

## Chatterbox #277 – The new space race

### Episode description

Have you ever wanted to travel to space? A few well-known billionaires definitely have! In fact, they have restarted the Space Race and their companies are racing into infinity and beyond. In this Chatterbox episode, Andrew and Anna talk about the new Space Race and what it means for the future of space travel.

Chatterbox is a series designed for intermediate and advanced English learners. Podcasts and audio lessons are a great way to improve your English listening skills. Culips' Chatterbox episodes feature natural, unedited conversations between native speakers, so you can build your English fluency. And this time, you will learn about the latest in space travel.

### Fun fact

The original Space Race started in the 1950s. In 1957, the USSR launched the first satellite into space called Sputnik. In 1961, they launched the first person into space.

There were many developments over the years, most notably in 1969 when the United States landed the first humans on the moon. The Space Race ended after the collapse of the USSR. After that, countries from both sides of the former Cold War have worked together.

### Expressions included in the study guide

- In a heartbeat
- Pet project
- To beat [someone] to the post
- Low-key
- Nerves of steel
- To get a lot of flack



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## Transcript

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Note: The words and expressions that appear in **bold text** within the transcript are discussed in more detail in the Detailed Explanations section that follows the transcript. The transcript has been edited for clarity.

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**Andrew:** Hello everyone, my name is Andrew.

**Anna:** My name is Anna.

**Andrew:** And you're listening to the Culips English Podcast.

Hello everyone. Welcome back to Culips. This is Chatterbox, which is our series for intermediate and advanced English learners that features natural, unedited conversations between native speakers about compelling topics. And, wow, we certainly have a very compelling topic for you all today. And to talk about it, I'm joined by my co-host, Anna. Hey there, Anna.

**Anna:** Hey, Andrew. How are you?

**Andrew:** I'm good. Anna, I almost jumped right into the topic without introducing you. So I'm sorry about that. But our topic for today is one that I'm really excited about. It is about the new era in space travel and space adventure that we are experiencing right now, because just recently, in July of this year, two successful companies that are headed by very interesting and famous billionaires, Richard Branson and Jeff Bezos, launched their companies that are going to do space tourism. The plan for these two companies is to tour people into outer space so that you can actually take a trip to space, Anna. It's quite remarkable and a very interesting story. And that's what we are going to talk about here today. I guess maybe, Anna, I should ask you right off the start. If you had an opportunity to take, you know, a 10-minute trip to space, would you do it?

**Anna:** I think if I had the opportunity, I don't think I would do it. I think I'm happy with tourism on Earth. I think I'll leave space tourism for other people. Even if I had the money, I don't think I would do it, no. What about you, Andrew?

**Andrew:** I would do it **in a heartbeat**. I would love to go to space. I think that would be so cool. Unfortunately, the ticket to ride to space is quite expensive. So I don't think I'll be doing it anytime soon.

But we'll get into all of the details about this exciting story for everyone in just a moment, Anna. But before we do, why don't we tell everyone about the study guide and transcript for this episode? So listeners, if you would like to follow along with our study guide, we have made one for this episode. And inside the guide, you will find a transcript of every word that we say as well as detailed vocabulary explanations and usage examples of how

you can use that vocabulary, plus a quiz and more. It's an awesome resource for learning English with us. And if you would like to study with it, all you have to do is visit our website Culips.com. Sign up and become a Culips member and then you can get it. It comes in two options, so there's a PDF option that you could download to your computer and print out if you're kind of old school and like studying with paper, which I know a lot of people do. Or if you're like me, and you're more of a modern guy, then maybe you would like to study on your computer or your phone. Don't worry, we have you covered there as well, because we have digital study guides that look great on mobile and computers. So if you want to get the guide, just visit Culips.com to do so.

**Anna:** We also wanted to give a shout-out to our listener Vinicius Carlos, a very regal name. Now you left us a nice comment on Castbox. And you said, "Thanks for the episode was very awesome. Keep going."

