

Chatterbox #176 – Casinos

Episode description

Are you in the mood for fun? Let your hair down, and join Andrew and Suzanne as they discuss casinos, nightlife, and painting the town red!

Fun fact

Casinos are quite popular in Canada, and are littered across the country. Some of these casinos are full-fledged resorts with on-site hotels, spas, restaurants, and attractions. Casino Niagara, located in Ontario, is built right next to the Niagara Falls. It opened in 1996, and remains one of Canada's most well-known casinos.

Expressions included in the learning materials

- A hotspot
- An alter ego
- To be feeling it
- To paint the town red
- To let your hair down
- To throw caution to the wind



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.

Andrew: Hey everybody. I'm Andrew.

Suzanne: And I'm Suzanne. Hi.

Andrew: Hey, and we're back with another Culips episode.

Suzanne: Yay!

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Andrew: Hey Suzanne. How's it going today?

Suzanne: It's going well. I'm really digging my coffee, I have to say.

Andrew: It's a good way to start the episode, right? With a sip of coffee, get you all pumped for recording.

Suzanne: Energized, yeah.

Andrew: Hey, I bet you can't guess what I did last week.

Suzanne: What did you do?

Andrew: I bought a lottery ticket. And I never ever buy lottery tickets, but I was feeling particularly lucky that day.

Suzanne: Ooh.

Andrew: I just had a really good day. I **was feeling it**. And one of my friends always buys lottery tickets, so kinda got me thinking about playing the lottery. But you know what? Didn't win anything.

Suzanne: Aw, snap! I'm sorry. You know, next time you feel lucky, you know what you should do?

Andrew: Hmm, what's that?

Suzanne: You book a ticket to Vegas, baby.

Andrew: Las Vegas. I've never been to Vegas before. But you're right, that's a great place to go if you're feeling lucky.

Suzanne: It is.

Andrew: Maybe the place to go. So today, we are going to do a Chatterbox episode, where we have a natural conversation and we speak freely and talk about an interesting topic. And today, we're talking all about casinos.

Suzanne: Ooh!

Andrew: Suzanne, I want to start this episode just by giving a general definition and explanation about what casinos are 'cause they're a little bit different in every part of the world. So just briefly, what's a casino?

Suzanne: Yeah, it's my experience that casinos are large buildings or sometimes even hotels. They have restaurants. They have areas where there's a lot of gaming going on. So they have card tables and craps tables and slot machines, and different kinds of games where you gamble money, but you can win money. And sometimes they have shows. They have ... Yeah, lots of fun activities for adults. And usually, I think there's an age limit. Like, you have to be at least 18 or 21, I think, because there are gambling rules, at least in the States.

And yeah, they serve drinks. A lot of times when you're gambling, you could drink for free. Did you know that?

Andrew: I did know that, believe it or not. And yeah, so you're exactly right. A casino is just a place where people go to gamble, to play games and try to win lots of money. And depending on the place where the casino is, it could be really, really big and have restaurants and theatres and other sorts of entertainment attached too.

Suzanne: Yeah, there are, like, circus acts and magicians, lots of magic shows.

Andrew: Celine Dion.

Suzanne: Exactly. Britney Spears, hello.

Andrew: Does she have a show there as well?

Suzanne: Mmhmm.

Andrew: Really?

Suzanne: Yup. Right now, you can see her.

Andrew: Now I have to go.

Suzanne: Yeah. But yeah, so you can see celebrities. You can see magic shows. In Vegas, they also have different themes for different hotels and casinos. So there's one that's the New York Hotel, and that has a whole skyline of New York City. And when you go in, it sets it up like you're in Brooklyn, and it's like you're in New York.

So there's also The Venetian, which has actual gondola rides inside the casino, where you feel like you're in Venice.

Andrew: What about the Luxor?

Suzanne: The Luxor is kind of the Egyptian. It's a pyramid, and it's kind of like Ancient Egypt. So there's imitation sculptures of different old artifacts, and they make it look like a temple, you know, like an Egyptian temple so...

Andrew: Ooh, cool.

Suzanne: The Bellagio is, you know, with the famous fountain, like in *Oceans 11*. In Vegas, there are different themed hotels, which is kind of fun because if you don't want to gamble, you can enjoy the ambience of each of the hotels and lobbies. And your friends or family can go gamble away their money.

Andrew: Well, judging from your knowledge of the Vegas hotels, I'm assuming that you've visited before?

Suzanne: Yes, I have, a few times. I think three times, and it's quite an experience. It's pretty crazy there.

Andrew: There's the expression *what happens in Vegas, stays in Vegas*. What does this mean?

