

Chatterbox #333 – The psychology of waiting (ad free)

Episode description

Waiting is a part of everyday life. Whether you're stuck in traffic, waiting for a job offer, or standing in line at the store, waiting can feel frustrating. In this episode, Andrew and Anna explore the psychology of waiting, discussing why some waiting feels harder than others and how cultural differences affect our patience. They also share personal stories about waiting, including long lines at government offices and waiting for language skills to improve.

Fun fact

Have you ever pressed the "close door" button in an elevator, hoping it would speed things up? In many places, that button *doesn't actually work*—it's just there to give impatient people a sense of control!

Expressions included in the study guide

- To go so far as to
- To be made redundant
- To cut in line / to push in
- To split hairs
- To cope (with something)
- Instant gratification



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: Joining me now as my co-host for this episode is Anna. Hey there, Anna. How's it going?

Anna: Hi, Andrew. Hello, everyone. I'm great, thanks. How are you?

Andrew: I'm doing well and I'm excited to record this episode, Anna. I know I always say that, but I love this topic and I've been waiting to talk about it with you all day. So, the anticipation's been killing me, but I'm glad we finally get to talk about it now. And guys, in this episode, we are going to talk about the psychology of waiting. And this is just a fact of life, right, Anna? As we go about our day from time to time, we have to wait, whether we like it or not. And that's what we're going to discuss in this episode is everything related to waiting. Maybe just a quick vocabulary lesson here at the top of the episode, Anna, because I know there's a difference between UK English and North American English when we talk about waiting. In North American English, we say "Standing in line." What do you say in the UK?

Anna: We normally say "queuing" or "queuing up."

Andrew: OK, queuing up or queuing. And yeah, in North American English, we say waiting or waiting in line. And these situations just talk about when you have to stand in a line to wait your turn, maybe at the supermarket, maybe to get onto the bus, that kind of situation. So, guys, just in case you hear us use this different vocabulary, now you know, same meaning, just different way to talk about it. So, Anna, let's get started here. I'm just curious in general, what is your mindset and philosophy about waiting? Are you a patient

person? Are you good at standing in a line and waiting your turn? Or are you very impatient and it makes you angry? What kind of waiter are you?

Anna: I have to be honest, I'm a little bit impatient. And if I see a long line, for example, or a lot of people queuing for something, like maybe in a restaurant, for example, if it's a popular restaurant and I can see people queuing, I'm not gonna queue. I'm just gonna go another time when there's no queue. So, I'm not a fan of queuing up. And I only would do it if it was absolutely necessary or if there was no other way around it. But I prefer to just go at a time when there's not gonna be any people there or book in advance or make the appointment in advance or whatever it is. But I'm not a queuer. I'm only gonna queue if I have to queue because for me, it's just like wasted time and it's annoying. So no, I'm not gonna queue up for three hours just to go and look at something. I'll just go at another time. Yeah, that's my philosophy on waiting. I'll just go when there's no one else.

Andrew: You know, it's very interesting to hear that because here in South Korea, where my home base is, there's an interesting psychological effect. And that is when there is a long line, like maybe outside of a store or outside of a restaurant, it grabs people's attention. And I even find myself noticing, I go, "Wow, there's a long line at that restaurant! It must be good!" And then I get curious and I'm like, well, maybe we should stand in that line or maybe we should go into that exhibit, or this cafe must have amazing coffee. The line is so long. And I've even heard that some business owners **will go as far as to** hire extras to stand in line outside of their stores to draw the attention of other people. And I don't know if that's just hearsay or if that's true. I'm not sure, but it's a very interesting phenomenon that I've noticed that it's true. If you see a long line, you're kind of drawn to it and it grabs your attention. Although I have to say, Anna, personally, I would never wait voluntarily to get into a restaurant or to get into an exhibit or something. I would just wait for another time because yeah, that's not my style.