**Andrew:** Yes. Awesome. So, Vinicius Carlos, I agree, very regal, very proper sounding name. Sounds important, like maybe the name of a prince or a king or something like that.

**Anna:** Absolutely.

**Andrew:** So thank you so much for that review. And everyone if you would like to hear your name shouted out at the start of a Culips episode, and if you don't feel comfortable using your real name, you could always use a nickname, that's fine too. All you have to do is leave us a nice review on your favourite podcast service. So it doesn't matter if you listen to us on Castbox or Apple Podcasts or whatever your favourite app is. If you can leave us a review and support what we do here at Culips that way, then we will thank you for that by giving you a shout-out at the start of an upcoming episode. And thanks to everyone who has been leaving us reviews. It's very encouraging to read them all. We love reading them all. And it pushes us to keep going and making great episodes for you to learn English with. So with all of the announcements out of the way, why don't we get started with the main topic for this episode, which is the Space Race, the new Space Race that's happening. And actually, Anna, I had a question for you. And that's about this term Space Race, Space Race. It might be kind of new to some of our listeners, especially our younger listeners, because it's a historical term. What does it mean when we talk about Space Race? What kind of time does that refer to?

**Anna:** Well, actually, the term Space Race is something that was very commonly used in the late 50's and 60's talking about the Space Race between the United States and Russia, so this was this competition to be the first people. Was it in space, Andrew, or was there another? What was the objective?

**Andrew:** Yeah, it was about going to space first. I know that the USSR, I guess it was at the time, they were the first country to launch a satellite into space. And I think they were the first country to launch maybe a monkey into space, I think that's what they started with. They sent some animals into space, unbelievably. But really, it was just about the first country to gain dominance in space. And the USA won that race, because they were the

first country to put a man on the moon. So that was the historical Space Race, this competition between Russia and the USA to gain dominance in space. But recently, people have been talking about another Space Race, and that is the race for dominance in the space tourism industry. So there are two private companies. One is called Virgin Galactic, and the other is called Blue Origin. And both of these companies are going to be offering commercial space travel, so that just like you can buy a ticket on an airplane and go from one side of the world to the other side of the world. You know, in the near future, you'll be able to buy a ticket and go not to the other side of the world, but out of this world and go to space, look down on Earth, and then return and land back on the ground. So actually, recently, in July, both of these companies had their first successful flights into space. And Blue Origin is the **pet project** of Jeff Bezos, who is a super rich guy, one of the richest guys in the world, obviously, very well known for being the founder of Amazon, the online bookstore and retail website. And Virgin Galactic was founded by Richard Branson, and Anna, I was hoping that you could tell us a little bit about Richard Branson, because he's from your country. And I think maybe you know more about him than I do. So could you tell us a little bit about what kind of guy Richard Branson is?

**Anna:** He's got a couple of interesting parts to his story. Number one, he never went to university. In fact, I don't think he even finished his exams when he was 16. So he's a real true entrepreneur. One of the first businesses he started was a magazine and he started it from a phone box at his school.

**Andrew:** Wow.

**Anna:** So he, he's a real entrepreneur. And he's very, also very famous because he started the Virgin empire. So Virgin Trains, Virgin Holidays, Virgin Insurance. I mean, you name it, they've had a business in it. And he's also very famous because he has a private island in the Caribbean.

**Andrew:** I knew that, yes.

**Anna:** You know, just you know, when you want to hop on hop on a flight and get away for the weekend. He's got his own private island to do that. So I mean, he's, I think he's really well seen in general and in the UK, and just a real true entrepreneur that's built his entire you know, fortune from the ground up.

**Andrew:** Yeah, I know him obviously from the Virgin company, as you mentioned. Virgin Records is where I first know him from, the record store. He's got his hands in that business as well, the record business, and also there's the Virgin Atlantic airplane companies. So yeah, he's all over the place. He's started so many different businesses, and has been very successful, right? He is a billionaire, so obviously very successful with all of his endeavors.

