

## Chatterbox #202 – Christmas traditions

### Episode description

It's the most wonderful time of the year! It's the holiday season! And, in this podcast, Andrew and Suzanne talk about Christmas traditions when they were growing up. Come and join the fun!

### Fun fact

The idea of Santa Claus has been around for many centuries, but the modern jolly old man dressed in red is a distinct look created by the Coca-Cola Company.

### Expressions included in the learning materials

- A goodie bag
- To slip [someone's] mind
- -ish
- To be spoiled
- To die to [do something]





## Transcript

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Note: The words and expressions that appear in **bold text** within the transcript are discussed

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Andrew: You're listening to the Culips English podcast. To download the study guide for this episode, which includes the transcript, detailed vocabulary explanations, real world examples, and a quiz, visit our website, Culips.com. C-U-L-I-P-S.com.

Hey, everybody, my name is Andrew.

Suzanne: And I'm Suzanne.

Andrew: And you're listening to Culips.

Hey, Suzanne.

Suzanne: Hey, Andrew, how are you?

Andrew: I'm doing very well, how about yourself?

Suzanne: Wow, I'm pretty good, but it's so busy these days, right? Gearing up for the holiday season.

Andrew: Yeah, it's a busy time of the year and, Sue, I know you and I, we're both teachers, instructors, and this is a busy time for us, as well.

Suzanne: Yeah.

Andrew: You know, the courses that we teach are kind of winding down and it just adds to the craziness, right?

Suzanne: Yeah, it's like everyone and everything has a deadline and the deadline is at the same time, so it's pretty busy.

Andrew: I'm happy that this year Christmas and New Year's Day both fall on a Monday.

Suzanne: Why is that?

Andrew: So there's two long weekends for me.

Suzanne: Oh, nice.

Andrew: Yeah, because I don't get any holiday vacation time.



Suzanne: Oh no, that's true.

Andrew: Because both of these days fall on a Monday means I get two long weekends, so this is great.

Suzanne: That's great, I really relate. I'm self-employed, so I don't really get an actual holiday either, just the days that are the holiday.

Andrew: Right, right.

Suzanne: Just the actual holiday days, not totally weeks off, so.

Andrew: This is one of the disadvantages of being self-employed is that there's no real holidays, right? You're always working.

Suzanne: That's true and because of that, you kind of have to get creative with your holiday season and spend your time wisely. And sometimes that causes you to create your own alternative holiday traditions, right?

Andrew: Actually, Suzanne that is the topic of today's Chatterbox episode. We are gonna talk about how we spend the holidays and what our Christmas and holiday traditions are.

If you don't know, Chatterbox is the series where we have a natural conversation and we let you listen in. We create an immersive environment for you to practice your English listening in. And, yeah, today our topic is Christmas and holiday traditions. We have a study guide for this episode on our website, Culips.com, that includes the transcript, some detailed vocabulary definitions and explanations, real world examples, and also a quiz. So if you wanna study along with our study guide, head over to Culips.com to download it right now.

Suzanne: Andrew, I had a question for you.

Andrew: Yeah, go for it.

Suzanne: What were some of your family or holiday traditions back when you were younger with your family?

Andrew: You know, it's interesting. This week I had a snack and it made me think about Christmas because my snack was a tangerine and peanuts. And I was laughing at myself about how different my thinking is now compared to when I was younger, because now when I eat peanuts and tangerines, I love it. I think, wow, this is a delicious snack, but it made me think back to when I was a kid. Every Christmas Eve, I would go to church with my parents, my family. There was a Christmas Eve candlelight service at the church that I went to when I was younger.



Suzanne: Nice.

Andrew: And at the end of the service, all of the children would receive a **goodie bag**.

Suzanne: Nice.

Andrew: It was a paper bag filled with candy.

Suzanne: Wow.

