

Chatterbox #299 – Brain drain

AD-FREE

Episode description

Brain drain sounds like a mental health condition, but it actually means the mass migration of educated and skilled people from one place to another. In this Chatterbox episode, Andrew and Anna have a discussion about some of the reasons for this phenomenon. The hosts describe some of the brain drain trends they've witnessed in Canada, the UK, South Korea, and more. Check out the episode and learn why nurses are moving from Canada to the United States!

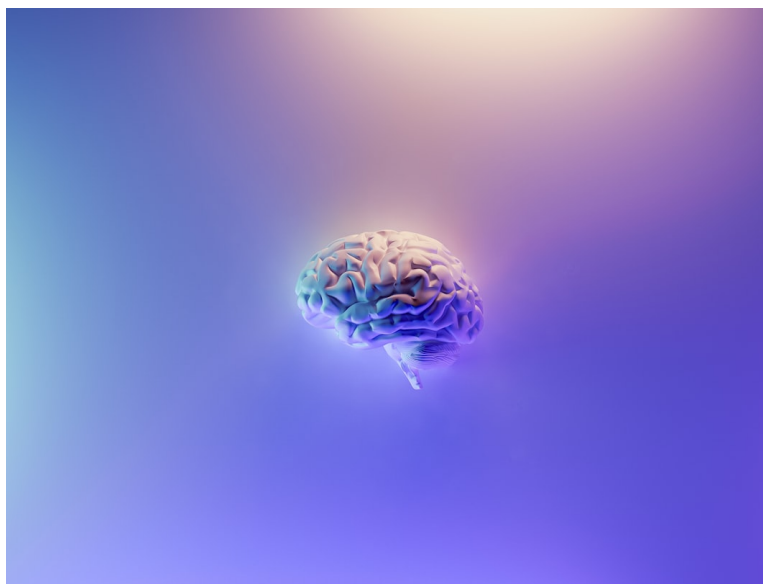
Chatterbox is the Culips series designed for intermediate and advanced English learners. This series features native English speakers having natural conversations about fascinating topics. Learning with our Chatterbox series is a great way to improve your English listening and speaking skills.

Fun fact

Some states in the United States that are suffering from the effects of economic emigration are offering remote workers money to relocate there. Two cities in West Virginia are offering [up to \\$20,000!](#)

Expressions included in the study guide

- Greener pastures
- No brainer
- To blend in
- To not do as/so hot
- Bottom line
- To put down roots



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: Chatterbox number 299. *Brain drain*. Featuring Andrew and Anna.

In this episode, we're talking about brain drain. Now Anna, we're not talking about that feeling that you get after you finish writing a big test or something, right. When you feel, like, drained. Maybe you could explain that joke that I'm making, like, what does it mean to feel drained, if you feel drained after writing a big test, for example?

Anna: It feels like, all of a sudden, maybe you've had loads of preparation for a big test, for example, or maybe you've had a really, really busy, and long day, and at the end of the day, you just feel completely drained. There's no energy left. It's like your energy has been completely depleted, and you've had to use a lot of concentration or focus for something. And then your concentration is piqued, and now you crash afterwards, that's probably how I would describe the feeling of feeling drained.

Andrew: But that's not the drained that we're talking about today, we're talking about brain drain. And, in this context, brain refers to smart people, or highly educated people, or very talented people. Maybe intellectuals, or technicians, or scientists, or professors, doctors, nurses, all of these very trained, very educated people. So that is what brain means. And here, drain means to go from one area to another area. So, when we're talking about brain drain then, it means that we have these very talented, educated people, and they're leaving from one city to go to another city, maybe from the countryside to the big city in a country. Or it could be international brain drain. You could be going from one country to another country. And this is a big issue these days around the world. I know in Canada, it's an issue. Also, in my second home here of South Korea, it's a big issue. And so, I thought

we would discuss it. And we're gonna get into it and talk about some of the reasons why brain drain occurs and some of the problems that are side effects of brain drain as well.