Suzanne: I can't tell you. I'm kidding. I'm just kidding. I think because a lot of rules are broken there, in the sense that you can carry around your drinks all through the streets and into the next hotel. You can walk around and drink. There's lots of opportunities to party, to kind of go crazy, **to just let your hair down and throw caution to the wind, and paint the town red.**

You really can go crazy and enjoy the city and have fun. And it's kind of like an adult amusement park in that way. And so because of that, people tend to do things that they maybe normally wouldn't do in their everyday lives. And so ...

Andrew: Mmhmm.

- Suzanne: Maybe they might drink or have a night out where they're doing goofy, crazy stuff. And they feel embarrassed the next day, or they don't wanna talk about it because, "Oh my gosh! Did I do that?"
- Andrew: Or their wallet is empty.
- Suzanne: Yeah, or maybe they lost all their money at the craps table. But I think that's why they don't talk about it. They keep it in Vegas. It's a secret.
- Andrew: Right. They do all this crazy stuff, and then they don't talk about it again. We will just ignore that. What we did in Vegas stays there. When I leave, it's over. Then back to regular life.
- Suzanne: Yeah, it's like you have a double personality, you know?
- Andrew: Yeah.
- Suzanne: An **alter ego** that you become when you're in Vegas.
- Andrew: So when you visited Vegas, did you gamble at all?
- Suzanne: A little bit. I'm not someone who likes to gamble with money because I feel like I work very hard for my money, and I like to buy actual things with it.
- Andrew: Not a 5-minute thrill?
- Suzanne: Yeah, sometimes it's faster than 5 minutes. But I do enjoy maybe playing one or two games. And the first time I went to Vegas, I went with my family actually, which is strange because you don't normally associate Vegas as a family vacation.
- Andrew: Mmhmm.
- Suzanne: But I went with my family because my sister was turning 21.
- Andrew: OK.
- Suzanne: My father loves Vegas. He goes, like, twice a year, and he has a whole system for gambling.
- Andrew: A gambling system, ooh.
- Suzanne: Do you wanna know about this system?
- Andrew: I want to hear this secret, yeah.
- Suzanne: It's very organized.

Andrew: OK.

Suzanne: It's ... OK, so he puts a certain amount of money in different envelopes. So if he knows he's gonna be there for 3 days, he knows there's about two gambling opportunities a day. Like, maybe before dinner or after dinner, and like, around lunchtime. Otherwise he goes to see a show or something like that.

Andrew: Sure.

Suzanne: So he'll put maybe \$300 in each envelope, and then he puts it in the safe in the room and locks it up. And he'll take just the envelope for Saturday afternoon, and he puts a time limit on it as well.

So by three o'clock, if he's out of this money, that's it.

Andrew: That's it.

Suzanne: He's not gambling.

Andrew: OK.

Suzanne: Or at three o'clock, if he's winning money, he stops. Do you see what I mean?

Andrew: Right, so he's got a system in place that kind of protects him from losing too much money ...

Suzanne: Exactly.

Andrew: If it doesn't go the way that he wants.

Suzanne: Exactly. So then say three o'clock comes around and he has \$600, and he made double his money, he puts it back in the envelope, seals the envelope, and puts that envelope into the safe, and he doesn't touch it all weekend.

Andrew: Wow, a man with a plan.

Suzanne: This way he knows he's not gonna be with no shirt at the end of the night. No, he doesn't gamble that much, but he's very organized with it.

Um, I played craps once.

Andrew: OK.

Suzanne: Sorry, twice. And then I also just play the silly slot machines. You know, the Wheel of Fortune.

Andrew: I like the slot machines.

Suzanne: Yeah. Which ones?

Andrew: I don't gamble very much, to tell you the truth. If I do find myself in a casino, I usually only will play a couple of times just for fun. And usually a cheap one, so a quarter slot or something. Maybe even a nickel slot.

Suzanne: Yeah.

Andrew: Where I can get more bang for my buck.

Suzanne: Yeah, I would say nickel. Do you ever have those gambling superstitions? Some people say, like, "OK, if I shake this person's hand, I'm gonna win." A lot of people in Vegas, they have these superstitions. Like, if you touch their machine, they're like, "No, don't touch my machine." They get really weird.

Andrew: I do think that if I'm going to play a slot machine or a video gambling machine, I do wanna play one that has just been vacated by some other player so that it's warmed up. It's hot, and it's ready to give me a big payout.

Suzanne: And how much was the most that you've ever won?

Andrew: I can't remember exactly. It was \$35 or \$50, or something like that. And I think that's the biggest I've ever won, and probably ever will win.