Andrew: Which was great, I always looked forward to receiving this **goodie bag** on Christmas Eve. And so I would eat the candy first, loved it, loved the candy. And then at the bottom of the candy bag would be some loose peanuts—shelled peanuts and a tangerine. And when I was a kid, on Christmas Eve I always didn't like this part. I liked eating the candy and then when it came to the peanuts and tangerine, I turned my nose up and was like, ah, Mom, Dad you have this—I don't want it.

Suzanne: Of course, yeah, that's the boring part.

Andrew: That was the boring part, but this week when I had my snack of peanuts and a tangerine, it made me think of that **goodie bag** that I use to receive on Christmas Eve.

Suzanne: And you realized, wow, I've grown up, I like tangerines and peanuts.

Andrew: Yeah, now I think it's the best, you can't get any better than that.

Suzanne: Well, speaking of peanuts, I think watching Snoopy and Charlie Brown Christmas specials on TV was one of my favourite traditions as a kid. And the music: I really loved the theme of the Charlie Brown Christmas special, and I think it was written by a composer and is kind of included in many Christmas carol CDs or compilations. It's a famous song. I can't sing it for you right now because it's an instrumental and it kinda **slips my mind**, but I think that's one of my favourite songs and one of my favourite traditions, to watch Snoopy and Woodstock.

Andrew: It's a really beautiful song, actually, the Charlie Brown Christmas theme.

Suzanne: Yes.

Andrew: That was always part of my Christmas tradition, too. You know on the days leading up to Christmas, usually the 21st, 22nd, 23rd, these days, there are a lot of Christmas specials on TV. So, Christmas-themed TV shows, Christmas-themed movies. And every year, I would watch A Charlie Brown Christmas and that theme song from that episode is really beautiful.



- Suzanne: Yeah, it's true. I think as I grew older I really appreciated it for a very good composition and a really beautiful song. I think when I was younger I pretty much liked those cheesy songs like Jingle Bells and all of those kinds of stupid-**ish** Christmas carols like Frosty the Snowman. You know? Rudolph the Red Nose Reindeer. These songs were more my childhood loves. Now I appreciate the more handcrafted, stand-the-test-of-time kind of songs. And, yes, always watching that special and being in, like, the foot pyjamas. Do you know what foot pyjamas are?
- Andrew: Foot pyjamas, so, it's like a onesie, right?
- Suzanne: Right, it's like socks that are attached to your pyjamas, kind of. It's like a big onesie for a kid or an adult.
- Andrew: Right, so it's pyjamas, a pair of pyjamas, actually, it's not a pair, it's a one-piece piece of clothing that you get into and it has the socks attached to the leg of the pants. So it's really comfortable and cozy for the wintertime.
- Suzanne: Right, and then you sit there with a hot chocolate, maybe with some marshmallows, and watch Snoopy and Charlie Brown.
- Andrew: There you go. One of my family traditions is that, well, we don't do this any more, but when I was younger we always opened one Christmas present on Christmas Eve.
- Suzanne: Nice.
- Andrew: Did you do this as well, growing up?
- Suzanne: Yeah, we did do that as kids, yes, because we couldn't wait. We really wanted to get right in there and open up gifts. So yes. My parents would allow us to open one gift, but since we got older and we stopped believing in Santa Claus, we started opening up gifts, I would say almost all of our gifts at night on Christmas Eve. And then just go to sleep and sleep in.
- Andrew: I like it, I like it. Yeah, well, my hometown of Kelowna, British Columbia has a fairly large population of European immigrants.
- Suzanne: Oh nice.



