

Chatterbox #326 – Teen employment (ad free)

Episode description

In this Chatterbox episode, Andrew and Anna discuss teen employment. They share their personal experiences and explore the reasons behind the increasing number of teen jobs in various countries. They talk about their first jobs, the wages they earned, and how these early work experiences influenced their lives. They also compare teen employment in different cultures and discuss how rising living costs affect young workers.

Fun fact

Did you know that teen employment can actually impact brain development? Studies have shown that working during adolescence can enhance cognitive skills like problem-solving and time management.

Expressions included in the study guide

- To chip in
- Bits and bobs
- To get roped into
- Late bloomers
- To take a stab in the dark
- Out of [one's] depth



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 episode 326, "Teen employment." Featuring Andrew and Anna.

In this episode, Anna and I are going to share our thoughts on a topic that's becoming increasingly relevant, teens entering the workforce.

Recent years have seen a significant rise in inflation, putting financial pressure on many families and leading more teenagers to take on part-time jobs, not just for extra pocket money, but to help make ends meet. In fact, the labor force participation rate for teens age 16 to 19 in the USA has climbed to 37.4%, a level we haven't seen for the last 15 years.

Today, many teens are contributing to household expenses like rent, utilities, and groceries, and even covering their personal costs too, such as cell phone bills and clothing. While financial necessity is driving this trend, working also offers teens valuable benefits like skill development, career preparation, and social interaction.

So today, Anna and I are going to discuss our personal opinions on the pros and cons of this trend, how we think it affects teens' education and social lives, and what it might mean for their future opportunities. It's a really interesting topic with many layers, and we're excited to share our thoughts and experiences with you. And with that being said, now I think it's time to welcome Anna to the show and get started with our main topic of conversation for today. So, let's do that now. Here we go.

Hello there, Anna. How's it going?

Anna: Hi, Andrew. I'm really good. How are you?

Andrew: I'm doing well as well, Anna. And to segue into our topic here, I thought maybe we could begin by just chatting about our experiences with employment as teenagers, and

then we can jump into the bigger issue. Anna, when did you first have your first job? How old were you? Do you remember your first job?

Anna: I absolutely remember my first job, and I was around 15 or 16, I think. I was still at school, secondary school, we call it in the UK, and I started working in a clothes shop with three of my friends. It was called M & Co. It's a not very well-known clothes shop, and I worked there as an assistant on the weekends, on Saturdays and Sundays. That was my first ever job, and I remember I think I earned £3.90 an hour, which at that time was pretty low. It's a very low wage, let's say, but I remember thinking I was, I don't know, Bill Gates or something like this. It was one of those moments where it was great for me. It's when you first start earning money, and you think, wow, I'm loaded. And then, of course, you slowly realize that no. What about you, Andrew? What was your first job? Did you work in retail or a restaurant maybe? That's quite common for people.

Andrew: Yeah, I kind of did a little bit of everything. I think, you know, the first real job where I did something for someone else and got paid for it was actually my piano teacher was running a little recording studio, and so he hired me to do some copying of digital audio tapes, these tapes called ADAT tapes. So, I'd copy these audio tapes from the recording sessions that he did to his computer, and I got paid for that when I was like 13 or 14, and it ended up being a lot of work. I'd go there every week for 10 hours to his recording studio to do these things. So, I consider that to be my first part-time job, really, and that was, yeah, when I was really young. But my first official job, I think, was actually in retail. I worked at a drugstore, and I stocked the shelves in the mornings from like 5am to 9am. It was... it was not the most pleasant thing to do, but it was fine.

Anna: And I was just going to jump in there, actually, Andrew, just so people know, *drugstore* for you, Andrew, is *pharmacy* for us, I think. I think we use a slightly different word for it, if I'm not mistaken.

Andrew: Yeah, a drugstore in a Canadian context is, you know, the kind of place where you would go to buy maybe beauty supplies, toothpaste, toothbrush, shampoo, but also

there's a pharmacy as well. So, like, you know, like, Tylenol, medicine, that kind of thing, but then also if you need a prescription field, you could get that done at this place. So yeah, it's just like a, I don't know, personal care store, I guess, is what we would call a drugstore. And Anna, to get back to the wage, I remember I made just a little bit over minimum wage. I think my first job paid me \$8.30 an hour, and maybe at the time, the minimum wage was around \$8.15 an hour. So, I remember thinking that I was just like, pretty cool, because I made just a little bit more than my friends, who also had minimum wage jobs. And I was like, yeah, just making a little bit more than you guys. So, I don't know why that made me happy at the time. It's pretty insignificant in retrospect, but I thought it was cool.

Anna: Exactly. I think that's the thing when you first start earning money, it does feel cool. And I also did some babysitting. That's really, really common. It's maybe not an official job, but I used to babysit for my mom's friends and things like that. So that would give me a little bit of cash. But as I said, my first official job was working in a shop, as I said. I'm going to continue to 17, 18, 19 as well, because we can call those also teenage years, maybe the latter end of teenage years. I also worked in a factory near my house. There is an industrial park, and there was a company that made computers. And I worked in the warehouse, packing the computers in between university years. So, it was a little bit later. It wasn't during school, but those were kind of my first real memories of working.