Anna, I know we're not economists, right? We're just English teachers. So, we're going to try and do our best to have an insightful conversation about this topic. But, guys, if you're listening, and you're an economist, please don't judge us too harshly, we're going to try and do our best. But—but we can't make any promises that we're going to do this topic justice, but we will do our best. And, Anna, I was thinking that we could start maybe by brainstorming about the brain drain, and maybe compiling a list about some of the reasons which could push a highly educated person to leave their city, or to leave their country and to look for a new opportunity in **greener pastures**. And I think this should be fairly straightforward, because there are probably, like, hundreds of different reasons why someone could leave. But what are some of the reasons that maybe pop into your head?

Anna: Probably most people would think economic reasons. So, getting a higher salary, or earning more would probably be the biggest driver that most people would think about. But maybe it could be the taxes are better in a different place. Maybe the weather's better, or the conditions—the quality of life is better in a certain place that might push somebody to—a highly educated person, to move, or maybe their work conditions are better. Let's think about the example of a doctor, for example, in the UK, doctors are really, really stressed, a lot of doctors. And there are opportunities in other countries where you can have working conditions that are much better, maybe you work less, but you earn more. Wow, that's a **no brainer**, right? So that can definitely be a big push for the brain drain. Maybe your home country isn't the best place for your skill set. Let's take the example of English teachers. I'm going to find it difficult to find a job in the UK, for example, there's not much demand for English teaching in the UK, or not as much as in other countries, for example.

But actually, Andrew, I'm really interested because you mentioned about Canada that this is a big issue there. And it would be really interesting to find out from you some of these

examples about the situation there because definitely Canada wasn't one of the countries that popped into my head when I was thinking about the brain drain. So, it would be great for us to know a little bit more about—about that. We'd love to hear what's going on in Canada.

Andrew: Yeah, well, it's an interesting issue in Canada because of our fabulous neighbours to the south, the Americans. So, as most people know from looking at the map, Canada and America share a big border, and we're also culturally very similar, right? We have the same language, we have a very similar culture, we're familiar with each other. So often, when I travel to America, people don't even know that I'm Canadian, I can just **blend right in**. So, you know, being in the States is very comfortable for Canadians. And these days, the American dollar is doing very well. And the Canadian dollar is **doing not as hot**. And I think many people around the world can maybe feel this in their country as well, these days, the dollar is really high, and other global currencies are not doing as well. So just in that point alone, if a Canadian can go to the United States to work, and make American dollars instead of Canadian dollars, well, that's going to be like making more money, even if your salary was exactly the same. Let's say you could make just, for example, \$30 an hour in Canada, or \$30 an hour in America getting paid in American dollars. Well, it's like a **no brainer** that you'd want to get paid in American dollars, because that's almost, I don't know, an extra 25% that you would make at the end of the day. So, it's a fantastic bonus for your **bottom line**. It's great. And so, because I think of the cultural similarities between Canada and the States, it's really very tempting for many Canadians to leave to go work in the USA.

Now, most people can't do this, right? If you're just like a regular person, it's hard to go live in the States because, well, you need to get a work permit and a visa, and all of these things, which are difficult for normal people to get. But if you are a very educated person or very skilled person, very talented person, then of course, more opportunities are available to you. And one issue that is causing a lot of problems in Canada these days, is that nurses are in high demand in the States. And in the United States, there is a private

healthcare system. And I think everybody is familiar with the kind of very high costs that Americans have to pay for healthcare. In Canada, we don't have that system, and we have a public system, which is supported by tax dollars. And because of that, it means that there is a limit to how much money nurses can make in Canada and it's not too high. And also, because of this government healthcare system, there are some restrictions about how many nurses can be hired. And as a result, that can cause some pretty bad working conditions in Canada for nurses.