Anna: But it does depend on the thing, right? I'm not gonna wait for a restaurant. I see lots of people waiting outside clothes shops, for example, to get their hands on the first new sweatshirt or something like this. I'm like, yeah, I'll just buy online, thanks. I'm just gonna avoid the queue completely. But then there are some things that I would wait for. For example, I think a lot of people, maybe it's not a product, but I would wait a long time to go on holiday, for example. I might plan something a year in advance, kind of wait for that to come around. Or maybe if I wanted to make an appointment with a specific doctor, for example, I would be prepared to wait for that. Maybe they don't have an availability, they only have an appointment in like three months, and I'll be like, no, no, no, I'll wait because I wanna see that specific person. So, it does depend on the thing. If it's something that I really value, then I don't mind waiting, but physically queuing, no. I guess queuing in a sort of abstract sense of queuing in time, but not physically queuing. Some people queue up and wait for the latest iPhone, for example. I literally have no interest in doing that, but some people love technology. I guess it just all depends.

Andrew: It's an interesting point that you mentioned there. I think it boils down to, is the waiting voluntary or is it forced? And I think if it's voluntary, like making an appointment with an amazing doctor who has a really long wait time, right? Maybe you have to wait several months for an appointment. You wanna see that doctor. That's like your own will, that's your own decision. And so, you're willing to wait in that kind of situation. Whereas if you're stuck in a traffic jam, you know, most people don't wanna be stuck in a traffic jam ever. And that is involuntary, right? There's nothing we can do to avoid that traffic jam. Once you're in it, you're in it and you're stuck there, and you just have to wait. And so, these situations that we choose, right? We're going on holiday in six months and we're counting down the days to that holiday. We're waiting for it, but it fills us with joy and anticipation and excitement. That's OK to wait for, but yeah, being stuck in line or being stuck in a traffic jam, not so fun. And so, I think it is really case by case. And it's very interesting, like we're doing the same action but it's the framing, the way that we view that action of waiting that affects our mood and our feelings.

Anna: And I think one perfect example of when it's forced on us is if you go for a job and you have the interview and then you have to wait for the answer. You have to wait for them to get back to you. And that can be a really agonizing wait. And maybe guys you've had that experience where you're kind of just waiting for the phone to ring. Maybe it never rings. I am working with a client at the moment as well who their company is going through some really big changes, and they know there's some bad news coming. Some people **are gonna be made redundant**. They just don't know who. And they're all waiting to find out. So, I think, again, it's like this forced waiting. And I think that's even worse when you know there's something bad coming. You don't know whether it's gonna be you affected or somebody else, or you don't know exactly what it is. That waiting can be absolutely agonizing and can just, you start making up your own stories and theories and things like this. Whereas like you said, for a holiday, in fact, I read somewhere that the whole process of waiting and looking forward to the holiday is actually part of the enjoyment of the holiday. And that's why it's important to have these things in terms of your happiness. It's a good idea to have some things in your calendar in the future because it affects your mood now, not just when you're on the holiday. So, I think that can be a nice thing to sort of boost your mood. And I know in my diary, it has a section at the top which says, name three things you're looking forward to. Just at the top. So, it could be something like, OK, coffee this weekend. Could be holiday in summer. It could be, I don't know, meeting my friend next month. And it just kind of boosts your mood a little bit in that moment. So yeah, again, comes back to that same point. Is it forced or is it voluntary? Same thing, we're doing the same thing, but totally reframes the situation.

Andrew: Yeah, I'm thinking of my mom, actually. If I go back to Canada and I tell her, "Mom, I'm coming back to Canada." Until I go back to Canada, she'll always message me like every week. Like, "Oh, I can't wait till you're coming back. It's gonna be so great when you're back here. We're gonna have so much fun. It's gonna be great to see you again." And it's just like, I think that brings her some joy for the month or two that she has to wait

for me to arrive. She's really looking forward to that moment of being reunited with me. And so, I think there's something to that, right? Having something in your schedule to look forward to just really brings some brightness to our lives. And I never really considered this, but I'm gonna try to always have something on my calendar to look forward to. And then when those times are tough, you can think, ah, in the future, I'll be doing this. And that will be a nice thing, yeah, to pass the time.