**Anna:** Yeah, and I guess Richard also has a lot of qualities that are similar to Jeff Bezos. I mean, he also built his business from, from the ground up. One thing that I found really

funny about this space race is that I didn't really know that Richard Branson was in it. I have to be honest, it wasn't as widely reported as Jeff Bezos. So I kind of thought that maybe Richard was like, "Oh, my God, I've got to go quick, because otherwise Jeff's gonna **beat me to the post**." So I don't know why I didn't know that. But maybe, maybe you were the same as me, Andrew, but I didn't really know that Richard was planning to do that. So I kind of thought maybe he was, he was in a bit of a rush because he left I think maybe it was a week or maybe a few weeks before Jeff did it. So I'm not sure really why I didn't know that. But you know, they definitely seem to be in a little bit of, well, a little bit of competition, they absolutely are in competition with each other.

**Andrew:** Yeah, it's, it's really interesting that they both did their flights, their inaugural flights so close together. Actually, Richard Branson was the first one to do it. So he did his successful flight to space with Virgin Galactic. And then several days later, Jeff Bezos and Blue Origin, they did their flight. So Richard was the winner here of the space race. Now, we're not sure which company will gain market dominance. But you know, I knew that both of these guys were working on these things. Like they've been doing it for years. And it's, you know, it's in the news from time to time. But it's like one of those things that just seems like sci-fi, doesn't really seem real. So when you, you know, hear it on the news, like Richard Branson's going to space, he's making a space tourism company, you're like, yeah, yeah, whatever. But now it's real and we saw it. And we saw these guys go to space and come back, and talk to the press and share their opinions. And so I thought that was really quite fascinating how now it's real. And you know, they're selling tickets. You can buy a ticket. They're expensive, but they're going to start doing these space trips very, very soon. And anybody can buy a ticket and go.

**Anna:** It's incredible, I mean, it's just the developments that we have now, the things that we can do is just amazing. I think also with Jeff's flight, it was more kind of a PR event, especially in terms of the people that went with him. You know, he had a woman who was an astronaut, but never been to space. I think she was the oldest person in space. They also took the youngest person into space. So I think overall, Jeff's flight was kind of a little bit more of a PR opportunity. Whereas I think in Richard's case, he took two women who worked for him in Virgin Galactic. So I think it maybe was just a different type of approach. I think Richard was, you know, maybe just a little bit more **low-key**. But I mean, Jeff's launch into space was really widely covered in the press, I think it was more widely covered than many things. So but anybody can buy a ticket, as you said, but it's like, it's so expensive. If you think about the actual time that you spend doing something, and how much money it's going to cost. For me, even if I had a lot of money or whatever, I still don't think I could justify it. But it's a once in a lifetime experience. I can't imagine what it's like to go up and like look down on the Earth. I just think it would be too scary for me that whole idea of launching into space. I just think I would be so nervous that probably I would just pass out and then I would just miss the whole thing anyway.

**Andrew:** Well, then, in that case, Anna, maybe the Virgin Galactic company would be a better option for you because the way that their spacecraft works is it's much like an airplane. So you're in, they call it a mothership, it looks like an airplane, and it takes off



from the ground just the same way that an airplane does. However, once it gets up pretty high in the sky, then the rocket ship actually separates from the mothership and then boosts in the space. So it's much like the way that an airplane takes off and just keeps going and going and going until it's in space. And then when it's ready to return to Earth, it comes back into Earth's atmosphere and lands on the ground the same way that an airplane lands, so it's not too revolutionary. However, Blue Origin, I think, yeah, that requires **nerves of steel** because it's an unmanned rocket. So you just get into this rocket and a robot is in control. It launches you off. It's like, you know, like we've all seen on TV, a rocket launch. There's the fire underneath and it goes straight up in the air and after I think around three minutes of going straight up, then the top part of the rocket, the top capsule breaks off and floats into space, and you're just in this little capsule. And then it doesn't spend much time in space. It's only a few moments. I think three or four minutes. And then it returns back into Earth's atmosphere and parachutes down to the ground and lands that way. So yeah, that seems like a lot scarier to me, but also a lot cooler. Like when I compared the video footage between Virgin Galactic and Blue Origin, Blue Origin looked a lot cooler and more futuristic and high tech. So I had an option between the two, maybe I would go with Blue Origin. It would be awesome just to be launched by a rocket, that's got to be an unbelievable feeling.