So, Anna, just imagine you're a nurse in Canada, and you're not making great money, you're making OK money. It's a decent salary. It's definitely a livable wage, but it's not too high. But because of certain governmental hiring restrictions, for example, you have to work overtime every day. So, you're pulling like 12 hour shifts every day. You'd feel really tired, right? In that situation?

Anna: I think maybe drained is a better word there to use. I think you would feel drained—just to quote the one from there before, absolutely. And I think the nurse example is really good, because I mentioned before about healthcare workers in the UK as well. Because I imagine, correct me if I'm wrong, the UK has a similar healthcare system to Canada, it's free at point of access and taxpayer funded.

Andrew: Yeah, exactly. So, we have a similar system. There's probably some small differences, but essentially the same in the UK and Canada. So, OK, we have this image, right? You're an overworked and just sort of decently paid nurse in Canada. And then on top of that, let's say you're living in Edmonton, which is a city in northern Canada, and you're going to have really cold weather in Edmonton from about October until April. So, a good chunk of the year is really cold and dark. But then, you know, down in the States, you hear a rumour like hospitals in California are hiring and they're gonna pay \$150,000 a year, US dollar salary, and your Canadian nursing accreditation, your nursing degree is going to be accepted. You don't have to do any additional training. And you can go down and get a job in the States and even those hospitals in the States are going to help you

walk through the visa process and get you a work permit and all of these things, well this is happening, and many nurses are jumping on this opportunity. And I mean, I don't really blame them, you could go live in sunny California, you could make triple your salary. You don't have to do that overtime. And you get help with lots of different things. And I mean, California is a high tax state, so it's similar to Canada in that regard. However, there are different states, maybe Texas or Florida, where taxes are quite lower as well. So, this is just one example of brain drain. And, yeah, it's something that Canadian people are worried about. We're worried about, like, what happens if we have no nurses left? What are we going to do? How can we compete with these high American salaries? And yeah, it's a big conversation topic these days in Canada.

Anna: Yeah, I was gonna say my bags already packed. Yeah, you don't need to convince me. You had me sold on double your salary, sunny weather. My bag was packed. And this is a thing, isn't it? It's for these types of people, it is a **no brainer**. And I mentioned this sentence before, guys, a **no brainer**, it's a noun and it's just something that requires little or no thought. It's like, it's so obviously a better option. Unless you—I don't know, unless you were somebody that didn't want to move to California and maybe you wanted to stay in Canada or whatever. But really, it's like a **no brainer**, OK, I can increase my salary significantly, I'm going to have to work less, I'm going to have better conditions, **no brainer**. And this is the conflict, isn't it? Because for the person, it's great. I mean, you'd want to empower people to take that. And if you can maximize your skills and maximize your income, then great, but then there's also that conflict, isn't there, of that home country of how do they deal with that problem? How do they try and retain more people? That's a big question and very complex. How do they retain those people there? It's a really interesting issue that Canada has. I know that in the UK, for example, there has been recently some interesting people who are scientists, for example, the ending of EU funding due to Brexit. And those people who are involved in research going to other places, because now they're not able to access the same sort of funding. So there has been brain drain to other places in terms of those areas, things like research, which are really, really important as well. You know, it happens everywhere in lots of different contexts, as you

said, at the beginning, Andrew, but it really surprised me about the case in Canada, because it definitely wasn't the first thing that popped into my head.

Andrew: Another example of brain drain and this is one that I don't know about as deeply but that I have heard about, especially my wife has shared some stories with me about this because she works in tech and here we're based in Seoul. So, she's told me, and she even has some friends—so we know about this through personal experience, anecdotal but personal experience—of some of her friends from tech who have left Korea to go work in California for the big companies. I believe they call them FAANG, Facebook, Amazon, Apple, Netflix, or Google, FAANG.

Anna: What a horrible acronym. Sounds awful in English, FAANG. It's really, it's really naff.

