

Real Talk #051 – How to talk with the concierge at a hotel

Episode description

Have you ever noticed a well-dressed, friendly person working in the hotel lobby? This person is often helping guests with taxis or telling them about the best restaurants in town. Many hotels employ a person called a concierge. Their job is to help you with all your needs, big or small. In this Real Talk episode, Andrew and Kassy talk about the various ways a hotel concierge can help you during your visit.

Real Talk is a Culips series where we help you with real-life English in real-life situations. In this episode, our hosts talk about the hotel concierge. This person helps you with directions, restaurant suggestions, transportation tips, and reservations for whichever city you're visiting.

Fun fact

In this episode, Andrew and Kassy talk about hotel concierges and the services they provide in most hotels. However, it is possible to hire the services of a luxury personal concierge. For a price, this person can show you the high life of any location, from yachts to high-class parties to the most exclusive restaurants!

Expressions included in the study guide

- Concierge
- Correct me if I'm wrong
- Must-see
- Don't be afraid to ask
- To get a sense of [someone]
- To pass on [something]



Transcript

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.

Andrew: Hello there, everyone. My name's Andrew.

Kassy: And I'm Kassy.

Andrew: And this is the Culips English Podcast.

Hello there, everyone. Welcome back to Culips. Today, we have a Real Talk episode prepared for you. Now Real Talk is the series where we teach you the English expressions that you need to know for real-world situations. And to help me with this lesson, I'm joined by my cohost, Kassy. Hey there, Kassy.

Kassy: Hey, Andrew, and hey, listeners. Today we'll teach you how to ask for recommendations from a **concierge** at a hotel.

Andrew: All right. So today's lesson focus is on how to ask for recommendations from a **concierge** at a hotel. It's going to be a great episode, and we'll get to it in just a moment. But before we do, listeners, I want to let you know that there is a study guide for this episode on our website, Culips.com. And it's a great way to study with us, with that guide and following along with the transcript that's inside while you listen to us here today. So to download it and follow along as you listen, just visit our website, Culips.com, sign up and become a member, and then you can access it.

All right, Kassy. So let's break down the plan for today. What we're going to do is learn some practical expressions that you can use when you're asking for recommendations at a hotel. And first what we'll do is listen to an example conversation between the hotel **concierge** and the guest staying at the hotel. Kassy, maybe we should talk about who a **concierge** is. Could you break this down for us? Who is this person and what do they do?

Kassy: A hotel **concierge** works at the front of a hotel. And they're usually there to help guests in whatever capacity they may need, especially with advice or some sort of information in the local area, maybe about restaurants or transportation or entertainment and tourist hotspots in the area.

Andrew: Exactly. Now, for our listeners from France or Quebec, they probably have no problem with this word because I think it's originally a French word. However, I think maybe some of our listeners from other parts of the world, especially parts of the world where a Romance language isn't spoken, they might be thinking what the heck is up with the pronunciation of this word, because as far as I know, it retains its French pronunciation for the most part. French listeners can **correct us if we're wrong**. But let's break down the pronunciation of this word, Kassy. How can we say it? It's **concierge**, right? That ending sound is /jerʒ/, which is a very rare sound in English, I feel.

Kassy: Yeah, I think you'd only hear this in borrowed English words.

Andrew: Yeah, it's not very common. And what about the spelling? How can we spell this word **concierge**?

Kassy: **Concierge** is spelled C-O-N-C-I-E-R-G-E.

Andrew: All right. OK, so we are going to take a listen to this example conversation between the hotel guest and the hotel **concierge**. And why don't we do that right now?

Kassy: Let's do it.

Concierge: Hello, how can I help you?

Guest: Oh, hello. I was just wondering if you had any pamphlets or brochures that recommended any **must-see** sights in the area?

Concierge: Of course, we do. But maybe I could offer you some suggestions personally, as well. What are your interests?

Guest: Well, I'm here with my wife and kids. They're 8 and 10 years old. So we're looking for something family friendly to do.

Concierge: Ah, then I would definitely recommend checking out the zoo. It's open every day between 8 a.m. and 4 p.m. There's also a fantastic rain forest-themed restaurant inside the zoo that I'm sure the kids will love.