Andrew: Cool. And your first job at the clothing store, you said you worked with your friends. That must've been fun working with three of your friends together.

Anna: It was so fun. It was great. It was great. But the problem was that we didn't get the same shift. So, they wouldn't always put us on at the same time, but it was really good because we could go out with the people from work. It was fun. We were like 16, so you were going to the cinema and things like this after work or maybe going to get something to eat. So, it was really, really nice to have that first job with my friends as well. So, I honestly really enjoyed that first job, and it was a really good learning experience for me.

So, Andrew, I wonder why did you start getting a job? Why did you work in the drugstore? What was your reason for that?

Andrew: Yeah, I think is that I needed money. You know, it's interesting, this new trend that we're talking about in this episode is really about the cost of living that has seen a dramatic rise in the last few years. So, teens from, I think, many countries around the world, and I'd be interested to hear from our listeners, if this is in every country. It definitely is in the States and Canada, and maybe Anna, you can chime in in a moment to talk about your situation as well in Europe and what's going on over there. But I know maybe the situation here in South Korea is a little bit different, actually. So maybe it's not as much a factor here in Korea. So, there are some cultural factors at play. I don't think we can say this is a worldwide trend, but the trend that is happening, at least in North America, is that the cost of living is rising. And as a result, more teens are getting jobs so that they can pay for their own expenses and also maybe help with their family expenses as well.

And when I got a job, it wasn't necessarily that I had to **chip in** and help with my family's expenses. My parents never asked me to suddenly start buying food or paying rent or anything like that. But I think, you know, once I hit probably 15, 16, that kind of employable age, my parents were like, "Yeah, if you want to buy something, you got to do it on your own." Dialing back how much they would support me. I think they wanted to make me a more independent person. And this was really common. I don't know if this is so much the case now, because of the rising costs of everything. I'm not sure how parents are handling it these days. But definitely, in my generation, for me and most of my friends, I did have a couple of lucky friends who didn't have to do this. But almost all of my friends at school and stuff, their parents forced them almost to get part time jobs, not necessarily by like saying, "You must get a job!" But just by cutting off the money supply.

So, it's like if you want to have your own car, if you want to buy the cool clothes that are more expensive than just the basic clothes, if you want to buy a new video game or CDs or whatever we would spend our money on back in the day, we would have to get a part time job. So, for me, my drugstore job, and the other jobs that I had subsequently were for that.

And I think also like as I got a little bit older and started going to university, it was to help me pay for my university tuition as well. My parents helped me out with university to an extent, not completely. I also had student loans, but I needed to make up the difference somehow. It still didn't cover everything. So, I had to have a part time job to pay for my education as well. So, I think those were the main reasons that I had a part time job. How about you, Anna? What was your reason for working?

Anna: Oh, well, absolutely the same as you, Andrew, more or less. I mean, it was a lack of pocket money, we could say. So, my parents sort of gently pushed all three of us, me, and my siblings to get a job when we were around 16. And it's for the reasons you said before, if you want to go out, if you want to go to the cinema, you know, you're 16 at that point, so you can't go to a bar or anything. If you want to get sweets, I don't know, if you want to buy a magazine, then you need to start earning your own money. And quite frankly, my mom and dad were not going to be giving me a huge amount of pocket money every week to fund my social habits. So, it was more for me. It wasn't because necessarily my family felt financial pressure. But also, I mean, it does help if you make your own money, and you can pay for your own things and your mom and dad don't have to give you pocket money.

So, I mean, for me, it was about becoming independent, like you said. And, you know, my mom and dad always were very keen on us doing that. And to be honest, when I grew up anyway, which let's say I was 16 in 2007. So around that time, it was very, very common to find a job at maybe a paper round or working in a shop or working in a restaurant. It was a big part of the culture where I grew up, which was in the UK in England. I'm not sure now. And it's really not very common. I see as common at least in Spain, aside from people who may be working family businesses, for example, which I know that that's a very common thing. If your family has a business, then you would start working there when you maybe you were even younger than that, maybe even 13, 14, 15, helping out and doing little **bits and bobs** here and there. But it was just to get some pocket money, essentially, and spending money. And I guess to teach you a valuable lesson, which is that nothing in life is free, really. Money doesn't grow on trees.

Andrew: I always felt bad for my friends whose parents did own like a store or a restaurant or something, and they would have to work all the time after school. And on the weekends. Starting at like a really young age, it seems like you're absolutely right. The kids whose parents own their own business and run usually, yeah, like a shop or a restaurant. The kids always end up **getting roped into working**. But yeah, I don't know. It's like, it really makes it a family business, right? I think there are some benefits that come with that kind of thing as well. And yeah, also like friends that I knew that grew up on farms, maybe they'd be involved with doing a lot of chores around the house and working on the farm. So yeah, those kids got started at a real early age. I guess we should consider ourselves a bit lucky, Anna.