OK, Anna, so we've talked about some of the different ways that waiting can affect our mood, whether it's a forced wait or a voluntary wait. And I kind of remember, Anna, you telling me a story, and perhaps you told it here on Culips, and maybe you could share it with our listeners if they haven't heard it, about, I think it was when you first arrived in Spain and you had a frustratingly long wait to get your paperwork and your identification to live in Spain as a foreigner. That was a really long wait, wasn't it?

Anna: Yes, so I had to get my identity card, and oh my goodness, at that time, they didn't have the appointment process, which they do now, because there was a kind of a bit of a scandal, because it was outrageous. You had to, it was basically luck. You had to turn up at four in the morning and start queuing when they opened the doors at like eight o'clock. And they would only let in a certain number of people every day to get the ID card, and every day it would change. One day it was six, the next day it was 20, the next day it was 15, so you never really knew. And I remember I'd been queuing up for about four or five days consecutively to try and get in. And I remember one day I was queuing up and I'd been waiting for hours from, it was super cold, and they let in 30 people, and I was number 31, and they were like, OK, we're shutting for today. And I was like, ugh. So eventually I managed to actually get in and get my ID card, but that was really frustrating, because it was like, you know, queuing from, I think I was queuing five hours every morning and in the freezing cold, because it was in December as well. And yeah, but it kind of opened my eyes as well, because many people go through processes like that when they go to different countries and they have to apply for different things, or they have to get an

identity card, or they have to sign up for certain things. So, and it's really, really frustrating for everybody involved, because, you know, I didn't speak very good Spanish at the time. There were lots of other people there from different nationalities that also didn't speak Spanish, so it just makes the whole process a little bit more uncomfortable. So actually, it kind of opened my eyes to, yeah, this is what a lot of people have to go through all the time when they want to move to different places and whatever. But yeah, that was annoying. But I got it eventually, and I was so happy when I got my little card. I was like, I deserve this card.

Andrew: Yeah, you put in the time. You waited in line.

Anna: Yeah, exactly. I really waited in line for that. And I didn't **push in**. I was always very, you know, very British, and, you know, never sort of tried to **push in**. I was always in my place, and eventually I got my little card after all of that waiting. So, I was very precious about my card after that.

Andrew: I like that vocabulary that you used there as well, Anna, **to push in**, this phrasal verb, **to push in**, because this is also, I think, more common in UK English than it is in North American English. It just means **to cut in the line**, right? Instead of waiting in your position in line, maybe you'll go to the front of the line or the front of the queue and try and get in at the front. And that's breaking the rules. That's a no-no. But in North American English, we have actually many ways that we could express this. We could say "**To cut in line**," "**To budge in line**," or even, "**To butt in line**." To butt in line. Yeah, but we don't say **push in**. So that's interesting, **to push in**.

Anna: Just a tip, guys. If you go to the UK, British people do not like people **pushing in**. They're not gonna say anything to you. They're just gonna go, oh, oh, oh. They're just gonna tut, roll their eyes and tut and sigh, but they won't be very happy with you. I find old people are masters at **pushing in**. It's kind of like they've lived all their life and they're like,

I don't care anymore. I'm just gonna **push in**. They do it, especially on the bus routes here in Madrid. They sort of hang around near the front of the bus and just kind of slip on. And I'm like, hold on a second. Get to the back of the queue. No, I'm joking. I don't really care that much. And maybe because they're older, we can give them a right of passage, but they certainly do **push in** a little bit on the buses, but we'll let them off. It's cool. We can survive.

Andrew: This is maybe me **splitting hairs** here and being a little bit of a grumpy old man. I'm not sure, but it's actually really interesting that in Canada and South Korea, I am Canadian, but I live in South Korea. The culture around waiting is very, very different. Korea is, I would say in general, an impatient country. People like things fast and done quickly. And this has sort of infiltrated into many different aspects of society. And it can be a really good thing and a really bad thing sometimes. It's great if you wanna order some food, the delivery comes immediately. If you wanna order some product online, you'll get it delivered the next day. If you go to a restaurant, they'll serve you quickly. Everything just about service is really quick. Going from place A to place B can also be really quick. They have high-speed trains. They have taxi drivers who will drive quickly. Like getting around is really quick and convenient. And so, all of these things are amazing, but it also means that people want things done quickly as well. And so, there's an expectation that you will do something quickly. And this has been not a major culture shock for me, but a slight culture shock, because I think Canada is a slower country. We're a big country. We're used to things taking a long time. To go from one side of the country to the other side of the country is thousands and thousands of kilometers. And if you wanted to drive there, it would take days and days and days. Even a flight will take hours and hours and hours. We don't have high-speed trains. We don't have anything like this. Canada is also a cold place. And you know, colder places are a little bit slower, I think.