Guest: Wow, that sounds great. Well, what's the best way to get there from here?

Concierge: Our hotel can arrange a taxi service for you or you can catch bus number 21. It's a block down the road from our hotel and that will take you straight to the zoo.

Guest: Great. OK, and I have one more question for you. Our flight leaves really early on Monday morning. Could you schedule a wake-up call for our room?

Concierge: Yeah, no problem. What time should we call?

Guest: 5 a.m. should do it. Thank you.

Concierge: Of course. Here's our hotel card. If you need anything else, **don't be afraid to ask**.

Andrew: So we just listened to that example conversation between the hotel guest and the **concierge**. And the **concierge** was very helpful at answering all of the guest's questions and recommending some activities for the guests to do with his family, and some information about transportation, as well. And, really, this is the job of the **concierge** is to give you recommendations about activities and restaurants and advice on transportation and how to get around, all of these things.

So, Kassy, what we're going to do next is go back and go through this conversation one more time and talk about some of the important expressions and important questions that we heard the two speakers use in the example conversation. And so the first one that we should highlight is, really, how the guest asked about activities to do in the area. So the guest asked the **concierge**, I was wondering if you had any pamphlets or brochures that recommend **must-see** sights in the area? **Must-see** sights in the area. Could you break this down for us, Kassy, what is a **must-see** sight?

Kassy: **Must-see** sights are quite literally sights that you must see, you shouldn't miss out on if you are in that area. They're places that that area is famous for, like the Eiffel Tower in Paris or the Taj Mahal in India.

Andrew: Yeah, absolutely. So sight is just another way of saying like a tourist attraction or a tourist sight, right? The kind of popular area that all the tourists love to visit. All right, perfect.

Now, moving on. The **concierge** asks the guest a question. The question is, what are your interests? What are your interests? Why would the **concierge** ask you this question when you're talking to them?

Kassy: Because everyone is different. Maybe one guest is really interested in finding the best restaurants in the area. But another guest might care less what they eat, they might go to McDonald's for lunch, but they're really interested in finding the best places to take pictures or go for walks.

Andrew: Yeah, absolutely. And in this case, the guest was travelling with his family. And when you have your kids and family with you, well, that's really going to determine the kinds of places that will be appropriate for you to visit. Like, I know a lot of kids don't like to go to old history museums all day long, right? Maybe they want to go to a theme park or an amusement park or a zoo. And so you could expect the **concierge** to ask you this kind of question just so they could **get a sense of who you are**, and what would be a good activity to recommend to you.

Kassy: Exactly, yes. And like you mentioned, this man has two kids. So he said that they needed an activity that was family friendly, family friendly.

Andrew: Family friendly. Yeah, that's a great way to say that you want to do something that is appropriate for kids, right? It's mostly to do with children. And we don't use it just to only talk about activities. We could even say things like that's a family friendly movie, or that's a family friendly restaurant. It just means that kids are welcome and the content, you know, of the movie is appropriate for children to watch. It's not too violent or sexual or something that's not good for kids to look at.

Kassy: Yeah, and I think parents already know that family friendly restaurants are important. You don't want to be taking your kids to a fancy establishment that focuses on, you know, romantic couples or something, 'cause your kids might be screaming and throwing crayons in the background. That would not be good for business.

Andrew: Exactly. So that's a great expression to know if you are a parent and have a family, especially with children. Now, a little later in the conversation, we heard the guest ask the **concierge** about getting to the zoo. So the **concierge** recommended that the guest and his family check out the zoo. And so that guest wanted to know about how to get there. So he asked a great question that I would recommend all of our listeners memorize, especially if you're ever travelling in an English-speaking country. Now this question is what's the best way to get there from here? What's the best way to get there from here? And really, it just means please recommend the best way to travel from where I am right now, when I'm talking to you, to the destination that I want to arrive at.

Kassy: Yes, that's right. This is a really useful phrase to use and to have when you're travelling. But it's not the only way you can phrase this question. You could say, where's the nearest taxi service? Or where's the nearest bus stop from here? Or could you show me on the map how to get there?