**Anna:** I think that's where we can differ Andrew. I think you can go you can do Blue Origin, and I will have the slightly more relaxed version, which I think will help me with my nerves. Yes, I'm definitely more of a Galactic girl, I think that in my case, rather than a Blue Origin. But well, I mean, it's just incredible. I think, you know, there's a lot of controversy that's been around it. Why are they doing this now? You know, we come out of a year of the pandemic. And, you know, there are also a couple of comments that Jeff Bezos made about how he thanked his employees for enabling him to go to space. So there's also been a little bit of controversy around it, I don't know if you heard about that, as well, Andrew?

**Andrew:** Yeah, people online were really heavily criticizing both Bezos and Branson for spending all of this money for kind of just like a **pet project**, right? Like, you know, personally, my opinion is, yes, we have a lot of poverty and suffering in the world, but that doesn't mean that we should stop scientific exploration. And governments really kind of dropped the ball. You know, NASA sort of stopped doing any space exploration. Of course, you know, they always send out satellites and rovers to space, but they haven't been sending people to space, really. So it's been up to these private companies, like SpaceX run by Elon Musk and Blue Origin and Virgin Galactic, to pick up the pace and to do it themselves. So my perspective is that I'm glad that somebody is doing it. And, you know, billionaires, they **get a lot of flack**, they get so much hate on social media and online. I don't know, if it's always warranted, you know, they're under a lot of pressure. I'm sure that all billionaires do some sketchy stuff, I'm almost positive. I know, Jeff Bezos has been criticized a ton for the way that he treats his employees at Amazon. I'm sure there's room for improvement there. But at the end of the day, I think this is a net good. Could money be spent in a different way to sort of help the Earth be a better place to live? Maybe. But I think this is really going to be, like I said, a net benefit for everybody on

Earth, discovering space and exploring space like this. So I'm not sure if all the controversy is warranted, to be honest with you, Anna.

**Anna:** Yeah, I totally agree with you. And I think look, improvement has to come from both sides, you have to both look at it from a forward perspective. So you have to get better at things at the same time as improving things that are bad. So it's like two angles, you know, you've got to make the things that are bad, better, but you've also got to explore and make the good things even better as well, if that makes sense. So, I mean, I'm with you, I think, look there, if they weren't doing this, they'd be doing something else anyway. So I mean, it doesn't matter, billionaires are always going to be looking for ways to spend their money. And for me, this is, well, I mean, it's positive. Maybe they're going to share I mean, I'm sure they're going to share their findings and their research about all of this stuff that they're doing, and maybe that can help us, you know, help the world to advance this area. So, as you said, they get a lot of criticism. They're always going to get a lot of criticism. When people are so, so successful, they have so much money, it's kind of a natural thing, a natural reaction for a lot of people in the media, for example, as well. So, I mean, I can't imagine what it must be like to be them. But I think well, I think at the end of the day, they'll probably be quite happy sitting on their large fortune. And after recently going to space, I don't think they're going to be too bothered about the negative criticism. But as you said, there's always ways to do things better. So I'm not saying that they are angels or anything like that, but you know, they're going to be doing this or something else anyway. So this seems interesting and a positive, a really positive achievement.

**Andrew:** So Anna, I think we'll wrap it up here in a moment, but before we do, what I wanted to do is to share with everyone the comments that Jeff Bezos and Richard Branson made after their spaceflight. And both of them seem to have these kind of profound realizations, which this is where I think the benefits going to come in for the world because these super rich, influential people, I think they gained a new perspective on life, here on Earth after visiting space. So I thought we would listen to their comments, and maybe discuss them very quickly here, before we finish today's episode, because they're really quite interesting to hear. So Anna, why don't we listen to Richard Branson's comment first, because he was the first one to go to space out of these two guys. So let's take a listen to Richard Branson's comment that he made in his post space flight interview. Here we go.