Anna: Yeah, **late bloomers**.

Andrew: **Late bloomers** and starting around 15, 16.

Anna: Absolutely. And then there's also another hidden thing, which I think a lot of people don't talk about, which is there's a lot of teenagers and young people that are carers full time. So, they care for their, maybe they have a parent who has mobility issues, or maybe they have a sibling who is disabled in some way, for example, and they have to care for them part time or full time. So, I think that's also something that people don't think about, but there are people, young people who are nearly full-time carers for people in their family. And OK, maybe it's not a job that most people think of as going to a shop, but it's extremely demanding. And there can be a lot of young people in those types of roles. And in fact, in the UK, you get a carer's allowance back in the day when I was a teenager. I don't know about now how it works, but you could get a carer's allowance if you looked after somebody in your family who was disabled or have mobility issues, for example. So that is also a job as well. So, I think there's lots of different things that young people do to get money and support their family. And I think personally, it's a really noble thing to do if the motivation for getting a job is to support your family. I mean, I think it is really noble, but of course, I can understand that that does put a lot of stress on that young person, on that teenager, a lot of pressure, of course.

Andrew: Sure. Yeah, absolutely. And just to clarify for our listeners in a North American context, we would call that a *caretaker*. Somebody who does that kind of work, a caretaker.

Anna, that's a good point, stress, and a burden on a young person. In your context, working a part-time job at a clothing store, how did that affect your school responsibilities? Do you think it had a positive effect on your studies, a negative effect on your studies? I'm just thinking like in our case, we weren't really working to provide for our families or to contribute to our household income, right? So, I didn't really feel any stress about that, but I could imagine that if I were working to make sure that my family could afford to eat or something, that would be a much more stressful situation. And maybe that added stress, that added burden could affect how I did in school and my performance, my grades, those kinds of things. How about for you? Did you notice that your part-time job ever affected your academic performance?

Anna: Oh, absolutely not. No, I mean, it was a few hours a week. It was like maybe six hours on a Saturday and six hours on a Sunday. So no, not really. I mean, it was very manageable and maybe even sometimes they wouldn't give me as many hours as that. So, it would depend week by week, but no, it didn't affect. I don't think my studying time, you know, I went through phases where I studied a little bit more in phases where I didn't study as much, but no, I don't think it really affected me. And I feel very grateful that I didn't have that pressure, like you said before, because I can imagine having that weight on your shoulders thinking, you know, I've got to provide, I've got to get this money because we need to eat, or we need to buy transport or whatever. So, I can't imagine that feeling, that weight on your shoulders at such a young age, it's such a big responsibility. But no, for me, it had no real effect on my personal life apart from the fact that, you know, I couldn't go out on a Saturday morning or maybe a Friday night because I had to be up early on a Saturday morning. So, for me, it didn't affect my studies. What about you? I mean, you said you were going there like for 10 hours a week doing the recording in the studio and did it affect you a little bit, Andrew?

Andrew: Yeah. I don't remember it having a big effect. Yeah. 10 hours a week divided over, I don't know how many days I would go there. I'd probably go there for like, you know, a few hours each afternoon during the week, like maybe three or four days during the week. So, it wasn't like a huge time commitment. And when I worked at the drug store, I was working only four-hour shifts from 5am till 9am. And those were mostly like Saturday, Sunday. Occasionally, I would have some shifts I remember before high school, but that was only like a few times. And yeah, that would only be if I had a late start. In Canada, I don't know what it's like in the UK. This is kind of interesting to compare the cultures here. But in Canada, we have a thing called a spare in high school. So, it's like a free class. And the way that the class schedule would be worked out for my high school classes is that it would shift every two weeks. And so, for some periods for two weeks, I'd have a spare as my first class, which means that I wouldn't actually have to go to school until like 10:30am. We'd call it what do we call it? We call it the bell schedule, something like that. I'm getting too old. I can't remember about high school now.

But the way that the bell schedule worked out, if I had my spare first class, then sometimes I'd be like, yeah, I can work this day, because I wouldn't have to start school until like later in the morning. So, I could get off my shift at the drugstore, and then drive to high school and start my class later in the day. But that didn't happen very often. And yeah, maximum I was working would be like eight hours a week at that job. I think in the summer, that's when I picked up more shifts, and I would go harder during the summer. But yeah, during the week, it was not very much at all pretty insignificant. And yeah, I don't think that it had an impact at all. But I totally agree with you. That's I really do feel for the kids that have to balance work and school. And there's a lot of pressure to actually provide money to your family. That's got to be really stressful. And I can't really imagine what that's like to go through all of that pressure at a young age, but kids are doing it out there. So, respect to them. That's amazing.