Andrew: Exactly. Or you may even want to ask how long does it take to get there from here? Because it might be too far away, maybe the zoo is 2 hours away and you're, like, no, that's just too far to get to the zoo.

Kassy: I'll pass.

Andrew: I'll pass this time, yeah. Now, Kassy, moving along in this conversation, the **concierge** gives the information to the guest about the options for getting to the zoo, such as arranging for a taxi service to pick the guest up or taking the bus to the zoo. And the guest says, yeah, that's great. Thank you for the information. Oh, and there's one more thing. He asked the **concierge** one more thing, and that is to schedule a wake-up call. And in our previous Real Talk episode, we mentioned what a wake-up call is. But just in case some listeners didn't hear that episode, or maybe just as a little review, Kassy, could you describe what a wake-up call is?

Kassy: Yeah. So a wake-up call is especially important when you have an early morning flight. It's when the hotel's front desk will call up to your room just to make sure that you are awake and able to catch your flight in the morning.

Andrew: Excellent, yes. So if you have problems waking up in the morning, then arranging for a wake-up call is a very good idea so that you don't miss your flight, which would really, really be terrible, I think.

OK, Kassy, so we're gonna wrap up this episode in a moment. But before we do wrap it up, I have just a quick question for you. And that is in the USA, in the country that you're from, what kind of hotel would you find a **concierge** at? Is there a **concierge** at every hotel? And what about motels, as well, would they have a **concierge**? Like, where can you find this service?

Kassy: Honestly, I think **concierges** are only found at fancier establishments. However, these days, most places or even like hostels, you know, low-cost places will have a **concierge** book, kind of. So even if it's not a person you can ask questions to, they have a whole booklet full of restaurant guides, **must-see** sights. Any kind of question you might have could probably be found in that book.

Andrew: Yeah, that's the same in my country, as well. In Canada, a **concierge** is usually not found in cheaper hotels or in motels, but from mid-range to high level and expensive hotels, then usually they will have a **concierge**. But even if your hotel or where you're staying doesn't have a **concierge** doesn't mean that you can't talk to any member of the hotel staff to ask them questions like this. So if your hotel or the place that you're staying at doesn't have specific **concierge**, then you can just feel free to talk to maybe the front desk person or any staff member. And I'm sure they would be able to help you out and you could use the same kind of questions and same expressions to talk to that person as well.

Kassy: Yeah, actually on a side note, I have a friend who is travelling in Africa right now. I feel very ignorant, I don't remember the country. But she asked her taxi driver for a suggestion on where to eat. And he recommended one of his favourite dishes in his area. And she actually went on a hunt for that food. So you could even ask these questions to just people in the city that you meet, like a restaurant owner or a taxi driver or someone like that.

Andrew: Yeah, absolutely.

All right. Well, that is going to bring us to the end of today's episode. Thank you for listening, everyone, and thank you for practicing English with us today. We hope that by listening and studying with this episode, you were able to improve your English and become a better English listener and speaker.

Now, speaking of that, if you find Culips helpful for building and developing your English language skills, then we would love it if you could support us. And there are several ways that you can do that. The best way is by visiting our website, Culips.com, and signing up to become a Culips member. When you're a Culips member, you will get study guides and transcripts to all of our episodes, along with a bunch of other helpful bonuses. So definitely visit Culips.com to find all the information you need to learn about signing up.

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If you have a question or a comment for us, our email address is contact@Culips.com. And we would love to hear from you, so don't feel shy about getting in touch with us. We'll be back soon with another brand-new Culips episode and we'll talk to you then. Take care everyone. Goodbye.

Kassy: Bye.

Detailed Explanations

Concierge Noun

In this episode's example dialogue, one of the two characters is a **concierge**. In the dialogue, the **concierge** helps the hotel guest with suggestions on what to do while visiting the city. That is one of the many jobs of a hotel **concierge**.

In most mid-range to upscale hotels, you will find a helpful **concierge** in the lobby. This person can assist guests in many ways. They can recommend restaurants or things to do. They can help arrange your transportation, whether giving you directions or even calling you a taxi. They can also take care of sending and receiving packages for hotel guests.