Suzanne: That's great. I'm with you though. I think just living life is a gamble, so I don't really gamble my money very often.

Andrew: When I was in my first year of university, there's a tiny casino in my hometown, and I had just turned a legal age limit to be able to go into the casino. And so my friends and I would sometimes go.

And it was great because they had this really old-school horseracing game that was actually made by Sega, the video game company. And this was a huge racetrack that was maybe 30 or 40 feet long, really big. And it had these mechanical horses that were maybe 2 feet high, and they ran on the track, and you could bet for the horse that you wanted to win. Even though everything was fully automatic, you would bet like you were watching real horses. So that was always a kick to go in and just put a little bit of money on a horse and watch these robot horses run around this track.

Suzanne: That's cool.

Andrew: It was really exciting, yeah.

Suzanne: What casino **hotspots** have you been to, Andrew?

- Andrew: Because I'm really not much of a gambler, I haven't been to any of the **hotspots** really. We've talked about Vegas quite a bit. There's also Atlantic City.
- Suzanne: Yes.
- Andrew: This is near New York, right?
- Suzanne: Yeah, and I've only been there once. When I was there, it was pretty rundown, so it wasn't as interesting as Las Vegas. But maybe it's had a makeover. I feel like they were renovating the Boardwalk because it's right on the water.
- Andrew: Hence the name, Atlantic City.
- Suzanne: Yes.
- Andrew: Very cool. Of course, in Europe, we have Monte Carlo. And I've seen this place in movies. I think there's a James Bond movie where they show the casino in Monte Carlo, but unfortunately, I've never been myself. But I do know it's a famous gambling spot.
- Suzanne: Yeah, I've never been either, but that's ... Yeah, I've heard that too.
- Andrew: In Canada, Niagara Falls is probably the most popular place to visit a casino. So if you wanna check out the waterfall, Niagara Falls, you can do that. And then in the evening, when the sun goes down, you can play some poker or a slot machine in one of the fine casinos we have in Niagara Falls.
- Suzanne: Oh, I forgot. There's one other thing that we didn't really cover about casinos that I think our audience really needs to know.
- Andrew: What is that?
- Suzanne: I can only really speak for the Vegas and Atlantic City casinos. However, I did see some of these in the casinos in Montreal and also in Tremblant, or Tremblant, here in Quebec.
- Andrew: What did you see?
- Suzanne: The all-you-can-eat buffets.
- Andrew: Oh yeah. The all-you-can-eat buffet, wow.
- Suzanne: This is a very North American concept. And you pay a flat fee, anywhere from \$12 to, like, \$25, I would say. Maybe they're more now. But they have lobster, they have steak, and just, like, crazy delicious and large amounts of food. Some of them are better than others, of course.

And it's a big ole meal. It's very good, and you can eat as much as you want. You can sit there for 2 or 3 hours, and just keep eating.

Andrew: Now I'm really sold. I definitely have to visit Vegas now. Have some fun, play some games, and then eat until I can eat no longer.

Suzanne: Yeah, and then maybe you can even pack a few rolls in your bag, and then have some snacks for later.

Andrew: I think that about wraps up our conversation on casinos. It was a really fun talk.

Suzanne: Yeah, absolutely. It's always fun talking about Vegas, baby!

Andrew: Yeah. But before we go, I do want to remind all of our listeners to check out our website at Culips.com—that is C-U-L-I-P-S.com—to learn about becoming a Culips member.

Suzanne: Thank you so much for listening to our casino episode.

Andrew: Yeah, thanks everyone. We will be back soon with another episode. Bye.

Suzanne: Bye.

Detailed Explanations

A hotspot

A hotspot means an exciting and popular place to visit. English-language speakers often use a **hotspot** to refer to a popular club, bar, or other nightlife, but the term can be used to talk about any lively and popular destination.

In this episode, Suzanne asks Andrew what casino **hotspots** he's visited. In other words, she asks what popular and exciting casinos Andrew has visited. So **a hotspot** means a trendy and well-liked place.

Hotspot is a great word to use when touring in an unfamiliar city. If you're looking to find out what places are the most popular with the locals, you can always ask, "What are the local **hotspots**?"

Be careful: **a hotspot** can also mean a place where there is a lot of danger or fighting. If someone is speaking about war or a perilous trip, chances are that they are using **a hotspot** as a replacement for a dangerous place.

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

Clarence:	I asked Julia from work out for drinks, but I have no idea where to take her. Do you know a cool, popular place to go?
Beatrice:	You asked the right girl! I know all the hotspots around town. You should go to Bar Cabinet. It's this awesome cocktail bar in Mile End. It would be perfect.
Clarence:	Awesome, thank you so much!

