear-view lights ( <i>tail-lights</i> )	gear stick ( <i>gear shift</i> )
windscreen ( <i>windshield</i> )	windscreen wipers ( <i>windshield wipers</i> )
boot ( <i>trunk</i> )	clutch
Sat-nav (satellite navigation system)	radio
air conditioning	exhaust pipe
petrol tank ( <i>gas tank</i> )	sun roof
ignition	indicator
steering wheel	

- 2
  - 1 drop
  - 2 miles
  - 3 party
  - 4 steals
  - 5 mileage
  - 6 petrol

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- 7 hurry
- 8 punctures
- 9 cracks
- 10 breaks
- 11 route
- 12 driving

- 6 call-out
- 7 dent
- 8 roadside
- 9 waiver
- 10 gear

- 3** *Listen for the first time*  
Jasmine describes the most positive experience.

*Listen for the second time*

- 1 crack
- 2 counter
- 3 out
- 4 gears
- 5 roof
- 6 careless
- 7 claim
- 8 smooth
- 9 record

- 4**
- 1 puncture
  - 2 scratch
  - 3 minor
  - 4 claim
  - 5 crack

- 5, 6** students' own answers

- 7**
- 1 Unless the car **is dropped off** by 11am, we'll need to pay for an extra day.
  - 2 It is more logical to refill the tank yourself when travelling on a journey with **low mileage**.
  - 3 The insurance policy states that damage to the seats **is not covered** if the driver has left the windows open during rainy weather.
  - 4 We paid an online deposit for our booking and the rest **is payable when** we pick up the car.
  - 5 I **hadn't taken out** the full insurance package, so I was liable for the car's damaged paintwork.
  - 6 The costs for damage to the car due **to careless driving** are not covered by the insurance policy.

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**Jasmine**

I hire a car whenever I'm abroad on holiday, so that's about once or twice a year usually. And I'm glad to say I've never really had much trouble. I mean, there was one time when I had some very minor damage. Just a little crack on the windscreen from a pebble that flew up from the road. But it was fine. When I dropped off the car, I pointed it out to the lady at the counter. She was really nice about it. I'd taken out the full insurance package so she said I was covered for any glass damage. I didn't have to pay a penny. Just goes to show, it's worth taking out the full cover.

**Dan**

I'll never forget the first time I hired a car. What a nightmare! I'd been driving for just over a year and I wasn't that confident yet. I was trying to get into a multi-storey car-park in the city, but it had such an awkward entrance. I couldn't figure out the gears in the car and I ended up sort of driving into the barrier before it had fully opened. I wasn't going very fast or anything so it was just a few scratches on the roof of the car. And luckily the barrier was fine. But the worst part was that I was liable for all the repair costs because the insurance company said it was careless driving! It was an expensive mistake to make.

**Monica**

Last year, I hired a car just for an afternoon and then dropped it off, all fine. Two days later, I got an email from the hire company telling me that the car had a small dent on its side and with a claim for two hundred pounds worth of repair costs. They attached a photo and I literally couldn't even see a dent; the metal was completely smooth. I wrote back to them and just refused. I said that the car had been perfect and that the assistant had even checked it when I returned it. I never heard back from them again. Next time I hire a car, I'll make sure to take my own photos of it when I'm returning it. Just to have a record, you know?

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### Assistant

You work on commission, so you receive a percentage of what each customer pays. This means that you want the customer to spend as much money as possible. To achieve this, you must try to persuade the customer to choose the most expensive fuel option ('No refill') and to take as many *Optional Services* and *Optional Extras* as possible.

### Assistant

You work on commission, so you receive a percentage of what each customer pays. This means that you want the customer to spend as much money as possible. To achieve this, you must try to persuade the customer to choose the most expensive fuel option ('No refill') and to take as many *Optional Services* and *Optional Extras* as possible.

### Customer

You and some friends are going on holidays to the UK and you want to keep your costs to a minimum. The base price of the car is already £250, and you don't want to spend much more. However, you need to decide the best fuel option for you, and you also need to be sensible about which *Optional Services* and *Optional Extras* to contract. Listen to the assistant's advice and make your decision.

### Customer

You and some friends are going on holidays to the UK and you want to keep your costs to a minimum. The base price of the car is already £250, and you don't want to spend much more. However, you need to decide the best fuel option for you, and you also need to be sensible about which *Optional Services* and *Optional Extras* to contract. Listen to the assistant's advice and make your decision.

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### 1 Warmer

Work in teams. You have 90 seconds to write as many car parts as possible. The parts can be inside or outside the car. You may use British English or American English.



Example: registration plate, steering wheel, etc.

### 2 Text

Look at the Car Hire Form on the next page. Complete it with the words from the box below. Use the glossary on this page to help you understand the form.