If you are in a country where tipping is common, it is customary to tip a **concierge** depending on the services they provided.

Here are a couple more examples with **concierge**:

Martha: What do you want to do tomorrow after we wake up?

George: I heard there's an awesome museum a few blocks away. Let's check that out.

Martha: Sure. Who told you that?

George: Remember this afternoon when I came up to the room later than you? I was talking to the **concierge**. He actually gave me a list of things to do. Here, take a look.

Izzy: I made hotel reservations for our trip next week.

Marion: OK, good. Wait, do you know if there's a **concierge** at the hotel?

Izzy: There should be. Why?

Marion: Since we're going to a new city, it would be nice to have a local person to ask for sightseeing suggestions.

Correct me if I'm wrong

Idiom

In this episode, Andrew pronounces concierge in what he thinks is the correct French way, but he's not sure. So Andrew asks French listeners to **correct him if he's wrong**. You can use variations on **correct me if I'm wrong** as a way to tell people that you are uncertain whether what you are saying is accurate.

Saying **correct me if I'm wrong** is a polite way to announce that you are open to being corrected. In fact, you are literally asking people to correct anything that you said that might be incorrect. **Correct me if I'm wrong** is often said at the beginning of a sentence.

Here are a couple more examples with **correct me if I'm wrong**:

Ethan: We have a small issue concerning our payments.

Patricia: OK. I'm listening.

Ethan: Taylor Inc. just called us about our final payment. They're wondering when we are going to send them the money.

Patricia: **Correct me if I'm wrong**, but I think we finished all of our payments to that company last week.

Ethan: Actually, I checked right before talking to you, and we didn't. So, when can they expect our payment?

Patricia: Oh, I must have overlooked that. I can take care of it right away. Thanks for telling me.

Jihee: What time will we be arriving in Ottawa?

Frances: If we leave around 12 p.m., we should get there by 4 p.m.

Jihee: What? At 4 p.m.? **Correct me if I'm wrong**, but doesn't it only take about 2 hours to drive to Ottawa from Montreal?

Frances: Oh, you're right. So we can leave a couple of hours later if you want.

Jihee: Or we can get there early and walk around.

Must-see Adjective

In the example dialogue, the hotel guest asks the concierge if there are any pamphlets that recommend **must-see** sights in the area. If you say something is a **must-see** place, you are highly recommending that someone visit it. You are literally telling that person that they must see it. It is similar to telling someone **you need to see it** or **you really shouldn't miss it**.

You can use a similar format with must for many adjectives. You can recommend **must-watch** movies, **must-see** TV, **must-visit** countries, and **must-read** books.

Here are a couple more examples with **must-see**:

Marcus: Do you have any suggestions for when I visit Seoul?

Dongho: Of course! You like architecture, right?

Marcus: I love architecture.

Dongho: OK. There's a **must-see** neighbourhood called Bukchon Hanok Village near the palace. It's full of houses built in the traditional Korean style. They're really nice. You will really enjoy it.

Marcus: Great. I'll write that down. How do you spell it?

Sarah: What books are you planning to read this summer?

Nicky: I don't know yet. I'm still waiting.

Sarah: Waiting for what?

Nicky: Every year, the BBC comes out with their list of **must-read** books for the summer. I usually pick a few from their list.

Sarah: Sweet. Do you know when it's coming out?

Nicky: It should be soon. I'll send you the link when I see it.

Don't be afraid to ask Idiom

At the end of the example dialogue, the concierge says that if the guest needs anything else, he shouldn't be afraid to ask. **Don't be afraid to ask** is a common expression used by service workers to let other people know they are available to further help them.

Don't be afraid to ask is often said by clerks whose job it is to help people in large stores. Think of the clerks who work at supermarkets, home furniture stores, and bookstores.

When saying **don't be afraid to ask**, you need to include a preposition beginning with if. For example, you can say, "If you need anything else, **don't be afraid to ask**" or "**Don't be afraid to ask** if you think of anything else."

Here are a couple more examples with **don't be afraid to ask**:

Jill: Excuse me. I can't seem to find the olives. Do you have any in stock?

Clerk: Sure. They're just over here.