Liam:	Hi Emma, do you want to go dancing tonight? Jen and Alex said that they were up for going.
Emma:	I might, but it depends on where you plan to go. I don't like dancing at places that are too crowded.
Liam:	We're not going to a crazy hotspot or anything like that. We were planning to go to a little place down the street that plays great music, but isn't too popular.
Emma:	That sounds perfect. Count me in!

An alter ego

The expression **an alter ego** means a different version of someone, so different that it can be considered a different person. In the simplest sense, **an alter ego** means an alternate personality.

The most famous examples of **alter egos** are those of American superheroes. For example, Superman's **alter ego** is Clark Kent. Clark Kent is the mild-mannered journalist that Superman pretends to be in order to conceal his identity as Superman. Although Superman and Clark Kent are technically the same person, they behave in completely different ways.

In this episode, Andrew and Suzanne discuss how many people behave differently in Las Vegas, a city known for gambling and partying, than they would in their normal lives. Suzanne mentions that people can have a different personality when they're there—almost like having **an alter ego**. So **an alter ego** doesn't have to be used to refer to someone with two identities or different names. The expression can be used when someone's behaviour is unusual or in sharp contrast to their normal behaviour.

Here are a couple more examples with **an alter ego**:

Marty:	Were you downtown last night?
Sheila:	Yeah, I was. Why?
Marty:	Well, I saw someone who looked so much like you, but they were wearing an outrageous outfit and dancing in the street! Because you're always so shy and reserved, I thought that it couldn't be you.
Shelia:	Actually, that probably was me! I sometimes perform experimental dance routines in the street. I get dressed up and become a completely different person. Her name is Belladonna, and she's my alter ego .

Yahn:	I ran into Dave last night, and boy, was he acting really strange!
Dahlia:	How so?
Yahn:	He was dressed up like he was from the 1920s and had a British accent. He pretended not to know who I was!
Dahlia:	Ah yes, you met Mr. Reginald DeFoncey—Dave's alter ego .

To be feeling it

To be feeling it is a very informal phrase that indicates enjoyment and approval. When you are really enjoying something, you can say that you **are feeling it**. For example, imagine a friend asks your opinion on a movie that you just watched. If you liked the movie you could say, “I **was feeling it**.”

However, you don’t always have to be enjoying a particular object or activity to use **to be feeling it**. You can also use **to be feeling it** if you’re in a good mood and generally enjoying yourself, when you’re soaking in the feeling of being happy. For instance, in this episode, Suzanne uses **to be feeling it** when she talks about having a good day. In other words, Suzanne is saying that she is feeling happy and is in a good mood because she had a good day.

Here are a couple more examples with **to be feeling it**:

Sara:	I have to ask—what did you think of my presentation? I was so nervous up there. Was it obvious? Please, be honest!
James:	You seemed a little unsure of yourself at the beginning, but you got over it quickly. I wouldn’t worry. Everything you talked about was so interesting. I was really feeling it!
Sara:	Thanks, that’s great to hear!

Sanjay:	How was the movie last night, Darla?
Darla:	It was horrible. I don’t know why I let Brian drag me to a horror movie. I really had a hard time watching it. I was just not feeling it .
Sanjay:	That’s too bad. I’m sorry to hear that you didn’t have a good time. I guess you have to be into horror movies to be able to enjoy them.
Darla:	I guess so.

To paint the town red

Although the origin of **to paint the town red** is disputed, this expression most likely started as a metaphor for lighting fires or setting off fireworks during a wild night.

To paint the town red is a North American idiom that means to go out at night and have a wild, reckless, and fun time. Having an extravagant and crazy time is a key part of this expression. No matter how much fun you had, you wouldn't say you **painted the town red** if all you did was watch a movie at your friend's house. So if you **painted the town red**, you had a wild and unrestrained time, not just a fun time.

In this episode, Suzanne mentions that there are a lot of opportunities to experience wild and crazy nightlife in Las Vegas. You can easily go out at night and have a reckless, crazy time in Las Vegas. In other words, it's easy **to paint the town red** in Las Vegas.

Here are a couple more examples with **to paint the town red**:

Tracey:	Hurry up; let's go! Get your shoes and coat on.
Bob:	OK, OK, what's the rush?
Tracey:	I have so much energy tonight. I want to paint the town red ! I want to have a fancy dinner, see a show, go dancing in at least two different places, and climb a building!
Bob:	Whoa, that sounds like a crazy night you have planned. I don't know if I'll be able to keep up with you.