And so, this is a cultural difference between Canada and Korea. And I've noticed just little things. Like the other day, I was trying to open a bottle of something. I can't remember

what it was. Some condiment bottle, like maybe ketchup or hot sauce or something. And you know, sometimes on a new bottle, there'll be a plastic seal at the top, and you have to kind of break the seal with your fingernail and then rip it down to open the bottle. There was that kind of plastic seal on the top of this bottle, and it was particularly tight. And I was trying to rip it with my fingernail. And my wife was looking at me, trying to open this bottle. I think I tried like one time, and it didn't work the first time. And immediately she was like, "Give me that, I'll do it." I was like, "Hold on, I'll get it. It's OK. It's OK if it takes me two or three times to try and open this bottle. Like, it's OK, just relax." But in Korea here, it's like, everything's gotta be fast. You know, she could open it a microsecond faster than I can. So, she wanted to open the bottle.

And I've noticed sometimes like on the subway, you know, the doors will open for the subway. And technically you're supposed to wait for all the people exiting the subway to exit first, and then you should enter the subway. This is the etiquette, the rule. But some people wanna get those empty seats, right? And so as soon as the doors open, they will try and get onto the train. You know, they're still waiting in their line, but they'll go into the train before the people have exited the train. And this can cause some problems when you are trying to exit the train, right? It's annoying to have to walk into somebody when you're trying to exit the subway. And so, I've noticed this happens from time to time too.

Anna: I think it's city living as well, right? Because when you live in a big city, like Seoul, for example, and me in Madrid, and maybe guys, if you live in a big or a small city, and you're used to things like, OK, buses every three minutes, metro every five minutes. And then you're like, sorry, 15 minutes? Like next metro, 15 minutes? I'm like, oh, just half my life has passed by in 15 minutes. What am I gonna do? And then you sort of go back home to Scotland, for example, when I was there this Christmas, and it's like, next train, one hour and 30 minutes. You're like, where am I? Oh, my goodness, am I on Mars here? So, I think there is also the element of city life gets you used to this kind of everything here and now, which I like, but I'm also along the same lines as you, Andrew, I'm like, it's OK if

it doesn't have to be right now, this second, like it's fine. But I think city life does get you used to that, like high paced, let's go, buses every three minutes, the metro comes all the time, everything's like you order something, it arrives within about 20 minutes. I just find that fascinating that now you can order something, for example, on Amazon, I can order something now and I'll get it by seven o'clock. I'm recording this at 11 a.m. and it'll be maybe even in my house, maybe even at five o'clock. Like how amazing is that? That's incredible, I don't have to wait at all, just a few hours to get my order. And then I remember I ordered something from a company, and it was like 14 days shipment. I was like, 14 days? I want it now, I wanted this afternoon, what am I gonna do in 14 days? I don't want it anymore.

Andrew: That's Canada style, 14 days, yeah.

Anna: 14 days, it's like half a year.

Andrew: Well, that's an interesting point and I wanted to talk about this as well, that is **coping** mechanisms for waiting. So, if you do have to wait 14 days for something or maybe just in other aspects of your life, having to wait in line at a supermarket or, you know, wait 15 minutes for the next train because you just missed the train, what kind of **coping** strategies and mechanisms do you have? And here guys, **coping** mechanisms just means a way of dealing with something. So, if you have a problem and you're handling that problem or dealing with that problem, we call that **coping**. And so, Anna, how about you? How do you **cope with** waiting?