Andrew: FAANG, and I think maybe there's a couple of extra companies who have been added to that acronym. But anyways, just imagine, again, another thought experiment. You are born in South Korea, educated in South Korea, and you work really hard. You learn English to a high level, you're a talented programmer, for example. And South Korea is notorious for its strict work culture. So, you're working long hours for a Korean company, maybe you have to do overtime that's unpaid. You have very short vacations and your benefits are not really great. You could get a job at one of Korea's top companies, because you're like the best of the best. You're very talented, like we mentioned, but Korean companies as good as they are and as respected as they are internationally, they can't really compete with Google or Apple. These massive companies that are like at the top of the ladder, right? So, if you are a skilled individual like this and a company offers you, one of these FAANG companies, offers you a job in California, it's very, very tempting. They can pay more money; they can give you more benefits. You can put your English skills to use.

And so, as a result, I mean, like you said, Anna, it's a **no brainer**, so a lot of people take that opportunity. Now not everybody is going to do that, some people maybe have a family that they want to stay in country for. And you know, it's case by case. But a lot of people are going to jump on that opportunity, especially if they're young, and they don't have **roots placed down** in the country yet. So that just means that you're sort of left with second tier talent, right? All of your top tier talent is gone. And you're left with second tier talent, which means that you need to either replace it with top tier talent from other countries, so, you open the door to immigration from other countries and hope that can make up the difference, or you just can't be as competitive. And maybe that's one of the reasons why we see companies like Apple and Google staying on top for so long, is they just have the power to attract the top talent from around the world and nobody else can compete with that. So, it's a really, I guess, global issue. And I think a lot of our listeners can probably relate to some of these stories and be like, that's happening in my country, too.

Anna: Absolutely. And I think the thing about brain drain as well as often it can be about a choice and jumping on an opportunity, as you said but also, it's out of necessity as well. For example, in Spain, there's a big problem with the rural areas here because they're extremely depopulated. Everybody moves to the city, if you want to find a job, you move to a city, you go to Madrid, you go to Barcelona, you go to Valencia, you go to Seville, you go to the cities. And so, it's out of necessity, really, that people have to move, because there's just not the same opportunities. And that's the question isn't it, is can you compete? Or do you have to find another way to try and address the issue? Because like you said, these huge companies these FAANG—it sounds horrible. I don't know why but FAANG is just awful. But well, whatever. They are, like you said they are at the top, can countries even compete with them? Probably not. So, it's probably about being innovative and finding different ways to retain people and attract people. So, I think that's probably the better question. But sure, it's a global problem with globalization. I mean, people can move around, people can move wherever they want, they can go to Canada, to the USA, they can go from Seoul to California, they can go from India to the UK. I mean, everybody can

move around everywhere, which is the beauty of it. But also, there are consequences of that as well.

Andrew: Yeah, yeah, absolutely. And, Anna, I thought maybe we could wrap up here by talking about some of the problems caused by brain drain because we've mentioned a few of these, like an inability to compete, right? If you lose your top tier talent, then it's hard to be competitive but there are some other issues. And guys, I had to Google to research about this, like I said, I'm not an economist, but I thought they were really interesting and so I want to share a few of them here. So, one of the things that can happen as a result of brain drain is your country can lose a lot of tax revenue, which is fascinating to me, because think about your top tier talent, right? Your doctors, your best programmers, your business leaders, your entrepreneurs, they are also the highest earners, right? So, if suddenly, all of your high earners leave your country, then you can't income tax them, you can't get their tax revenue and so that can end up hurting a country, of course.