- Andrew: Especially people from Northern Europe, so the Nordic countries, Germany, Poland, these places. And now I'm not exactly sure if everybody from these countries does this, and listeners out there from Northern Europe, please send me an email and correct me if I'm wrong, but I believe that's it's a tradition to open all your presents on Christmas Eve in these countries. A lot of my friends opened all of their presents on Christmas Eve growing up, so my family didn't do this—we waited until Christmas morning. And I remember being really jealous of my friends that got to open their presents, all of their presents, on Christmas Eve. You know they would open their presents and then call me on the phone and be like Andrew! I just got the new Super Nintendo game I wanted. And I was like, ah, I'm so jealous.
- Suzanne: And then did you get your Nintendo the next day?
- Andrew: Oh probably, probably. I was always **spoiled**.
- Suzanne: You couldn't wait that one night?
- Andrew: Yeah, you know when you're 9 or 10 years old, 12 hours is a lifetime.
- Suzanne: I know you can't sleep. I always had trouble sleeping, Christmas Eve.
- Andrew: Yeah.
- Suzanne: Well, something funny that my dad would do, and it became a tradition in our house, was he would eat the cookies and the milk or coffee that we left for Santa, and he would make crumbs all over the table and near the plate and on the chair. And then he would take the red felt from the stockings that we hung up and the white felt as well, and he would put them around the chair like little tufts of felt and fuzz, and then he would take his boots and he would scuff the wall around, like, the chimney or around the chair to make it look like Santa was there for real.
- Andrew: Wow.
- Suzanne: And he even took my dog, whose name was Peewee, which is a funny name, and he would put her feet in, like, I don't know, mud or maybe ink and make footprints around the house.
- Andrew: OK, so you thought it was a reindeer?
- Suzanne: Really a reindeer, yeah. Like there was a reindeer and Santa actually came. So I really believed it, I mean he made it sound and seem like Santa really was there, but low and behold it wasn't true.
- Andrew: Wow, your dad went to a lot of work to make it look like Santa actually visited your house.



Suzanne: I know! It was a grand lie.

Andrew: Suzanne, you used a really interesting word, a couple sentences ago and I think maybe it would be a new word for many of our listeners. That word was scuff. You said your father scuffed the wall. What does this mean, scuff?

Suzanne: With his boots. So he would rub the boot on the floor or the wall and create a mark. So when you rub your shoe or a rubber sole on a wall or on a floor, that's a hard floor, maybe hardwood, it will leave a mark, and that you would call a scuff.

Andrew: Yeah.

Suzanne: A mark that you leave behind or a sort of abrasion, like a rough spot that you leave behind with your shoe.

Andrew: Totally. And I think this is why sometimes when you go to a gym to exercise or a gymnasium to play a sport like badminton or basketball, you'll see a sign that says no outside shoes. Why the sign is there is they don't want you to scuff the floor. They don't want you to leave a mark on the gymnasium floor with your dirty shoes.

Suzanne: Yes, yes.

Andrew: Yeah, so this is a good word to know, scuff.

Suzanne, we will leave it at that for today. Thanks for sharing some of your Christmas traditions with us.

Suzanne: Sure, thank you.

Andrew: Yeah, and everyone, once again please visit our website, Culips.com. That is the place where you can download the study guide, and it's also the place where you can listen to our previous episodes, if you're just **dying to hear** more of us in between our releases. And if you have any questions or comments for us, our email address is [contact@culips.com](mailto:contact@culips.com). Shoot us an email and let us know how you are spending the holiday season.

Suzanne: We love hearing from you, so send us a message. Your feedback is priceless.

Andrew: Suzanne, I think this will be our last episode of the year, so I wanna wish you a merry Christmas and a happy New Year. We'll talk to you in 2018.

Suzanne: Oh my gosh, you too, Andrew!

Andrew: Thank you and happy New Year to everybody. Happy holidays. Bye, guys!





Suzanne: Happy holidays. Bye!

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## Detailed Explanations

### A goodie bag

A **goodie bag** is a bag filled with goodies! In this context, goodies means good things like candy or other small things. In this episode, Andrew talks about how, after a church service, all the children received a **goodie bag**, which was basically a paper bag filled with candy. You can see why children would think this bag is so good!

**Goodie bags** are common at children's parties and other such get-togethers. They're often given to children as a thank-you for coming. At Halloween, some people hand out little bags with assorted candy inside. Those are **goodie bags**.