Anna: I've got my Kindle, that is my absolute go-to. Use some kind of device. This is the real plus point about having different types of devices because I guess a lot of people just look at their phone, check something online, answer some emails. So, for me, it's like if I'm waiting for something, especially in a queue, for example, like literally in a supermarket, I'm gonna go on my Kindle, I'm gonna go on my phone, I'm gonna answer some emails,

like let's get a bit of a two for one here and kill two birds, one stone. But then if it's something that I have to wait for for a long time, like I remember I ordered something, I think it was like a chair and it didn't come for like three months or four months. I don't know, I just try and forget about it and just try and forget that it exists. And then when it finally arrives, you're like, oh, how nice, I completely forgot about this. I didn't even realize it was coming. So, I just try to forget about it. And then hopefully, if it doesn't matter, I mean, I don't know, other people maybe are waiting for things that are more important than chairs, like maybe, I don't know, a particular operation or something like this, in which case I can imagine that's really difficult because maybe you have a pain in your knee and you're waiting for a knee operation and maybe you're on a wait list at the hospital and you have to wait for six months. And so, I guess that's probably a little bit more difficult if you're having to deal with that pain every day and you're waiting for that operation. So, I've never been in that situation myself, but I can imagine that must be really, really stressful, just that long wait, because I guess every day will go slower. If you're really waiting for something and you really need it, then the time is gonna pass a lot slower, I imagine.

Andrew: Yeah, interesting. I haven't had that situation, thankfully, in my life, so I don't know. Maybe some of our listeners could chime in if you guys have been in that kind of situation, share what it was like. I wonder, Anna, if it could also have that effect of looking forward to something, how we said that that can bring you joy and some happiness in your life. Maybe at the same time, it could be like, oh, OK, only five more months until I can get my knee operation and I'll be back in service, I'll be back in business. I wonder if maybe just knowing that you have an operation scheduled could maybe help you, I don't know. But any listeners out there, feel free to chime in and let Anna and us know, of course. Yeah, that's a totally different situation. I'm kind of thinking about, if you miss your train and you have to wait, I think for here in Seoul, depending on the time of day, I think the longest I'll ever have to wait for the next subway train is eight minutes, I believe.

Anna: What!

Andrew: Yeah, I think it's pretty fast.

Anna: My goodness.

Andrew: Maybe a little bit longer on Sundays or the weekends, but I think regular weekday during non-rush hours, eight minutes. So usually what I do, Anna, I'm kind of similar to you. I find it is a good time to catch up on email. I'm sorry to all of the Culips listeners out there who have emailed me and have had to wait for a long time for a response. I'm kind of notoriously bad at responding to emails in a timely manner, but I do find that that's a good time to catch up on some email. So, I'm like, OK, I'm here. I can't go anywhere. I got to do it. So, I'll often try and catch up on messages or emails in that time. And also, I like to just walk. Maybe I look like a psycho in the train station. I'm not sure, but I'll just walk to one end of the platform and then walk to the other end of the platform. You could like get in a kilometer in that eight minutes. It feels like long corridor in the train station. So yeah, I'll walk and email. Those are my two **coping** strategies.

Anna: Yeah, I've always got to have my Kindle tucked in my bag somewhere just in case I've got to whip it out and I'm in a queue or something or I have to wait, and you just don't have to stand there like a lemon waiting for the train. And you can sort of make the most of it and enjoy a good book or read something or whatever. So that's how I like to make the most of that dead time, let's say.

Andrew: OK, Anna, we're almost at the end of this episode, but one last question for you before I let you go. And I'm just wondering if you think that waiting can be a form of personal growth. Do you think that there is some value in waiting from time to time? Can it be an opportunity for us to grow as people? What are your thoughts about that?

Anna: Definitely. I think waiting is a really important lesson, actually. For example, when I started my podcast and at the beginning, I didn't have any listeners, really. And over the

years, you keep putting out the episodes and you're waiting for a larger audience, for example, or you're waiting for that podcast to reach more people. And it's a good lesson, right? Because there are... there are some things that happen very quickly and you can have quick successes or overnight successes, as they say. And actually, a lot of the time, you have to wait. You have to put in the effort and then wait for what happens in the future. So, I think absolutely waiting is a really good time to reflect. And I don't think that people necessarily do it enough. But yeah, I do think waiting for things, it teaches you a good lesson is that things don't just happen the way that you want all the time. You can't just expect something to land on your doorstep or to happen straight away. Even though sometimes those things do happen, but it's not very common.