- |          |          |           |             |
|----------|----------|-----------|-------------|
| • breaks | • party  | • driving | • miles     |
| • steals | • route  | • mileage | • petrol    |
| • hurry  | • cracks | • drop    | • punctures |

#### Glossary

**gallon** (noun, countable) – a unit for measuring an amount of liquid, especially petrol or water. In the UK, a gallon is equal to 4.55 litres. In the US, a gallon is equal to 3.79 litres.

**claim** (noun, countable) – an official request for money that you believe you have a right to.

**waiver** (noun, countable) – an official statement or document that says a right, claim, or law can be officially ignored or given up.

to **cover** (verb, transitive) – if an insurance agreement covers a situation or person, it provides protection against loss for that situation or person.

**call-out** (noun, countable) – an occasion when a technician travels to a car to do repairs.

**payable** (adjective) – due to be paid.

**counter** (noun, countable) – a long, flat surface where customers are served, for example in a shop or a bank.

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### Car hire form

<b>Logistics</b> Pick-up date & location (1) _____ -off date & location	14 <sup>th</sup> April; 11.00am - London, Gatwick Airport 18 <sup>th</sup> April; 12.00pm - <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> (tick box to return car to the same location)
<b>Vehicle details</b> Features Capacity	Air-con, Manual <b>gears</b> , 5 Doors, 61 (2) _____ per gallon 5 Seats, 2 Suitcases, 1 Bag
<b>Mandatory services</b> Third (3) _____ Insurance Damage Waiver Theft Waiver	(all included in your rental fee) This protects you against claims from any other person for <b>damage</b> or injury caused by your use of the vehicle. This limits the amount that you will have to pay if the car is damaged in an accident. This limits the amount that you will have to pay if another person (4) _____ or vandalises the car.
<b>Fuel options</b> No refill Refill tank before you return Refill tank after you return	(tick to select) Start with a full tank, no need to refuel at any stage. A good choice for high (5) _____ journeys (long distance). <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Start with a full tank, refuel at a nearby (6) _____ station before returning the car. A good choice for short journeys. Start with a full tank, we refuel the car after you return it. A good choice if you are in a (7) _____.
<b>Optional services</b> Tyre and Glass Protection Emergency Roadside Service	(tick to select) This limits the amount that you will have to pay for damage to <b>tyres</b> (8) _____, etc) and windows (9) _____, <b>scratches</b> , etc). This covers the cost of a call-out from our technicians if your car (10) _____ down. <input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
<b>Optional extras</b> SatNav Additional driver Child Seats	(tick to select) A GPS device to attach to your windscreen, showing you the best (11) _____ to your destination. Add an extra driver to your booking. This person must be over 25 years old and possess a full (12) _____ licence. <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Add a baby seat or a booster seat (for older children) to your booking.
<b>Amount payable at counter</b>	£390.55 GBP

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### 3 Listen

Listen to three people talking about an experience with a hire car — Jasmine, Dan and Monica. Answer the question:

Which person describes the most positive experience? \_\_\_\_\_

Listen for the second time. For each sentence, use a word from the audio to complete the gap:

- Jasmine describes a time when a stone caused a small \_\_\_\_\_ on the car's windscreen.
- Jasmine mentioned the problem to the woman who was working at the \_\_\_\_\_ in the hire office.
- Jasmine didn't need to pay for any repairs because she had taken \_\_\_\_\_ an insurance package which covered damage to the car's windows.
- The first time Dan hired a car, he didn't fully understand how to use the car's \_\_\_\_\_ .
- For Dan, the only damage was to the \_\_\_\_\_ of the car.
- Dan's accident was not covered by the insurance company because they said he had driven in a \_\_\_\_\_ way.
- In Monica's case, the hire company wrote to her making a \_\_\_\_\_ for £200.
- The hire company said that Monica had returned the car with a dent, but she says that the side of the car was totally \_\_\_\_\_ .
- Monica says that in future, she is going to keep a \_\_\_\_\_ of things when she hires a car.

### 4 Language in Use

For each gap, write one word from this lesson to complete the sentence.

- Driving with a tyre which has a \_\_\_\_\_ is dangerous and can cause permanent damage to the wheel of the car.
- As we were driving, a branch from a tree touched the side of the car, leaving a long \_\_\_\_\_ in the paintwork.
- The accident caused only \_\_\_\_\_ damage, including some scratched paint and a broken side-mirror.
- When another driver damaged one of my car's headlights, he gave me the details of his insurance company so I could put in a \_\_\_\_\_ for the cost of the repairs.
- The car had a small \_\_\_\_\_ on the windscreen, which the technician said could grow bigger unless it was repaired.
- I asked the technician to do a \_\_\_\_\_ - \_\_\_\_\_ but he insisted that the car was capable of driving back to the garage.
- The force of the impact left the car with a large \_\_\_\_\_ in the passenger door.
- After our car broke down, we pushed it to the \_\_\_\_\_ and waited for the assistance team to arrive.
- The total cost of the damages was almost £5,000, but luckily my insurance policy had a damage \_\_\_\_\_ which meant that I didn't need to pay anything.
- Damage to the engine can be caused by driving the car at high speed when it is in a low \_\_\_\_\_ .

