

## Podcast 143 - A First Aid Training Course

by Rob McCormack - Wednesday, November 16, 2022

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**Learn English while learning about daily life in Australia, with Rob McCormack**

*Podcast Number 143 – A First Aid Training Course*

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(This podcast is 14 minutes and 38 seconds long.)

Hi,

Every year many Australians die prematurely following an accident or sudden illness because they are unable to get the immediate medical help they need to survive. The first few minutes after such an event can be critical. Even though we have an excellent ambulance service here in Australia, it may take around 15 minutes or more for it to arrive, depending on where you live. It is in these first few minutes after the accident or sudden illness that a person skilled in first aid can make a real difference. Sometimes even small actions can make the difference between life and death for a heart attack victim. Recently I decided to take a first aid course so that, should I come across someone who has had an accident or sudden illness, I might be able to help and make a real difference. In this podcast, I would like to tell you about my experience of doing this first aid course and hopefully explain the value of knowing basic first aid.

(Please note that this podcast is not designed to give you first aid information. Download the Australian Red Cross First Aid App for first aid information. See <https://www.redcross.org.au/firstaid/firstaidapp/>).

In Australia, Red Cross runs first aid courses for people in workplaces, sports clubs or just the general public (like me). I have a lot of trust in the Red Cross so I thought I would choose them to do my training. They do wonderful work in helping Australians in times of disaster or special need.

<https://www.redcross.org.au/>. I have great respect for what they do and have donated to them in the past, so they were my first choice for my first aid training course.

The course I chose was a blended course. That means it had both an online component for the theory and a face-to-face classroom component for more practical aspects. That seemed like a good mix for me. It was not that expensive and I think well worth spending the money. After enrolling online, I received my course details via email. This included my login details for the online training component and the time and place for my classroom component.

I thought I would do my online course in the week prior to my classroom training. That way, the information would be fresh in my mind when I did the classroom part. The online course was around 4 hours long and I must admit that it was a lot of information to take in. I think maybe I spent a little more than 4 hours. After each section, there was a short multiple-choice test. You could only proceed with the online course when you had achieved 100% on each test. Luckily, they gave you feedback about each

answer, so it was easy to find out why you got one incorrect. By doing the test again, you could correct any error and learn from your mistakes. It's a good feeling to get that 100% result at the end of each test.

The online course was quite detailed. It covered many topics, including the objectives of first aid. First aid is all about helping the victim before the ambulance arrives with professional medical help. The objective of the first aid person is to preserve life by protecting a person's airways, stopping any bleeding, preventing further injury, comforting and reassuring the victim, and most critically, sending for help by calling 000. Where a patient is unconscious and not breathing, the course teaches you how to perform CPR (Cardio Pulmonary Resuscitation) and how to use a defibrillator. CPR involves pumping or compressing the chest with your hands as well as giving rescue breaths to the patient – 30 compressions followed by 2 rescue breaths. The defibrillator is a device which provides an electric shock to the chest to get the heart beating correctly. Whilst I had seen and been taught CPR before, I had never learned about defibrillators, so that was new for me.



A defibrillator in place in a building, ready for use if required.

Image by [Tanja-Denise Schantz](#) from [Pixabay](#).

As I went through the online course and learned about these techniques, I knew I would get the chance to actually practise using them in the classroom course. I was looking forward to that.

Whilst CPR and defibrillators are used for people who have lost consciousness and who are not breathing (such as in a heart attack), there are many less serious first aid situations where a first aid person can also help. These are well covered in the course. Topics include (amongst others) what to do in cases of asthma, bites and stings (including snake bite), bleeding, burns, choking, electric shock, fractures (or broken bones), hypothermia and hyperthermia, poisoning, seizures, shock, stroke, sprains and strains. Anyone interesting in learning about these topics should consider doing a first aid course.

Finally, the day came for me to attend the classroom course. I was as ready as I could be. There were around 20 people there, all of whom (except me) were sent there by their employers so that they could become first aid officers back in the workplace. In Victoria, it is a requirement that every workplace provides certain first aid facilities, including first aid kits and volunteer first aid officers who can assist in the case of a medical emergency. When I was working at Australia Post, I had been one of these first aid officers. However, that was around 20 years ago, so I had forgotten most of what I had learnt back then about first aid.

The teacher was Alex.



My first aid trainer Alex, who delivered the course with enthusiasm. Alex really knows about first aid.

Alex explained to us all about the day's training. It would be about 6.5 hours, so pretty much all day. I could tell it was going to be an interesting day, as Alex tried to make the course fun as well as informative, which I really appreciated. Alex was very knowledgeable and was obviously a very experienced teacher of first aid.

During the course, Alex covered all of the areas I had studied in the online course, which helped to improve my knowledge. For example, it was great to practise tying a sling and a bandage, and also putting on a special bandage used for a snake bite. The most interesting parts however were the sessions on CPR and use of the defibrillator on an unconscious person who is not breathing. They were very practical and invaluable.