But I think with social media and things like this, unfortunately, it feels like we can have things very quickly all the time, and we can have all these quick wins and successes. But actually, a lot of it is just kind of doing a lot of work and then just waiting for what happens in the future. So yeah, I think waiting is an important lesson. And even when you're a kid, right? If you get everything that you want, it doesn't really teach you anything. But if you have to wait for that toy that you really want all year, and you have to behave well all year, and then your mom and dad might buy you, might buy you that Barbie doll house. I think that teaches you something important. So yeah, I think it can be really good for personal growth. What about you, Andrew, do you agree? Do you have any other perspective?

Andrew: Yeah, well, first of all, just some vocabulary came to mind that I would like to share with our listeners. That is "delayed gratification" and "**instant gratification**." So **instant gratification** is where you achieve something, or you get what you want right away, and you feel satisfied right away. Gratification is kind of that sense of satisfaction, right? The sense of I did it or I got what I wanted. So **instant gratification** is getting what you want right away and delayed gratification is getting what you want at a later time. And so, building your podcast is a great example of delayed gratification. I think I felt that at Culips before, I felt that with my marathon running as well, right? I have goals that I wanna

set for myself in the marathon and they take a long time to achieve. It's not something that you can do right away, at least for me, maybe some skilled people can do it right away, but for me, it takes a long time. And you put in that effort and that work and that time and then eventually you can maybe hit your goal or achieve what you want to do and then you feel amazing. So that delayed gratification can actually often feel better than **instant gratification**, right? Often, we value things more that we get after a period of waiting and after a period of effort. I think that's the same as language learning too, right? I think a lot of listeners probably out there, I know it's not the same as maybe a marathon, right? There's not the same way to measure our English-learning growth or our second-language-learning growth as there is with like a race where you can time yourself and you can see year after year how you improve your speed. I mean, I guess you could do like an English test or something, but it's difficult to measure our English speaking or our second-language speaking in the same way that you could a marathon, for example. But still, the same principle applies that we have to put in a lot of time and effort and practice, and it might be hard to notice our growth, but if we're patient with ourselves, if we can wait, then eventually we can hit our goals and we can become the speakers and the English users that we wanna be. So, I think that's a great point, Anna, about **instant gratification** versus delayed gratification and I'm right there with you that there's a ton of value in delayed gratification. Just feels better at the end of the day. Although I think a lot of our listeners out there, if they could snap their fingers right now and be perfect English speakers, I think almost everybody would do it. But gotta be at least a few people out there who enjoy the grind and love the process.

Anna: That's a lovely word, actually, Andrew, enjoy the grind. Just in case you don't know that, guys, it just means kind of enjoy the difficult work. The grind is like the day-to-day slog, the work that you have to do to get your goal or your objective. You know, learning languages is great once you get to that level where you can speak without thinking so much, but you have to put in a lot of work to get to that point and that's the grind, the slog.

Andrew: Well, it's that cliché, right? It's not the destination, it's the journey. And yeah, I don't know, I can see in the near future, maybe we could just get AI to feed us second-language fluency, right? Anna, maybe you and I wanna be perfect German speakers. We could just sort of put a little chip in our brain or spend some time with AI and then become perfect German speakers. But I bet compared to somebody else who learned how to speak German and studied it for a long time and put in the time and put in the effort, it wouldn't feel as good. We'd be like, OK, we can do it, but we wouldn't have that sense of satisfaction as achieving a difficult goal. So yeah, interesting point there, but I think this is a good time to wrap up our conversation before we go off on a crazy tangent. I think I could talk about this topic for a long time, so I gotta cut myself off here.