But **goodie bags** aren't just for children. If you went to a conference and someone handed you a bag with small gifts and promotional materials, you can also call that a **goodie bag**.

Here are a couple more examples with a **goodie bag**:

Mom:	Honey, did you buy those little stickers for the children's <b>goodie bags</b> ?
Dad:	Sure did. They're in the top drawer.
Mom:	I think the boys will really like their <b>goodie bags</b> this time.
Dad:	I'm sure they will. That was my favourite part when I went to birthday parties as a kid!

Beth:	How did the teacher's conference go last week?
Naomi:	Not bad. A lot of blah-blah, but I saw a few interesting speakers.
Beth:	What's that?
Naomi:	This? This is the <b>goodie bag</b> they handed out.
Beth:	They hand out <b>goodie bags</b> at conferences, like, with candy?
Naomi:	Candy, no. There's a calendar, some pens, a notepad, and the conference schedule.
Beth:	Oh. Candy would have been better.

**To slip [someone's] mind**

When something **slips your mind**, it means you can't remember it, that you've forgotten. Imagine the physical thought slipping out of your brain and going away into the atmosphere. You can't find it again. Suzanne is talking about a song and wants to sing the melody but can't because **it slipped her mind**, meaning she can't remember how the song goes.

The expression is commonly used when you're trying to think of something but can't remember it in the moment. "I know that actor. I saw him in a movie last week. What's his name? **It slips my mind.**" It's similar to the expression drawing a blank or on the tip of your tongue.

You can also use it in the past tense. "Did you buy some milk while you were at the store?" "Oh no! **It slipped my mind.**" However, you wouldn't use it in the future tense (it will slip my mind) or in the present continuous tense (it is slipping my mind).

Here are a couple more examples with **to slip [someone's] mind**:

Portia:	Hey, remember you were going to tell me the name of that new television series you thought I should watch? What was the name of it?
Brent:	Oh yeah, it's... Wait a minute. It's... I can't remember.
Portia:	You watched it last week. The one with the lawyer and the girl.
Brent:	Yeah, I know. The name <b>slips my mind</b> right now, but I have it on my laptop. I'll send you a message when I get home.

Huck:	So, I bought the broccoli, the garlic, the wine, and the pasta. Am I missing anything?
Bianca:	Did you buy the ground beef?
Huck:	Ah. No.
Bianca:	Then you're missing the ground beef.
Huck:	I'm so sorry. It must have <b>slipped my mind</b> . But I did buy you lottery tickets. How's that?

**-ish**

In this episode, Suzanne mentions Christmas carols she thought were stupid-**ish**. The **-ish** part is a very commonly used suffix among native English speakers. It is like putting the word somewhat in front of an adjective. For example, saying someone is short-**ish** is like saying that person is somewhat short or just a little short. If Suzanne had said stupid Christmas carols, the word stupid would have had greater effect. Instead, she made the word stupid softer and more playful by adding the **-ish** suffix.

The suffix **-ish** is normally used to form adjectives from nouns, like how something from Britain is British. But English speakers like to use it to turn almost anything into an adjective. If you're not entirely certain as to a colour, you can say it's brown**ish** or redd**ish**. Notice how brown**ish** is written in one word, but stupid-**ish** is hyphenated. That's because brown**ish** is an accepted term and stupid-**ish** is a made-up term.

Some people even use **ish** as an independent word. If someone asks you, "Are we going to meet at 2:00?" and you're not entirely sure you can be there on time, you can respond, "**Ish**." That means you'll show up at around 2:00. It helps if you add indecisive body language.

Here are a couple more examples with **-ish**:

Pete:	I was talking to the new teacher at our school. He said you knew him.
Dave:	<b>Ish</b> .
Pete:	Really?
Dave:	Well, I only met him twice and it was with many other people, so I don't remember much about him.
Pete:	OK. Anyways, he says hi.
Dave:	Cool.