Jill: I must be blind. I was looking and looking and still couldn't find them.

Clerk: That's all right. If you're looking for anything else, **don't be afraid to ask**.

Jill: Thanks.

Howard: Excuse me. Are the blue shirts also on sale?

Clerk: Yes, they are.

Howard: And how about those with the interesting design?

Clerk: Unfortunately, those are new arrivals so they aren't on sale. But if you look around the corner, you'll find a bin full of shirts on sale in every colour.

Howard: Oh, great. Thanks.

Clerk: No problem. If I can help you with anything else, **don't be afraid to ask**. I'll be over here.

To get a sense of [someone]

Idiom

In this episode, Andrew explains that a concierge will likely ask you what kind of interests you have. They would do this **to get a sense of who you are** so they can better help you with recommendations. **To get a sense of [someone]** is to begin to know someone else. A concierge will not truly know you after a few questions, but they will know you enough to guide you based on your answers.

You can also **get a sense of a place or situation**. For example, if you walk into a new supermarket and it kind of looks like one you know very well, you can quickly **get a sense of this new supermarket**. You will have an idea about what kind of products you can buy and perhaps where you can find them, even though it is your first time there.

Here are a couple more examples with **to get a sense of [someone]**:

Jimmy: What do you think of the new guy working at the front desk?

Trevor: Not sure. I've only talked to him a few times.

Jimmy: Me too. I haven't yet **got a good sense of him**. I think he's pretty shy.

Trevor: He looks shy, but the boss told me he's really friendly once he opens up.

Jimmy: Should we invite him out for drinks?

Maria: What are you doing?

Véro: I'm researching our trip.

Maria: Why do you always do so much research on a place before visiting it? The whole fun of travelling is to discover somewhere new.

Véro: I know, but I like **to get a good sense of the place** before I visit. I'm much more comfortable that way.

To pass on [something]

Phrasal verb

In this episode, our hosts talk about visiting a zoo. However, if the zoo is 2 hours away, both Andrew and Kassy agree that they would **pass on visiting it**. **To pass on [something]** is to decide not to do something. It's basically saying no. **To pass on [something]** usually comes after someone's offer. Someone can offer you free ice cream. If you don't want any, you can say **I'll pass**.

You can also **pass on [someone]**. For example, if your friend was not selected for a team, that means the team **passed on your friend**.

This expression is different from to pass on [something] to [someone], which means to give something to someone else.

Here are a couple more examples with **to pass on [something]**:

Geoff: Hey, my friend just texted me with a deal on Disneyland tickets for you and your family.

Chandra: What's the deal?

Geoff: She can get them for half price if you go in the month of November. Are you interested?

Chandra: November? I'm sorry. It's not possible then. **I'll pass**.

Geoff: OK.

Chandra: Thanks anyways.

Bradley: Do you have any news on Adam? Did they hire him?

Miko: No. It looks like they **passed on him**.

Bradley: That's too bad. I hope he finds a job soon.

Miko: Me too. He's a really hard worker.

Quiz

1. What does a concierge NOT usually do?

- a) call a taxi for you
- b) give you directions
- c) tell you about interesting sights
- d) clean your hotel room

2. If you want to get a sense of someone, you want to _____.

- a) know this person more
- b) avoid this person

3. Why would a clerk tell you don't be afraid to ask?

- a) they want you to be afraid
- b) they don't want you to ask them more questions
- c) they are taking a break
- d) they are open to helping you further

4. True or false? To pass on something is to refuse it.

- a) true
- b) false

5. What is the best description of a must-see place?

- a) somewhere that might be fun
- b) somewhere you kind of liked
- c) somewhere with a decent tourist rating
- d) somewhere many tourists love to visit

Writing and Discussion Questions

1. What experiences have you had with concierges during your travels?
2. What kind of research do you do before travelling?
3. If someone says to you “correct me if I’m wrong,” would you feel comfortable correcting them if they are wrong? Why or why not?
4. What are some must-see places in your hometown?
5. Are you the type of person who can get a sense of someone quickly? What do you look for in someone when you first meet them?

Quiz Answers

1. d 2. a 3. d 4. a 5. d

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