Anna: Yeah, absolutely. And I think, for me, there's, of course, pros and cons to everything. I'm a really big advocate for getting a job when you're a teenager, because I think that aside from the fact that it teaches you, you know, money doesn't grow on trees,

things don't come for free. If you want to get money, you've got to work for it. And I think that's a really important lesson to learn when you're like 15 or 16, or whatever age you are. And also, another thing is that it just teaches you how to relate to people like in a customer service environment. If you're working in a shop, you have to deal with customers that come into the store. I did anyway because I was on the till. Or maybe if you're in a restaurant, I have a lot of friends, and this is a really interesting point. I have a lot of friends that actually worked in restaurants rather than in shops. That's another common job that people get when they're teenagers in the UK.

And they always say that they feel that they owe that time that they did working in a restaurant to how they now relate to people. So, they built up a lot of soft skills doing that job, because you have to talk to people, you have to manage complaints, you have to ask people what they would like, you have to be kind and friendly. And so, it's really interesting. I think that it does teach you skills. And I think it helps get you out there as well, when you're a teenager, and maybe you're a little bit shy, you don't really maybe talk to people or whatever. And I think it just helps. I really just think it helps. I'm a big, big advocate for it. I think it really adds something when you're a teenager. And I think it helps you learn a lot of really valuable lessons at an early age, before you go into the real work world later.

Andrew: Yeah, I couldn't agree more. In my case, I remember really having to interact and like work on a team and work closely with people that until that point in my life, I had never met. Like, because I was working with adults. So even the people that were working this job were like similar age to my parents. But they came from a totally different background and a totally different social circle that my parents were involved in. So, these are people that like, I wouldn't have met, maybe some of my friends, parents would have been similar to these people. But yeah, I don't know, like, you never like work on a team with your friends, parents, right? I don't know, I just remember being like, for the first time, I had to interact with people that who I had like, never run into, or never spent time with in my life before.

And I remember that I worked with this one lady who, yeah, was just like, very different than the people that my parents hung out with. So, like, all of the adults that I had known to that point in my life, she was like, very different. And she'd always ask me what I was studying in school and what I thought about things and then would like push back on my ideas. And like, why do you think like that? Like, that's not a good way to think that you should think of it from this perspective. And I was like, wow, she like, is really challenging me in a way that I had never encountered before. And I wasn't getting from my social circle, from my teachers at school. And so yeah, it's a really important experience to go through, I think, for young people is like, yeah, working with others, working with people that you wouldn't encounter just in like, your basic, regular life of home, school, family. So, I think there's a lot of value in that. Absolutely.

Anna: Yeah, you've got to be on time. You've got to show up at a specific time. There might be people that you work with that you don't really like, but you've got to be nice and friendly to them anyway. So that's also a nice skill to learn is that, you know, sometimes you're not going to get on with everyone and you just have to get the job done. And there might be problems that you have to solve, or there might be issues. So, for me, I'm a massive advocate for I think it's such a good thing to do if you can, of course. And of course, that is if it's for independent reasons, but you know, as we said before, it must be very difficult if you have the added pressure and added stress of having to provide.

And I think for me, the main time that I've seen that happen is rather than when people are at school, when people are sort of 18 and they're at university. And I remember that I had one girl who I lived with, and she had to work at the same time as doing university in order to be able to pay for her accommodation and her course, because just very quickly, the way it works in the UK is that each person has to pay for their accommodation and their course. When you go to university, you can take out a loan, but if you take out a loan, you have to pay it back and things like that. So anyway, it can be very expensive. And she was working at the same time, and that is very difficult. She really struggled with that because you have to pick up different shifts during the week, but you also have to study and make time for your coursework. And she was studying architecture, which was very intense.

So, I think jobs are great for young people. I think that it really teaches you a lot of lessons, but obviously, as we said before, I can imagine that for people where it's a necessity rather than just a nice to have, it might be a different situation. But still, I think that it does teach you really, really valuable life lessons at an earlier age. So, I'm a big fan. I think it's a good thing.

Andrew: Anna, we'll wrap up here in just a moment. But before we do, I wanted to circle back and just ask you about something that I touched on earlier. And that is that, you know, this trend of an increase of teenagers entering the workforce, this is based on American statistics. And I don't have any data to back up any other countries. We're just going off American data here. But I think Canada is probably in the same boat as America for this one. And I know here in Korea, it's actually a very different situation, because high school is so intense in South Korea. And because entering university, and that entrance exam that you have to take to get into university can be so influential on determining the path you take in life. I don't have any statistics. But my gut feeling is that very, very few South Korean students, especially around the 16, 17-year-old range, probably not too many students are working, they're busy studying. Not everyone, some students are going to work, probably some students that need to provide for their families, they're going to work. But I would say like 90-95% of students in South Korea are probably just focusing on their studies. And it wouldn't surprise me if other Asian countries are maybe similar to that. But what about in Europe? What's your feeling in Europe? Do you think in the UK, in Spain, is it common these days for, you know, high school students to get part-time jobs? Is it following the American, North American trend? What do you think about that?