Neil:	Ugh, I'm so hungover.
Molly:	It sounds like you had quite the night.
Neil:	My little brother was visiting from the United States. He's 19, so he can't drink there, but can drink here. He insisted that I take him to all the cool places.
Molly:	That doesn't sound so bad.
Neil:	It wasn't, but he just had so much more energy than I did! We went to five bars, two house parties, and ended up at a 24-hour diner until 6:00 a.m.
Molly:	Holy cow! You really painted the town red !

To let your hair down

We all have worries and sources of stress in our lives. However, sometimes it's important to forget your worries, and relax and have fun! If you put aside your worries, and spend some time enjoying yourself, you are **letting your hair down**. In other words, **to let your hair down** means to let loose, behave more freely than usual, and have fun.

Be careful: context is important. **To let your hair down** can be used literally—to wear your hair down instead of tied up—or figuratively—to behave in a free manner. If the conversation is about hair or hairstyles, it is a safe bet that **to let your hair down** is being used in the literal sense.

For instance, in this episode, Suzanne uses **to let your hair down** to describe how there are many opportunities in Las Vegas to let loose and have fun. So she uses **to let your hair down** as a replacement for to behave in a free manner, not to wear your hair down instead of tied up.

Here are a couple more examples with **to let your hair down**:

Jillian:	Are you coming over to my house for game night?
Roger:	I dunno. I have a lot of work to do around the house.
Jillian:	Can't the work wait?
Roger:	Well, I guess.
Jillian:	C'mon Roger! You should come and let your hair down . Have some fun!

Emily:	Do you want to go swimming tomorrow? I hear our resort has a huge swimming pool.
Joy:	I'm not sure. I always feel very self-conscious in my bathing suit.
Emily:	I think most women feel the same way, but it shouldn't stop you from having fun. Let your hair down , and let's have some fun.
Joy:	OK. You've convinced me. Let's go swimming tomorrow.

To throw caution to the wind

Most people would agree that it's a good idea to be careful, and not take unnecessary risks. However, sometimes we need to forget about being careful and take a risk in order to have a new experience or accomplish something.

If you decide to stop caring about the risks involved in a situation and try something anyways, you are **throwing caution to the wind**. In other words, the idiom **to throw caution to the wind** means to engage in an activity despite any emotional or physical dangers that might be involved.

Take for example skydiving. Skydiving is risky because, if something goes wrong, the consequences can be life-threatening. Despite this danger, many people still go skydiving each year. So when someone goes skydiving, they are ignoring any potential risks and **throwing caution to the wind**.

Here are a couple more examples with **to throw caution to the wind**:

Charles:	Hey Renee, I heard you quit your job. Is that true?
Renee:	Sure is! I quit 2 weeks ago.
Charles:	Do you have another job lined up?
Renee:	No, I don't. I'm unemployed at the moment.
Charles:	Wow, that's scary. Isn't it usually a good idea to wait until you have a new job lined up before you quit a job?
Renee:	That's what people say, but I was so fed up with my boss. I just couldn't take it any longer, so I threw caution to the wind and quit!

William:	I need some advice. I'm trying to decide if I should go on this kayaking trip with my friends. I've always wanted to try kayaking, but I'm pretty scared of falling into the water.
Marissa:	Well, can you swim?
William:	Yeah, but not very well.
Marissa:	You should throw caution to the wind and go! If you can swim, it's not that dangerous. Plus you'll have a life vest.

Quiz

1. Which of the following is the best example of a hotspot?

- a) a quiet strip mall
- b) a quiet coffee shop
- c) a trendy, new club
- d) a trendy, new hairstyle

2. If someone has an alter ego, they have a(n) _____ personality.

- a) alike
- b) mature
- c) mild-mannered
- d) alternate

3. If you painted the town red, what kind of night did you have?

- a) a boring night
- b) a wild night
- c) a movie night
- d) a cozy night

4. What does *to be feeling it* mean?

- a) to be feeling crazy
- b) to be feeling disapproval
- c) to be feeling enjoyment
- d) to be feeling horror

5. When you throw caution to the wind, you ignore the potential _____ of a situation.

- a) dangers
- b) benefits
- c) activities
- d) fun

- 6. Cara wants her friend Barb to go to a party. Barb is stressed because she won't know anyone at the party. Cara tells Barb, "Let your hair down, and come to the party." What does Cara mean when she says, "Let your hair down"?**
- a) Barb should take her worries.
 - b) Barb should change her hairstyle.
 - c) Barb should leave her hair down.
 - d) Barb should loosen up and have fun.

Quiz Answers

1. c 2. d 3. b 4. c 5. a 6. d

Episode credits

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