Like we've mentioned, it could lead to loss of new ideas and innovation. I know this happens a lot like people will leave Canada to go to the USA, especially entertainers, this is a huge, huge problem in Canada. All of our best singers, our best movie stars, our best writers, our best comedians will get a little bit famous, and then they'll go move to Hollywood. And suddenly they're making movies in Hollywood. They're starting TV shows, and we have to watch them on American TV. We can't watch these shows on Canadian TV, because Hollywood is just such a bigger, better market. So, we lose that innovation, that creative innovation when it comes to entertainment. You could also think about a citizen of a country as being a sort of investment, right? Every baby is an investment. And it seems weird to talk about people as being investments but when we educate our citizens, that costs money, right? You have to pay; taxpayers have to pay for a child to be educated in the country from when they're young all the way through to their university training. And especially if you are like really, really smart, well if you're really, really smart maybe you will take part in the brain drain as soon as you finish high school, right? You will go to an American Ivy League school or maybe you'll go to the UK, maybe you'll go to

Oxford, or Cambridge, or one of these high, high, high-level universities. But maybe you will stay in your country for your university education as well. And maybe you'll get some government scholarships. So, the government taxpayers are paying for your total education. And then finally, you finish, you're ready to enter the workforce. You're young, you're bright, you're talented, and then you're out of here, and you go to a different country and work and you're not paying any taxes back into the local economy.

So again, you could say, like, oh, that's a bad investment, right? From a financial point of view. So, yeah, I just read about some of these effects of brain drain and thought they were really fascinating. And I hadn't thought of them before, to be honest with you. So, it was really interesting to think about.

Anna: Yeah, and I think there's also the other part of that, of course, there are issues with this, but there are positive things because people do tend to come back. I mean, that's a very general statement. But people can come back to their home country. And then they bring back all of this knowledge, innovation, creation. So, you can have the brain drain, but there are people that will return back. So, of course, when you're talking about people going to the best places to learn their topic, for example, or different universities, if in the future, they come back, they're also going to bring back that wealth with them, not just in terms of money, but also in terms of knowledge, and maybe they start a company. And there's that relationship too, as well, that in the future, they could come back and bring all of that innovation and wealth with them.

Andrew: Yeah, absolutely. There's two sides to every coin. And we've been really looking at this issue from a negative perspective, but it doesn't always have to be negative. And that's a great counter argument to say that people can go abroad and gain more knowledge, more skills, more wealth, and then bring that back with them to their home country and improve their home country with that new knowledge and wealth. And also, you could say that maybe people go abroad, and they work, and then they send money

home as well. So, it's not like it's a total loss and there's two sides to every coin, as we mentioned.

Anna, maybe we should wrap things up here. It's also a little ironic that we are both brain drainers. What would you call somebody that is a part of the brain drain?

Anna: Oh, I don't know, I guess a brain drainer. I don't know if I put myself in that category, though. I don't think I've got a very big brain. So, maybe come up with a different term for me. But yeah, a brain drainer.

Andrew: Anna, you're being too humble, because you're a great educator. And, you know, you could be educating the bright future young talent in the UK, but instead you've gone abroad, and I've made the same decision, right? I'm not educating Canadian citizens, and Canadian students. I'm over here helping Korean students, and, of course, listeners around the world on Culips as well. So, I think yeah, maybe, maybe you're not 100% of brain drainer, but we're at least 50% brain drainers.

Anna: Half and half. Half and half.

Andrew: Half and half.

That brings us to the end of this lesson. Talk to you next time. Bye.

Detailed Explanations

Greener pastures

Plural noun

In order to introduce the idea of brain drain, Andrew suggests that he and Anna come up with a list of reasons why someone would leave their home country to seek new opportunities in **greener pastures**.

The idiomatic noun, **greener pastures**, refers to a situation that is better than the one you're currently in. You can use the words **greener pastures** to talk about getting a new job, a new place to live, or even a new relationship. For example, you may decide to leave the countryside and move to a major city in order to seek out **greener pastures**, in other words, better job opportunities, or a more fulfilling lifestyle.

A *pasture* is a piece of land where animals graze. Try imagining a cow looking for a **greener pasture** so they can enjoy eating the best grass available! The grass is the thing that show up in your life which can make it better.