Anna: Goodness, I've really got no idea because I haven't lived in the UK for nearly 10 years now. So, I would say that it's probably a similar situation than what it was when I was younger. I mean, both my brother and sister who were quite a bit younger than me, they both had the same experience of going out and getting jobs, but I'm not really sure. But in Spain, for example, I think it's probably a situation that's closer to Korea. They have quite difficult exams for university and most of the time, young people dedicate to studying and you don't see that many young people in jobs. I mean, maybe if it was a family

business, for example, maybe that would be an exception. But as you said before, I think probably I would say it's a minority. I don't think it's as much part of the culture as in the UK, for example.

Andrew: OK, Anna and I are going to continue our conversation here for just a little bit longer for some bonus content for all of our Culips members. Guys, we love you. Thank you for your support. This bo-co is for you. And Anna, I have a quick rapid-fire question here for you. And it's a quiz question. So, you might just have to guess on this one. Just throw it a guess. Doesn't really matter if you're right or wrong, but it is an interesting answer. So, you know, we've been talking about this rise in employment for teenagers in the USA. I'm curious. I read this online a little bit earlier. So, I'm curious, what percentage of teenagers do you think actually have a job in the States right now? What percentage of teenagers are employed? It's the highest that it's ever been since like 2008 or 2009, the last 15 years or so.

Anna: Oh, goodness. So, I've got to guess. I've got to guess. I've got **to take a stab in the dark**. Okay.

Andrew: **Stab in the dark**. What percentage of teens are employed?

Anna: 20%?

Andrew: It's actually 37%.

Anna: 37%. Oh, wow. OK, that's higher than I thought. I thought it'd be somewhere around the 20s, 30s, but I went on the lower end.

Andrew: Yeah, I was actually surprised. I thought it would be a little bit higher. I thought... because based on my experience, as a teen, it seemed like probably 80% of my friends had part time jobs. So, I thought, maybe it's a little bit lower these days. Maybe it's like 60%. But yeah, I was actually surprised. I thought we're talking about this big trend, like a

rise in employment, but it seemed to me like it was still a little bit low. OK Anna, question number two: What's a job that you think every teen should try at least once? And why?

Anna: I think, as I said before, in the main episode, probably working in a restaurant, because I think you get to learn a lot about dealing with people. So maybe in a restaurant or a shop or something like this, something where you have to interact with people, and the public, I think is a really good one to try. And I don't know, I guess it depends on what you like. If you're active, and you like being outside, maybe something like a paper round, for example, I don't even know if I don't think those exist anymore. I think I'm showing my age here. A paper round, by the way, guys, is where you used to go on your bike, and you would take the physical paper to people's houses in the morning, the newspaper. I don't even know if that really still happens, actually.

Andrew: Yeah, I mean, there are still newspapers, so I think it happens. But it's probably some guy in a van that goes to one house in the neighborhood that still has the subscription. I actually had, in Canada and in the States, we call it a *paper route*. I had a paper route when I was, yeah, a really little guy, like 12, 13, and me and my brother did it together. And I remember we had to deliver not the daily paper, but a paper that came out twice a week. And sometimes there was a special edition, so like, maybe sometimes three times a week. And we would deliver in our neighborhood to around 70 houses. So, it would take us a little while to do. And our pay for doing that paper route was like \$37 a month. It was incredibly low in retrospect.

Anna: Oh, my God. A rip-off. Oh, my goodness.

Andrew: Yeah, I could talk about this for hours. Like there's a lot of funny stories that developed from having the paper route.

Anna: But did you enjoy it?

Andrew: Some parts were cool. Some parts were cool. Yeah. I remember my brother and I, we bought a really cheap electric guitar with our paper route earnings. So that was cool.

It got me into playing guitar. So, there's some good things that came out of it for sure. Final question for you, Anna. That is, was there ever a part time job that you had when you were younger, where you had it for like a day and then quit? Or, you know, did you ever try something, and you were like, "Nope, that's not for me." And then get right out of there.

Anna: That's a really good question. Yes, there was one that I did. And this was when I was at university. So, I was about 18. So, I'm a little bit older than 16 at this point. And I really like makeup and beauty. So, I went for an interview with one of the counters, like the makeup counters. It was a beauty brand. And basically, what you had to do in the interview was you had to go around the shop, find people, bring them back to the counter and do their makeup. And I was like, Oh my goodness. I was freaking out. I was really nervous. I was really shy. I felt totally out of place. Like I did not feel confident going up to people getting them and doing their makeup. So, I literally just said to the lady, I said, Thank you so much for the opportunity. But it's not, it's not for me. I was so scared. I don't know what it was. I think I was just a little bit **out of my depth**. And I just didn't really know what to do. So yeah, I actually did. That was one where I left, I left during the interview, because I was just like, this is just this just not for me. And there's no point wasting my time here. What about you, Andrew?

Andrew: I had a job that I quit during my first shift. And that was at Subway, the sandwich restaurant. Yeah, I remember I got a job as a sandwich artist. And I think I was like, training to make, you know, sandwiches on the very first day. And there was like a really rude customer who was like, screaming at me to put more mayonnaise and mustard in his sandwich. And I was like, "This ain't for me. I don't need to go through this." So yeah, I pretty much quit on the spot. I was like, "You know what, man, make your own sandwich. I'm out of here."