Jan:	Hey, I heard you've been studying Spanish lately. Can you speak it?
Rita:	Not quite, not yet.
Jan:	John told me you've been studying really hard.
Rita:	Hard- <b>ish</b> . He only says that because he hasn't been studying at all.
Jan:	Ah. Sounds like something he would do.

**To be spoiled**

In this episode, Andrew says how he was always **spoiled**. By this he means to say he always received good presents for Christmas. **To be spoiled** is an expression that can be both positive and negative but, clearly, Andrew thinks it's a good thing that he received great gifts.

The negative version of the expression means that someone has received so many good things that it ended up being bad in the long run. Think about how chocolate ice cream is great. We all know that. But if you eat too much of it, you might get sick.

This negative version usually refers to children, when parents give their children everything and the child develops bad characteristics because of it. You can say that child is **spoiled** or even **spoiled rotten**! Think of a recipe and how all the ingredients must be balanced. If you put too much of one ingredient you really like, you might ruin or **spoil** the food.

This expression works both as a verb ("you **spoil** him too much") and as an adjective ("a **spoiled** child").

Here are a couple more examples with **to be spoiled**:

Fran:	Did you hear the Wilson kid got a motorcycle?
Carl:	A motorcycle? He's only 16!
Fran:	I know, right? And his parents are going to buy him a car for his birthday next year.
Carl:	What a <b>spoiled</b> boy! He'll never know the value of a dollar if his parents keep giving him everything.
Fran:	I had to work for every penny I got. Kids these days!

Kate:	What's this?
Victor:	Open it.
Kate:	It's ... Two plane tickets for Paris! Oh, dear, you <b>spoil</b> me too much.
Victor:	And it's only begun. Wait till you see what I have planned in London!
Kate:	Can you afford all this?
Victor:	Sure! Don't worry!

**To die to [do something]**

At the end of this episode, Andrew mentions that you can download previous episodes if you're "just **dying to hear** more." Well, we hope you're not actually dying! Here, he's using figurative language to exaggerate his meaning. **Dying to hear** means that you really, really want to hear more.

The format of **to die to** can be added to many more expressions: I'm **dying to know**. I'm **dying to go to** Singapore. She's **dying to test-drive** this car. He's **dying to check** his phone, but he can't! In these examples, the subject strongly wants to do something, but that feeling is exaggerated, similar to how, when you are cold, you can say you are freezing or, when you are hungry, you can say you are starving.

Here are a couple more examples with **to die to [do something]**:

Martha:	I just binge-watched this show on Netflix and it's killing me.
Danica:	What's killing you? I thought you loved that show.
Martha:	I do! That's the problem. It's just that the second season only comes out next year.
Danica:	So? You can wait, can't you?
Martha:	No, I can't! The series left off on a crazy cliff-hanger and I'm <b>dying to find out</b> what happens next.

Bill:	Hey, aren't you moving soon?
Shirley:	Yeah, I can't wait.
Bill:	How come?
Shirley:	This place is so dirty, the pipes rattle in the winter, and the downstairs neighbours are way too loud.
Bill:	Sounds like a nightmare.
Shirley:	Yeah, that's why I'm <b>dying to move out</b> of this apartment.
Bill:	When's that gonna be?
Shirley:	Next month! Can't wait!



## Quiz

**1. Charlie is dying to hear something. That means he is:**

- a) sick
- b) eager
- c) deaf
- d) tired

**2. If you tell someone you will arrive at 6ish, that means you will show up at:**

- a) around 6:00
- b) 5:54
- c) 6:00
- d) 6:30

**3. What would you not find in a goodie bag?**

- a) candy
- b) a puppy
- c) a calendar
- d) peanuts

**4. When Josh says it slipped his mind, that means:**

- a) he had too much to drink
- b) he fell on some ice while walking
- c) he forgot to pick up his goodie bag
- d) he had a headache

**5. True or false: To spoil someone can be both positive and negative.**

- a) true
- b) false



## Quiz Answers

1.b    2.a    3.b    4.c    5.a

### Episode credits

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