For these sessions, we used a special first aid dummy or manikin.



Rob practising cardio pulmonary resuscitation on a first aid manikin.

This is made of special plastic and rubber and looks like the top half of a real person. It allows you to get a feel for what it is like to give CPR and mouth to mouth breaths. For example, when you compress the chest when giving CPR, the manikin lets you feel resistance and measures how fast you are doing each compression. The required rate is 100-120 compressions per minute. You must do 30 compressions followed by 2 rescue breaths. There are lights on the manikin which glow green when you are compressing at the right rate, and to the required depth, which is one third of the height of the chest. It turns out that giving CPR is actually quite tiring. If you had to do it for, say, 10 or 20 minutes before the ambulance arrived, that would be hard work.

If a person is unconscious and not breathing, such as in a heart attack, then the best thing to do is use a defibrillator, which will deliver an electric shock to the heart to bring back a normal heart beat. I was amazed how easy they are to use.



A defibrillator opened and ready to go. Image by [R. H.](#) from [Pixabay](#)

The defibrillator gives you verbal instructions out loud and in a commanding voice, about what to do. It tells you where to attach the wired pads to the patient's chest, when to stand back from the patient, when to press the button to deliver a shock, and when to keep doing CPR after giving a shock. Our teacher Alex told us that, when a defibrillator is used, around 70% of unconscious people survive which is high.

We practised in pairs and I must say this type of learning is really effective. While all this training was quite intense, Alex controlled the session really well, making sure that everyone had a chance to be involved and to learn the skills.

At the end of the day's training, I felt really satisfied that I had learned new skills which could possibly help save a life someday. I hope I never have to use these skills, but I am glad that I did the course. Becoming a qualified first aid person is something really worth doing.

If you have a question or comment to make, please leave it in the comments box at the bottom of this page. Or, you can send me an email at [rob@slowenglish.info](mailto:rob@slowenglish.info). I would love to hear from you. Tell me where you live, a little bit about yourself and what you think of my Slow English podcast. I will write back to you, in English of course. If you would like to take a short quiz to see if you have understood this podcast, you will also find it on my website. Goodbye until next time.

Rob

[WpProQuiz 147]

### Vocabulary

= when something goes wrong, like a car crash or a fall

= things that you do

= a van which takes sick or injured people to hospital

= feeling thankful

= a problem in the lungs where you cannot breath properly

= a piece of cloth wrapped around a wound or injured body part

= the minimum things which are needed

= when something is stuck in your throat and you cannot breath

= (here) a loud voice which makes you listen

= part

= to press down

= the act of pressing down

- = being aware of what is happening around you
- = very, very important
- = made a certain way, made for a special purpose
- = when there is lots of information
- = a fire, a flood or an accident that causes harm to people
- = to give money or things for a good cause (e.g. those who are poor)
- = when an electric current (electricity) passes through your body
- = the bosses, who give you a job
- = to sign up to do a course
- = a mistake, when something is wrong
- = when you have done something before many times
- = places or equipment which make it easier to do something
- = people in the workplace who are trained in first aid
- = have not remembered
- = when your heart can't get pump normally
- = when the body gets too hot
- = when the body gets too cold
- = when you receive lots of useful information
- = (here) strongly, requiring a lot of concentration
- = worth a lot, very valuable
- = to be part of something or part of a process
- = a collection of things (usually in a box or bag) for a particular purpose (e.g. a first aid kit)
- = to have lots of knowledge about a topic



- = to find out how much there is of...weight, force, height, length etc
- = to do with your body and your health
- = an error, when something is wrong
- = a test where you select the answer from a list of possible answers
- = when someone eats or drinks a poison which can make them sick or die
- = involved with doing things (usually with your hands)
- = to do something many times in order to learn it
- = before the due time, ahead of time, early
- = before
- = to go forward, to continue
- = when trained people are paid money to do something as a job
- = all the people in the community
- = (here) when you have been trained and have shown you have the skills
- = the need, a rule
- = to give mouth to mouth resuscitation to another person
- = (here) when something is hard to move
- = when you believe that someone is very good and can do a good job
- = part
- = when the brain suddenly stops work correctly and the person falls to the floor
- = how things are at a particular time
- = a piece of cloth which is used to support your arm when it is injured
- = when you hurt one of your joints (e.g. ankle)
- = when you hurt one of your muscles

- = a blood clot in the brain which can injure or kill someone
- = when you get sick very quickly, such as a heart attack
- = to stay alive after a dangerous event
- = ways of doing something
- = (here) ideas and knowledge about a topic
- = when an activity makes you tired
- = when you believe someone is reliable, truthful, knows a lot
- = how much something is worth
- = instructions given out loud
- = a person who is injured or killed because of an accident or event
- = someone who does a job without being paid
- = (here) pads with a wire attached which go back to the defibrillator

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