Anna: Yeah, life's too short for me to be getting shouted at to put in more mayonnaise and mustard. Thank you very much.

Andrew: Yeah, yeah. So that one didn't work out. But...

Anna: Yeah, oh, well, these things happen. I mean, not all jobs are fun. I remember my sister had a job in a shoe shop, which she absolutely hated. And I can't say that I loved working in the clothes shop, but it was, it was fun. It wasn't a bad job. I think the factory job that I did where I was packing laptops was a little bit more soul destroying. After the sort of 50th laptop that you've packed in a box, you sort of start staring into space and thinking like, "Is this going to be my life forever?"

And I also got really fat on that job because they had a cafeteria, and we would work a shift from six in the morning until two in the afternoon. And there would be a break at about 10 o'clock and they had a cafeteria that would serve English breakfasts. So, I literally spent the summer having an English breakfast every morning. And yeah, I ended up, I think I put on quite a lot of weight. So, I was just like, so depressed packing all these laptops. I was like, well, I'm obviously just going to have the English breakfast every day. But well, that took its toll after a couple of months.

Andrew: In the UK, do you guys have the store Costco, or do you know what Costco is?

Anna: We do now. I think, yeah, I do. We do now, but I hardly ever go. There's one in Madrid as well. We have it here in Spain too. Yeah. There's sort of huge sizes.

Andrew: Yeah. It's like a warehouse store. And yeah, I had a part-time job during university in Costco and I worked in the bakery. And so, I was just munching on bagels and cookies and cake, like all the time while working in the bakery. And then they have a cafeteria in Costco where it's really, really affordable. So, they would have poutine, which is a Canadian dish, which is like french fries with gravy and cheese. And they have really cheap pizza and hot dogs. So, I'd be like munching in the bakery all shift. And then I'd hit up the poutine and hot dogs and pizza during my lunch break. And yeah, I think that job was a delicious job. Don't get me wrong, but it was not so good for my waistline.

Anna: Yeah. I remember being, I had the same thing with that job. And I remember actually a lot of people, another thing just finally is that a lot of people used to work in places like McDonald's as well and fast-food restaurants when they were teenagers. So, I

used to remember we had friends that would work there, and we would go there and try and get free meals and stuff. And sometimes we were lucky. Sometimes we weren't. Sometimes they would give us an extra chips or something like this. But I remember that was quite a common thing that people did as well as working in McDonald's or Burger King or something like this. And yeah, they always used to just constantly eat McDonald's obviously, which probably isn't the best thing, but you know, it is what it is. You can get away with it when you're young.

Andrew: Yeah. Yeah. When you're younger, you can get away with it. Absolutely. Hook your friends up.

Anna: Right.

Andrew: All right. And I think this is a good place to wrap things up. So, thanks everyone for tuning in and we'll catch you in the next episode. Goodbye.

Anna: Thanks, everyone. See you next time. Bye.

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

Detailed Explanations

To chip in

Phrasal verb, informal

To chip in means to contribute or help out, often by giving money, time, or resources. In the context of the episode, Andrew uses "**chip in**" when talking about how he started earning his own money as a teenager. He mentions that his parents did not directly ask him to contribute to household expenses, but they gradually reduced their financial support, encouraging him to be more independent.

When you **chip in**, you are adding your part to a group effort or shared expense. This could involve giving money, time, or other resources to help with a goal. For instance, if friends are planning a surprise party and everyone contributes money for food and decorations, they are all **chipping in**. It's a practical and casual way of saying that everyone is sharing the costs or workload.

The origin of this phrase likely comes from the idea of adding small amounts, or "chips," to a collective whole, much like putting in small pieces to complete a puzzle. Synonyms for **chip in** include "contribute," "help out," or "pitch in."

An important thing to remember is that **chip in** is commonly used in informal situations. In more formal contexts, "contribute" or "donate" would be more appropriate.

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

Joel: Have you figured out what to get Cal for his birthday?

Elsa: He mentioned he didn't want any gifts, so I was thinking we could all **chip in** for a surprise party and a cake instead.

Joel: That sounds perfect! Just let me know how much I should contribute and any other details.

Hillary: We're organizing a charity drive to collect warm clothes for the homeless this winter. We need people to **chip in** by donating clothes, helping with sorting, or spreading the word.

Luke: Wonderful idea! I'll bring a few winter coats and sweaters. I'll make sure to share the details with my friends!

Bits and bobs

Phrase (UK, informal)

Bits and bobs is a casual expression used in British English that refers to small, varied tasks or items that might not be significant on their own but are collectively useful or necessary. It's commonly used to describe different things that are too numerous to mention individually.

In the episode, Anna uses the phrase **bits and bobs** to discuss the type of varied tasks young people might do when they are helping out in family businesses or starting to work at a young age. This means they do various minor tasks to help out rather than focusing on one big job.