Verbs that are commonly used with **greener pastures** include *to leave for*, *to look for*, *to search for*, and *to move on to*. For example, "I want my children to leave poverty behind and move on to **greener pastures**."

Here are a couple more examples with **greener pastures**:

Marcus: Hey. I heard Lauren say that you put in your two weeks notice today.

Greta: That's right. I've been looking for a new job for a while now and I found one at a graphic design firm in Brooklyn.

Marcus: Wow, congratulations! I'm so happy for you, but we're all going to miss you.

Greta: Thanks, Marcus. It's going to be hard to leave the team behind, but I feel like I need to move on to **greener pastures**. Graphic design is more aligned with my skillset and the firm seems to offer a lot of benefits to its employees.

Kiera: I was just looking at some population data statistics for one of my classes at school. Did you know that most rural counties in the United States have experienced population decline in the time between 2010 and 2020?

Franklin: I can believe that. People are looking for **greener pastures**. There's no money or stability in rural towns anymore because profitability in agriculture is declining.

No brainer

Noun

No brainer is an expression that comes up several times in this episode. Choosing a job that lets you work less but also pays you more is a **no brainer**. Moving somewhere with better weather and cheaper rent is also a **no brainer**.

As Anna explains, a **no brainer** is something that requires little to no thought. This is commonly used to refer to the simple or easy answers you would make to problems or decisions in life. For example, elementary school level math problems are a **no brainer** for an adult. Making a choice between a difficult job with no benefits and an easy job with great benefits is a **no brainer**. The idea behind this expression is that the answer to the question at hand is so obvious that you don't even need to think hard to figure it out.

There are many nouns like **no brainer** that you may have come across before, including *piece of cake*, *cinch*, *breeze*, and *walk in the park*. However, the important difference between **no brainer** and these other expressions is that **no brainer** can be used to talk about solving a problem or decision making, while the other terms are usually only used to refer to tasks that are easy to accomplish. For example, you can say, "This math problem is a **no brainer**." You can also say, "This math problem is a cinch." However, it sounds much more natural to say, "Accepting that job position was a **no brainer**" than "accepting that job position was a cinch." The first sentence sounds like it was an easy decision to make, but the second sentence sounds like the action of accepting the job itself was easy to do, which is not what you are trying to get across.

Here are a couple more examples with **no brainer**:

Isabella: My husband and I adopted a puppy from the animal shelter this week.

George: Wow! That's wonderful news. What made you decide to get a pet?

Isabella: For one thing, our new house has a big fenced-in yard, so it's perfect for a dog. Also, since my job is fully remote now, I have a lot more time to spend keeping an eye on a puppy and letting it go outside to pee. Making the decision to adopt now seemed like a **no brainer**.

Harry: Mom, I've been thinking about it all week and I still can't decide which university admission offer to accept.

Francesca: What? Harry, it's a **no brainer**. The state school offered you a scholarship that covers over half of your tuition. Plus, they have an incredible biology program and your brother went there, too! I think the choice is clear.

To blend in Phrasal verb

Towards the beginning of the episode, Andrew explains why Canadians like himself often feel comfortable being in the United States. Because the culture is so similar and the dominant language is the same, it's very easy for a Canadian **to blend in**. This makes the U.S. a potentially appealing place for Canadians to relocate to.

To blend in is a phrasal verb that means to look similar to your surroundings or behave similarly to those around you. It's the opposite of the phrasal verb *to stand out*. You can use **blend in** to describe social inclusion ("The new girl at school instantly **blended in** with the rest of the class") or visual appearance ("The chameleon turned dark green and **blended in** with the lush foliage.")

This usage of **blend in** is intransitive, meaning it is something that doesn't take a direct object. If you use this phrasal verb with a direct object, the meaning of blend in changes to mixing a substance into another substance. For instance, an artist lightens a color by **blending it in** some white paint.