**Richard Branson:** I will now spend, and I promise, I will now spend the next, I'm an optimist, the next 30 years of my life, you know, doing everything I can to protect the species on this beautiful Earth, to, you know, work on climate change issues, to work on, you know, trying to stop the degradation of our rain forests too. You know, just all the, all the thing, things that are getting the wrong way just to do everything we can to make them go the right way.

**Andrew:** So Anna, what's your take on that?

**Anna:** Well, I think this kind of is in line with his kind of persona. People see him as a really charitable person. So this is totally in line with what I would expect for him. And he seems really humble from his experience, and also very, as you said there, optimistic and dedicated. So I mean, what a great comment after coming back from space. I guess, maybe seeing the world from that angle, you're like, look, this is the only planet we have. There's no other planet sitting around the corner. Well, maybe Mars, but that's definitely, that's another episode.

**Andrew:** Yeah, the thing that we should mention, which is kind of a joke that I think Branson was making in that interview, he said, I'm very optimistic that over the next 30 years, I'll be able to improve life on Earth by taking care of the environment. The reason is that he's quite elderly. I'm not exactly sure of his age, but he must be in his 70's, I would assume. So yeah, for him to say over the next 30 years, it's kind of a joke that he's getting up there in age. And he's optimistic about living for a long time into the future. Let's compare that now with Jeff Bezos' comments about his experience, leaving the Earth and going to space and what he realized during his space trip. So let's listen to his comments now.

**Jeff Bezos:** The most profound piece of it for me was looking out at the Earth and looking at the Earth's atmosphere. Every astronaut, everybody who's been up into space, they say this, that it changes them, and they look at it and they're kind of amazed and awestruck by the Earth and its beauty, but also by its fragility. And I can vouch for that. When I look out, you know, we're sitting in this room, and we're driving our cars, and we're moving around the planet, in our normal ways, the atmosphere is so gigantic. You know, we're these tiny little things in the planet, the atmosphere is so big. But when you get up above it, what you see is it's actually incredibly thin. It's this tiny, little fragile thing. And as we move about the planet, we're damaging it. And, you know, so that is, you know, that's a very profound it's one thing to recognize that intellectually, it's another thing to actually see with your own eyes, how fragile it really is. And that was amazing.

**Andrew:** So a very similar comment from Jeff Bezos, saying that he made a profound realization, right? That once he got to space, it was his perspective that changed. He realized intellectually that we really only live on one planet. And that's as we go about our daily lives, we are damaging the planet. But getting that perspective of leaving the planet and seeing it from space, really seems to have clicked with Jeff Bezos. And it sounds like he now on a very deep level understands how valuable and precious our planet is.

**Anna:** Yeah, I mean, it was kind of similar, isn't it? They've both gone up, and they've both kind of had this wow, oh, my goodness, like, we've have a very thin atmosphere, you know, we are damaging the planet. So I guess in a way, you could say, well, in a way, if it were possible, everybody should go to space and have a look at the Earth because then everybody would understand that, you know, this is just one planet that we have. And maybe that would change people's way and way of life and behaviour. I mean, you have to have a shock to have a big realization you know, it's a shock. Like maybe looking back at the planet and seeing, oh my goodness, where we really are destroying some aspects of



the world. So, I mean, I think it's a positive realization, as you said, these two powerful individuals, maybe they will make some really powerful changes over the next few years, too.

**Andrew:** Yeah. And I think if anybody should come to these kinds of epiphanies, it should be rich, powerful people that can influence change here on the planet. You know, if it was me that did that I maybe would have the same realization. But I don't know if I could institute change on a large scale. However, Jeff Bezos, you know, if he decides to change the way that Amazon is run, he could have a huge impact. So this could be a good thing for everyone going forward. But we'll have to wait and see what happens.