The phrase is often used when referring to a collection of minor jobs or objects that don't need to be listed one by one. It's similar to phrases like **odds and ends** or **this and that**. For example, if someone is doing a few different chores around the house, they might say they are handling **bits and bobs** to cover all those small tasks.

The term likely originated in Britain, where "bit" refers to a small amount, and "bob" was a slang word for a shilling (a small unit of currency). Together, **bits and bobs** means a mix of small, unimportant things.

Be careful when using this phrase in formal contexts, as it is quite colloquial and might not be understood outside of British English or informal situations.

Here are a couple more examples with **bits and bobs**:

Lexi: Do you have everything packed for the trip?

Tom: Almost. I still need to pack a few **bits and bobs**, like my charger and some snacks.

Lexi: Don't forget to pack the camera too. We want to take lots of photos!

Cam: Do you need help with anything before the meeting?

Stephanie: Actually, yes. I need to take care of a few **bits and bobs**: printing out reports, setting up the projector, and arranging chairs.

Cam: I can set up the projector and arrange the chairs for you!

Stephanie: Thanks, Cam. I appreciate your help!

To get roped into

Phrasal verb

The phrase “**to get roped into**” means to be involved in something, usually unwillingly or unexpectedly. In the episode, when Andrew says kids **get roped into working** at their family’s business, he means they end up working there because their family needs help, not because they chose to do it themselves.

Just like **getting roped into working** at a family business, you might **get roped into doing** something when someone asks you for help, and you feel like you cannot say no. For example, if a friend asks you to help with a big project, and you agree even though you would rather not, you could say, “I **got roped into helping** with the project.”

For example, if you were talking to a coworker and said, “I **got roped into staying** late at work,” it means you were asked or expected to stay late, and you ended up doing it even if you didn’t really want to. Another example is, “I didn’t want to go to the party, but I **got roped into it** by my friends.” This means you ended up going because your friends convinced you even though you didn’t want to go.

To get roped into means that you were not eager to participate, but you ended up involved because of some pressure or persuasion. To remember this expression, think of “**getting roped into**” as being tied up with a rope and unable to escape.

Some similar expressions are “dragged into” or “sucked into.” These phrases mean almost the same thing – they describe situations where you are pulled into something against your will.

Here are a couple more examples with **to get roped into**:

Mia: I heard you had to work late last night.

Jake: Yeah, I **got roped into** covering for a colleague who was sick. It was a long day.

Mia: I hope you get some time to rest soon.

Pete: I can’t believe you’re in a school musical! I thought you said you hated musicals.

Sarah: Yeah. I’m not into musicals, but I **got roped into it** by my teacher. I just couldn’t say no to her.

Late bloomer

Noun

To be a **late bloomer** means that someone reaches their full potential or starts to shine later in life compared to their peers. In the episode, Anna and Andrew use this expression when describing themselves. They are saying that they started to work or develop their skills at a later age, around 15 or 16, compared to others who started earlier.

The term "**late bloomer**" is used to describe people who start to show their talents, skills, or successes later than others. For example, if a student doesn't excel in school until they are older, they can be called a **late bloomer**. Similarly, someone who begins a new career or hobby later in life and becomes very successful is also a **late bloomer**.

This expression is often used as reassurance that it's okay to develop at your own pace. It suggests that everyone has their own timing for when they achieve milestones or become successful. You can use "**late bloomer**" in sentences like, "It's okay if you're not a top student now. Many successful people are **late bloomers**." This means that even if someone is not successful or talented early on, they might achieve great things later.

The term "**late bloomer**" comes from the idea of flowers that bloom later than others. Just as some flowers take longer to open fully, some people take longer to show their full abilities. You can use this as a visual to remember this expression.

Here are a couple more examples with **late bloomers**:

Emma: I saw some really cool photos on your Instagram. You've been traveling a lot lately!

Chris: Thanks! I'm a bit of a **late bloomer** when it comes to travel. I only went abroad for the first time when I was 29, so I'm catching up now!

Edith: Did you know that Samuel L. Jackson didn't become a major star until he was in his 40s?

Oscar: Yeah, he's a great example of a **late bloomer** in Hollywood. His talent really shined through later in his career!



To take a stab in the dark

Idiom

In this episode, Andrew asks Anna a question about the percentage of teenagers with jobs in the USA. When Anna says, “I’ve got to **take a stab in the dark**,” she means she has to guess or make an estimate without having much information.

The expression “**take a stab in the dark**” is used when you have to make a guess or try something without knowing all the details or having a clear idea of the answer. It means to attempt something without much knowledge or certainty.

For example, if someone is asked to guess a number or an answer without enough information, they might “**take a stab in the dark**.” It’s like making a guess in the dark, where you cannot see clearly, so you are just trying your best based on whatever little information you have. Another example, if you’re trying to guess a password for an account and you don’t know it, you might “**take a stab in the dark**” and try common passwords like “123456” or “password.”

You can use **take a stab in the dark** in sentences like, “I don’t know the answer, but I’ll **take a stab in the dark** and say it’s around 50%.” This means you are guessing without being sure, and by using this expression you’re making it clear that you don’t know the exact answer.