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### 5 Communication

Work in pairs. One student is the car-hire assistant and the other is a customer making a booking. Read the role card which your teacher will give you. Then use the form below to complete the booking.

Services	Details	Cost
<b>(Already contracted)</b>	Pick-up: 14 <sup>th</sup> May → Drop-off: 18 <sup>th</sup> May (London Gatwick) Car features: Air-con, Manual gears, 5 Doors, 61 miles per gallon Car capacity: 5 Seats, 2 Suitcases, 1 Bag Services included: • Third Party Insurance • Damage Waiver • Theft Waiver	(base cost) £250
<b>Fuel options</b>	(tick to select)	(average)
No refill	Start with a full tank, no need to refuel at any stage. A good choice for high mileage journeys (long distance). <input type="checkbox"/>	£100
Refill tank before you return	Start with a full tank, refuel at a nearby petrol station before returning the car. A good choice for short journeys. <input type="checkbox"/>	£50
Refill tank after you return	Start with a full tank, we refuel the car after you return it. A good choice if you are in a hurry. <input type="checkbox"/>	£70
<b>Optional services</b>	(tick to select)	
Tyre and Glass Protection	This limits the amount that you will have to pay for damage to tyres (punctures, etc.) and windows (cracks, scratches, etc). <input type="checkbox"/>	£50
Emergency Roadside Service	This covers the cost of a call-out from our technicians if your car breaks down. <input type="checkbox"/>	£50
<b>Optional extras</b>	(tick to select)	
SatNav	A GPS device to attach to your windscreen, showing you the best route to your destination. <input type="checkbox"/>	£20
Additional driver	Add an extra driver to your booking. This person must be over 25 years old and possess a full driving licence. <input type="checkbox"/>	£30
Child Seats	Add a baby seat or a booster seat (for older children) to your booking. <input type="checkbox"/>	£30
<b>Amount payable at counter</b>	(Calculate the total by adding the base cost, the fuel option and any optional items contracted)	£ _____

### 6 Discuss

Work in pairs. Discuss the questions below with your classmate.

1. Do you drive? If so, do you enjoy driving? If not, why not?
2. Have you ever hired a car? If so, describe your experience.
3. What are the advantages to hiring a car while on holiday? Are there any disadvantages?

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- For the items below, talk about how the experience of driving can vary between different countries and cultures:
  - driving on the left or the right
  - laws related to speed, age, alcohol, etc
  - people's general style of driving
- Talk about a memorable car journey which you have taken.
- Have you ever been in a vehicle which has broken down? Describe the experience.
- In your country, what are the steps to getting a driving licence?

### 7 Further practise

Use the word in brackets to complete the second sentence so that it has the same meaning as the first. Don't change the word in brackets. Use between two and four words.

- We need to return the car by 11am if we don't want to pay for an extra day. (*drop off*)  
→ Unless the car \_\_\_\_\_ by 11am, we'll need to pay for an extra day.
- On a short distance journey, it makes more sense to refill the tank yourself. (*mileage*)  
→ It is more logical to refill the tank yourself when travelling on a journey with \_\_\_\_\_.
- According to the insurance policy, there is no protection against seat damage which has been caused by the driver leaving the windows open during rainy weather. (*covered*)  
→ The insurance policy states that damage to the seats \_\_\_\_\_ if the driver has left the windows open during rainy weather.
- After paying a deposit online, the outstanding cost of our booking is due on the day we pick up the car. (*payable*)  
→ We paid an online deposit for our booking and the rest \_\_\_\_\_ we pick up the car.
- I needed to pay for the car's damaged paintwork because I hadn't contracted the full insurance package. (*out*)  
→ I \_\_\_\_\_ the full insurance package, so I was liable for the car's damaged paintwork.
- The insurance policy does not cover the costs for damage which has been caused by driving in an imprudent way. (*careless*)  
→ The costs for damage due \_\_\_\_\_ are not covered by the insurance policy.

### Red Words

crack**	mile***	petrol**	gallon*	claim***	cover***	payable*
counter**	gear**	tyre**	scratch*	minor***	damage***	barrier**
liable**	smooth**	record (noun)***				