Here are a couple more examples with **to blend in**:

Nina: Jeff, do you think that this leather couch would **blend in** with the rest of our living room décor?

Jeff: No way. It's such a dark colored leather and everything we have in the living room is light. If you want it to **blend in**, I think it's going to need to be white or tan leather. Otherwise, if you want a pop of color, why don't you try looking for a bright red couch?

Nina: Yeah... I see what you mean.

Thomas: Christina, how was your first day at your new school?

Christina: Oh my god, Dad, it was terrible. I felt like everyone was staring at me all day. I need to figure out a way to **blend in** or I'm never going to fit in and make any friends!

Thomas: I'm sorry to hear that, honey. But you don't have to conform with the crowd to make friends. The things that make you different from other people are what make you special.

Christina: Come on, Dad. I get what you're saying, but we're talking about high school here. The fact of the matter is that **blending in** is going to make my social life easier.

To not do as/so hot Expression

After discussing that the cultural and linguistic similarities between the U.S. and Canada, those of which make the U.S. an appealing place for Canadians to move to, Andrew also brings up the differences in currency. He says that the Canadian dollar is **not doing as hot** as the U.S. dollar, so it makes being paid in U.S. currency another appealing reason to live there.

To not do as hot is an informal expression that means to feel or to perform poorly. It's usually used with the adverb "so," as in "I **didn't do so hot** during my class presentation." You can also preface it with other verbs, such as "look" or "be." For instance, "Do you have a fever? You **don't look so hot**" or "To be honest, I'm **not so hot** at cooking."

Although **to not do as/so hot** is an informal expression, it's still a little more polite than saying "to do poorly". In English, using adverbs of degree like "so", you can make negative assessments sound more polite by negating a positive adjective/verb. For example, "He did badly on his test" is very direct and doesn't sound as kind as, "He didn't do so well on his test." In the same way, "She **didn't do so hot** during her audition" sounds gentler than, "She did poorly during her audition." Finally, "You **don't look so hot**. Do you need to lie down?" is less likely to offend your conversation partner than, "You look terrible. Do you need to lie down?"

Here are a couple more examples with **to not do as/so hot**:

Bethany: Gavin, how did the interview go? Tell me everything!

Gavin: Oh... to be honest, I think I **didn't do so hot**. I was really nervous and I stuttered a lot. I think they could tell that I was sweating a lot, too...

Bethany: I'm sorry to hear that, but I bet you did better than you think you did!

Gavin: I sure hope so...

Victor: What are you doing, Emily?

Emily: Just taking a look at how my investments are doing.

Victor: Yeah? How are they looking?

Emily: Well, most of them seem like they're doing well, but it looks like the stocks for that tech company I invested in really **aren't doing as hot**. I'm trying to figure out whether it's worth selling them now or if they might recover.

Bottom line

Noun

When Andrew talks about the reasons behind the large number of Canadians emigrating to the U.S., he mentions that the U.S. dollar is performing better than the Canadian dollar. He says that moving to the U.S. and being paid in U.S. currency is therefore great for a Canadian worker's **bottom line**.

Bottom line is a noun that can mean either a net profit or loss, or the most fundamental element of a situation. In this episode, Andrew uses this term to refer to the total amount of money someone makes. You can often tell which definition is being used based on context, but there's another way to identify this. When talking about net profit or loss, **bottom line** is frequently used with a possessive. For example, "I need to focus on **my bottom line**" or "the company is worried about **its bottom line**." In both of these situations, **bottom line** means net profits.

The second definition for **bottom line** is often used for summarizing a main point. For example, "There are a lot of ways to protect yourself from COVID-19, but the **bottom line** is that getting vaccinated is the most effective option." You might also say, "All of the candidates performed well in the interview, but the **bottom line** is that David has the most experience of them all."

Here are a couple more examples with **bottom line**:

Tony: Have you made up your mind about whether you're going to quit and take that job offer?