**Anna:** So we'd love to know what you think about this topic. Do you think it was the right time to go into space? Would you go into space if you could? Would you be a Blue Origin or a Galactic person? We would love you to let us know. And you can send us an email at [contact@Culips.com](mailto:contact@Culips.com).

**Andrew:** That's right. We love to hear from you and are very interested to hear what you think about this new space race. If you enjoy listening to Culips, and find us helpful for improving your English skills, then we would love it if you could support us. And there are many different ways that you can do that. The best way is by signing up and becoming a member on our website [Culips.com](http://Culips.com). And when you become a member, you'll get a lot of awesome materials that will help you become a better English user. So to find out all the details, just visit [Culips.com](http://Culips.com). But that's not the only way you could support us. You could also really help us out by telling your friends who are learning English to listen to Culips by following us on social media, and by leaving us a five-star rating and a positive review on Apple Podcasts or wherever you get your podcasts. That's going to be it for us today. But we'll be back soon with another brand new episode. Take care and we'll talk to you then. Goodbye.

**Anna:** See you later.

## Detailed Explanations

### In a heartbeat Idiom

**In a heartbeat** means without delay or hesitation. When native English speakers say they'll do something **in a heartbeat**, it means they are very willing to do it. For example, Andrew mentions in this episode that he would go to space **in a heartbeat**. So he would go without delay or hesitation, if the opportunity comes up.

**In a heartbeat** also means very fast or immediately. Where the first meaning is for how people feel, the second is for situations, actions or things. For example, things can change **in a heartbeat**. That means that things can change very fast. This is a hyperbolic expression, which means it's an exaggeration. Of course, something will take more time than an actual heartbeat.

Here are a couple more examples with **in a heartbeat**:

<b>Rashida:</b>	Did you hear? Yuna's engaged!
<b>Elise:</b>	I did. I'm so happy for her. Jack's such a good guy. Are you and Omar going to the engagement party?
<b>Rashida:</b>	Yup! But Omar seemed really annoyed for some reason when I told him.
<b>Elise:</b>	Oh, maybe he was planning to propose to you and now he's made someone else beat him to the punch!
<b>Rashida:</b>	Oh. Oh! Maybe? If he proposed, I'd accept <b>in a heartbeat</b> ! Oh, I hope he asks.

<b>Stanley:</b>	Have you reviewed the third quarter projections?
<b>Hasib:</b>	I have. Though I'm not sure how accurate they'll turn out to be. I mean, the market is really volatile right now.
<b>Stanley:</b>	I know. I'm a bit worried. Things really have fluctuated this past year and I know things can change <b>in a heartbeat</b> .
<b>Hasib:</b>	Still, it doesn't hurt to have an idea of what's coming.

## Pet project

Noun

A **pet project** is a project, activity or goal that someone focuses on for personal reasons. When you call something a **pet project**, you're saying it is what you would much rather be doing, instead of the things you have to do, like your regular job.

**Pet projects** are rarely necessary or important to others. What makes it a **pet project** is that the person pursues it out of desire rather than responsibility. If it's at work, the **pet project** might be done in addition to assignments, maybe even on personal time. At home, it's something you spend your free time on, like a new hobby or interest.

Here are a couple more examples with **pet project**:

<b>Joon-Ho:</b>	I just saw Ren in the hallway with a very confused look on her face. Is everything OK?
<b>Young-Hee:</b>	Oh, yeah. She was just here asking for tips on how best to secure some wood planks or something to do with carpentry. I overheard her talking with Steve from the warehouse.
<b>Joon-Ho:</b>	Why would Ren need to know about carpentry? She works in sales.
<b>Young-Hee:</b>	I'm pretty sure she's working on a <b>pet project</b> for her younger sister. She's being really secretive about it though.
<b>Joon-Ho:</b>	All right, I'll be the nosy office neighbour and ask her about it.