You can remember this expression by thinking about trying to hit a target in the dark – you can’t see where you’re aiming, so you’re just guessing. Similar expressions include “make a wild guess” or “take a shot in the dark.”

Here are a couple more examples with **to take a stab in the dark**:

Julia: Did you figure out the problem with the laptop?

Roy: Yes! I **took a stab in the dark** by replacing one part that looked kind of old and that solved the problem!

Jane: Okay, so we’re supposed to guess the number of jellybeans in this jar. I’ll **take a stab in the dark** and say 250.

Emmet: That’s a good guess. Let’s see if you’re close. The answer is, 290!

Out of [one's] depth

Idiom

When Anna says she felt “**out of her depth**” during the makeup job interview, she means she felt uncomfortable and unsure about what she was doing. To be **out of your depth** means to be in a situation that is too difficult or beyond your abilities. Anna felt this way because she was nervous and didn’t feel confident in her role, so she decided it wasn’t right for her.

The expression “**out of [one’s] depth**” is used when someone is facing a task or situation that is too difficult or beyond their skill level. For example, if you join a team sport without knowing the rules or techniques, you might feel **out of your depth** during the game. Similarly, if you are asked to give a speech on a topic you know little about, you might feel **out of your depth** while speaking.

Another example, if a student is enrolled in an advanced course that’s far more complex than their previous classes, they might feel **out of their depth** with the new material. This expression can also be used in personal situations, like when someone tries to handle a difficult family issue without the necessary skills or knowledge, they may feel **out of their depth**.

You can remember **out of one’s depth** by thinking about being in water that is so deep that you can’t touch the bottom, and you might struggle to stay afloat. Similar phrases include “in over one’s head” and “overwhelmed.”

Here are a couple more examples with **out of [one's] depth**:

Vicky: I tried to do my own taxes this year, but **I’m out of my depth** with all the forms and deductions.

Ron: Taxes can be really complicated. Maybe you should hire a tax professional to help you.

Vicky: I’m considering that, yeah.

Nina: I’m trying to learn how to play the violin. Honestly, I **feel out of my depth** compared to the other students who have been playing for years.

Kevin: Keep practicing! It’s normal to feel that way at the start. You’ll improve with time.

Expressions Quiz

1. What does the expression "to chip in" mean?

- a) To contribute money or effort towards something.
- b) To start a new project.
- c) To work on something alone.
- d) To finish a task quickly.

2. Which of the following is used to talk about many small things that are too many to list one by one?

- a) Beeps and boots.
- b) Bibs and bots.
- c) Bites and bobs.
- d) Bits and bobs.

3. What does "late bloomers" refer to?

- a) People who are late for appointments.
- b) People who achieve success later in life.
- c) People who are always early to events.
- d) People who are experts in their field from a young age.

4. True or false? If someone says they'll take a stab in the dark, they know for sure what they're doing.

- a) True
- b) False

5. How might someone feel if they are "out of their depth" at a new job?

- a) They are confident about their skills.
- b) They are excited to learn and grow.
- c) They feel overwhelmed and unsure of their abilities.
- d) They are familiar with every aspect of their job.

Comprehension Quiz

6. How old was Anna when she had her first job?
7. What was Andrew's first official job?
8. According to Anna, what are some benefits of having a teenage job?
9. What job did Andrew quit during his first shift and why?
10. How did Anna's experience with her factory job impact her?

Writing and Discussion Questions

1. What was your first job as a teenager? Why did you start working? How did your early work experiences influence your personal habits or lifestyle choices?
2. What kind of job would be most beneficial for teenagers to have? Why do you think it's important for teens to try certain types of work? Do you agree that every teenager should get a job, or is it not necessary in your opinion?
3. Have you ever been in a situation where you needed to **chip in** for a group project or a shared expense? How did it go? How would you deal with people that aren't willing to **chip in**?
4. Can you recall a time when you **got roped into** a job or activity that you weren't particularly excited about? How did you handle it? Do you think it's the right thing for parents who own a business to involve children in it?
5. Describe a time when you **felt out of your depth** in a job or situation. How did you manage to cope, and what did you learn from the experience?

Quiz Answers

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

6. Around 15 or 16 years old.

7. Working at a drugstore, stocking shelves from 5am to 9am.

8. It teaches valuable life lessons such as the value of money, how to relate to people in customer service, and builds soft skills.

9. He quit his job as a sandwich artist at Subway because a rude customer made unreasonable demands, and he felt it wasn't worth continuing.

10. She found the job soul-destroying after packing numerous laptops and ended up gaining weight from eating English breakfasts every day at the cafeteria.

Episode credits

Hosts: Andrew Bates and Anna Connelly

Episode preparation/research: Andrew Bates

Audio editor: Marshall Vaillancourt

Transcriptionist: Andrew Bates

Study guide writer: Alina Morozova

English editor: Indiana Brown

Operations: Tsuyoshi Kaneshima

Image: iMin Technology (Pexels.com)