Leslie: Yes. I've been thinking about it all week, and I've finally decided. I'm going to take the new job.

Tony: Congratulations! I know it was a tough decision.

Leslie: It really was. I love my job so much—the team, the work, everything. But with two kids and a mortgage, I realized that I need to prioritize **my bottom line**. I just hope that higher pay doesn't come with too much more responsibility!

Wanda: Can you please explain to me why your department didn't meet the quota for last quarter?

James: Well, with all due respect, the **bottom line** is that we do not have enough staff. The sales quota that headquarters set for us is simply undoable with only three full-time salespeople.

To put down roots

Idiom

Towards the end of the podcast, Andrew and Anna talk about how some tech companies in the U.S. offer better pay, benefits, and working conditions than the top tech companies in South Korea. For this reason, Andrew says that a young programmer who hasn't **placed down roots** in South Korea yet might want to seize the opportunity to move and work for one of these American companies.

To put down roots is an idiom that means to establish yourself in a place and make it your long-term home. The idea behind the idiom comes from the imagery of a plant developing roots and anchoring itself into the earth. Once a plant has developed large roots, it's hard to pull it out of the ground. In the same way, it's hard to leave a city or country once you have **put down roots** there.

Putting down roots often refers to life events like buying a home or starting a family. For example, "After years of moving from city to city, my wife and I finally decided to buy a house and **put down roots** in Los Angeles."

In this episode, Andrew uses the verb "**place**" instead of "**put**" in this expression. This is an acceptable but somewhat less common usage.

Here are a couple more examples with **to put down roots**:

Tessa: Babe, I'm getting tired of feeling like we don't have a place to call home. I love travelling the world with you for your job, but I need a change.

Robert: Like, what kind of change?

Tessa: I'm feeling ready to **put down roots**. I think it's time we start talking about having a baby and maybe choosing a city to settle down in, long-term.

Robert: Wow...okay. You've given me a lot to think about. Let me have some time to process this and we can discuss it further.

Joe: Bye now! Careful of the snow and get home safe!

Taylor: Bye, Jenny! Bye Mark! Oh, Joe, I'm so thankful our daughter decided to **put down roots** less than an hour away from us. It's a joy to be able to see her and Mark all the time.

Joe: I couldn't agree more.

Quiz

- 1. If your employee tells you that she wants to move on to greener pastures, she is probably referring to...**
 - a) a career in agriculture
 - b) a better paying and more fulfilling job
 - c) moving away to the countryside
 - d) taking a vacation

- 2. If your new girlfriend blends in with your friend group, that means she...**
 - a) isn't very talkative or sociable with your friends
 - b) has an unusual sense of humor compared to your friends
 - c) wears boring clothing compared to your friends
 - d) has a lot in common with your friends

- 3. Which of the following is NOT an example of putting down roots?**
 - a) Moving for your job every couple of years
 - b) Buying a long-term home
 - c) Developing strong connections with a local community group
 - d) Settling down in one city and having a baby

- 4. If a small business owner wants to increase her bottom line, that means she...**
 - a) wants to give more money to charity
 - b) wants to make more money
 - c) wants to give her employees better benefits
 - d) wants to hire more employees

- 5. Which is the best example of a no brainer?**
 - a) Picking a restaurant to go to for dinner
 - b) Deciding between California or Florida for your family vacation
 - c) Choosing between a cold glass of lemonade or a scalding cup of coffee on a hot summer day
 - d) Deciding when your child is responsible enough to drive your car

Writing and Discussion Questions

1. Have you or any of your relatives moved to a new place for an employment opportunity? Explain.
2. Please describe a time in your life when you were faced with a no brainer decision. What did you decide to do?
3. What are some of the ways a country might be able to reduce or prevent brain drain?
4. Would you be willing to move to a new country for a better quality of life? Why or why not?
5. Does the idea of putting down roots in one town or city sound appealing to you? Why or why not?

Quiz Answers

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

Episode credits

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