<b>Meaghan:</b>	What's going on with the expansion pack that was announced last month?
<b>Scott:</b>	It was cancelled.
<b>Meaghan:</b>	What? No! I was looking forward to it. It was supposed to add extra levels to the game.
<b>Scott:</b>	Yeah. Sorry. I was reading about it last night. I guess the expansion was a <b>pet project</b> of one of the creators and the board of directors cancelled it when it got too expensive.
<b>Meaghan:</b>	Damn. That really sucks.

## To beat [someone] to the post Idiom

**Beat [someone] to the post** means to win by a narrow margin or at the last moment. This is used during races, competitions and athletic events. You will hear this idiom used with post in the UK, Australia and Ireland. Another UK variation on this idiom is **to pip somebody at the post**.

In North America, they say **to beat [someone] to it**, or **to beat [someone] to the punch**. These three phrases are very similar in meaning. When you **beat [someone] to the punch**, you do, say or achieve something before someone else. When you **beat [someone] to it**, you reach a destination or do something before the other person.

Here are a couple more examples with **beat [someone] to the post**:

<b>Kaelynn:</b>	Darn. We waited too long to launch our product.
<b>Daniel:</b>	Our new product? Do you mean the one we've been working on for the past six months?
<b>Kaelynn:</b>	That's the one. Our biggest competitors just <b>beat us to it</b> with their version.
<b>Daniel:</b>	What does that mean for our product?
<b>Kaelynn:</b>	Well, the managers still want us to launch, but we're not going to get the media coverage we planned on having. So that will affect our numbers..

<b>Gloria:</b>	The new Marvel movie is playing tomorrow at the discount theatre across from the mall. Do you want to come with?
<b>Rayyan:</b>	Ah! I was going to ask you if you wanted to see it at the new theatre over on Main Street, but you <b>beat me to the post</b> !
<b>Gloria:</b>	Oh, I haven't been to the new theatre. Let's go there.
<b>Rayyan:</b>	Nah, it's like, five times more expensive than the discount theatre. I like your suggestion much better.
<b>Gloria:</b>	OK, discount theatre it is! I'll pick you up tomorrow at around noon, OK?

## Low-key Adjective

**Low-key** means subdued, modest, quiet or restrained. **Low-key** events are relaxed and casual. They're usually small, without a lot of activity or elaborate décor. **Low-key** things and people are minimal, modest and restrained. They don't draw a lot of attention.

In this episode, Anna says that Richard Branson was a little bit more **low-key** than Jeff Bezos with his space travel, because he took two employees with him on his space adventure. Richard wasn't trying to get a lot of publicity and was quieter about his flight.

**Low-key** is also a slang adverb meaning in a restrained or discreet way. As an adverb, it often describes a speaker's desires or emotions. It shows that something that is secretly wanted or felt by the speaker. For example, you can have a **low-key** crush on someone.

Here are a couple more examples with **low-key**:

<b>Miku:</b>	Any big plans for this weekend?
<b>Benjamin:</b>	Nope. I might hit the gym, but otherwise, nothing on the schedule. Why?
<b>Miku:</b>	I'm having a party. It's really <b>low-key</b> , so nothing special. Do you want to come?
<b>Benjamin:</b>	Sure! Do you need me to bring anything?
<b>Miku:</b>	Just bring whatever you're drinking. Otherwise I've got things covered. Do you have any allergies or foods you don't eat?
<b>Benjamin:</b>	Nope, I eat everything.

<b>Hideaki:</b>	Did you see the cake in the lunchroom?
<b>April:</b>	I did. It looks so good, I <b>low-key</b> want to eat the entire thing myself.
<b>Hideaki:</b>	Same here. How about we play chess? The winner gets the cake.
<b>April:</b>	No way. You'll win for sure.



## Nerves of steel

### Idiom

Someone with **nerves of steel** is able to stay calm in dangerous and difficult situations. They are brave and strong with patience and courage. They don't show any nervousness or fear when faced with something dangerous or difficult. Andrew says Blue Origin requires **nerves of steel** because it's an unmanned rocket. Someone has to be very brave to ride it.

Steel is very strong. That's why having **nerves of steel** is a good thing. It means you are strong, brave and capable, no matter what happens.

Here are a couple more examples with **nerves of steel**:

<b>Maddie:</b>	I can't wait for my driving lesson this weekend.
<b>Leonard:</b>	Lesson? I thought you already had your license.
<b>Maddie:</b>	Oh, I do. This is racing lessons. I'm hoping to drive in Formula One someday.
<b>Leonard:</b>	Racing? You know, you need <b>nerves of steel</b> for that.
<b>Maddie:</b>	I know that. I'm pretty sure I can handle it.
<b>Leonard:</b>	OK. Well, I'll definitely come watch your first race so let me know when it happens.

<b>Jia:</b>	I'm so sorry to hear about your mother's passing. She was a great woman.
<b>Qing:</b>	She really was. She never backed down and was always there to protect me from danger.
<b>Jia:</b>	She had <b>nerves of steel</b> , your mom.
<b>Qing:</b>	I hope to be half the woman she is... was.
<b>Jia:</b>	You are. Believe me.

## To get a lot of flack

Idiom

**To get a lot of flack** means to be criticized, judged or reprimanded, often severely. If you **take** flack you're getting blamed for something. You can also say **to catch flack**. On the other hand, **to give [someone] flack** is to criticize, judge and blame someone.

flack is an abbreviation for a German word which means aircraft-defense gun. In this sense, **to get a lot of flack** is like shot at during a battle. Now, the meaning is much less violent.

Here are a couple more examples with **to get (a lot of) flack**:

<b>Wei:</b>	Are you coming on the school trip next week?
<b>Carmen:</b>	I can't. I'm grounded.
<b>Wei:</b>	What? How? You never go anywhere or do anything fun.
<b>Carmen:</b>	I <b>caught some flack</b> from my parents about the clothes I wore last weekend to the party. They caught me when I came home and they were not happy.
<b>Wei:</b>	Do you mean that string tank top with the shorts?
<b>Carmen:</b>	Yeah. It showed too much skin, I guess. So I'm grounded until next month.

<b>Sakiko:</b>	The manager wants to see you.
<b>Barbara:</b>	Right now? Why?
<b>Sakiko:</b>	Not sure, but she seemed mad about something.
<b>Barbara:</b>	Ugh! Why do I always <b>get the flack</b> when something goes wrong around here?
<b>Sakiko:</b>	I don't know. But I suggest you go now before she gets even angrier.
<b>Barbara:</b>	Fine. But we're definitely going out for drinks tonight.
<b>Sakiko:</b>	Deal.

## Quiz

- 1. Your friend tells you the dinner she attended was low-key. What was the dinner like?**
  - a) it was loud, extravagant and formal
  - b) it was subdued, quiet and casual
  - c) it was short and thrilling
  - d) it was long but exciting
  
- 2. Which of the following describes someone able to stay calm in dangerous and difficult situations?**
  - a) nerves of stew
  - b) nerves of stone
  - c) nerves of string
  - d) nerves of steel
  
- 3. What do you mean if you tell someone you'd travel somewhere in a heartbeat?**
  - a) you are very willing to travel
  - b) you are not at all willing to travel
  - c) your heart will stop beating if you travel
  - d) your heart will only beat if you travel
  
- 4. Which of the following means to win at the last moment?**
  - a) to beat a retreat
  - b) to beat to a pulp
  - c) to beat to the post
  - d) to beat a dead horse
  
- 5. What is a pet project?**
  - a) a pet that completes a project
  - b) a project that ends with a new pet
  - c) a project that someone focuses on for personal reasons
  - d) a project that someone does only for work

## Writing and Discussion Questions

1. What is something you would do in a heartbeat if you ever got the chance? Why?
2. Describe a current, past or future pet project you love working on.
3. What is something you low-key like and why?
4. Describe someone you think has nerves of steel.
5. When was the last time you got a lot of flack for something? What was it and why?

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## Quiz Answers

1. b   2. d   3. a   4. c   5. c

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### Episode credits

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