But, listeners, thank you for tuning into this episode and for studying English with me and Anna today. And of course, we'd love to hear what you have to say as well. Please join us over on our Discord server where we'll be continuing our conversation. It's free to join, and we have a wonderful community over there. Over 7,000 people now have joined our server and we're just having great discussions each and every day. The link to join the server will be in the description for this episode. And also, don't forget, we have a helpful study guide and an interactive transcript available for this episode. And all of our episodes for Culips members. So, if you want to sign up and become a Culips member and get the guide, then just visit our website, [Culips.com](https://www.culips.com), and you can do that. Well, it's time for us to go. Anna, thank you so much, and we'll see you in the next episode.

Anna: Thank you so much. See you soon, guys. Bye.

Andrew: Bye-bye.

Detailed Explanations

To go so far as to Expression

To go so far as to means to take an extreme action or to do something surprising, even though it might seem too much or unnecessary. It is often used when someone does something unexpected or excessive to achieve a goal. Because this phrase is used when talking about an action that is a big step beyond what is normal or expected, it often expresses surprise, disbelief, or emphasis.

In the episode's example, Andrew says, "I've even heard that some business owners **will go so far as to** hire extras to stand in line outside of their stores to draw the attention of other people." This means that some business owners don't just wait for customers to come naturally—they take *an extreme step* by hiring fake customers to make their stores look popular.

For example, think about a person who doesn't just complain about bad service at a retail store but writes a long letter to the company's CEO. This person **went so far as to** contact the CEO about this minor instance of poor service. In other words, this person is pushing the limits of what is expected. Another example could be the behavior of a strict teacher. A friend might say, "Mr. Smith is so serious about class rules. He even **goes so far as to** take away your phone if you check the time!"

Similar expressions include "take it to the next level" (She took it to the next level by training six hours a day), "go the extra mile" (He went the extra mile to make his guests feel welcome), and "take things too far" (He took things too far by yelling at the waiter).

Here are a couple more examples with **to go so far as to**:

Frank: Did you see that influencer on social media? She **went so far as to** fake a luxury vacation with Photoshop just to impress her followers.

Natalia: That's ridiculous! People will do anything for attention these days.

Emily: Have you heard about that new restaurant downtown?

Daniel: Yeah! People say it's great, but I can't believe some customers **go so far as to** wait in line for three hours just to eat there.

Emily: Wow, they must have some seriously gourmet food for people to wait that long.

To be made redundant

Verb

To be made redundant means to lose your job because the company no longer needs your position. This usually happens when a company has financial problems, is changing how it operates, or needs to cut costs. Unlike being fired, which happens when an employee does something wrong, **being made redundant** is not the employee's fault.

This phrase is commonly used in British English. In American English, people usually say "**to be laid off**." In the episode, Anna talks about a company going through big changes. The employees know that "some people **are gonna be made redundant**," but they don't know who. This means that some workers will lose their jobs because the company is restructuring, but the employees have no control over it and they're just waiting for the bad news.

For example, imagine a bookstore that is struggling to make money. The owner decides to move most of the business online and only keep one physical store. Because of this, many employees in the other locations **are made redundant**.

One important thing to note is that "**to be made redundant**" is usually used *in the passive voice*, such as "I **was made redundant**." It is not the same as being fired, which happens when an employee does something wrong. In the UK, employees who are made redundant might get "redundancy pay," which is money the company gives them after losing their job.

Similar expressions include "to be laid off" in American English, as in "The company laid off 50 workers last year." Another similar phrase is "to lose one's job," such as "She lost her job when the company closed." Yet another related phrase is "to be downsized," meaning that the company is reducing its workforce, as in "The company downsized and let go of several employees."

Here are a couple more examples with **to be made redundant**:

Kyle: I just got some bad news. My company is cutting costs and I **was made redundant**.

Lana: Oh no! I'm so sorry. Were you expecting it?

Kyle: Kind of. Business has been slow lately.

Olivia: Have you heard from your old coworker Tom?

Gregory: Yeah, he **was made redundant** last month. He's looking for a new job now.

To cut in line / To push in Verb

To cut in line or **to push in** means to move ahead of other people who have been waiting, instead of staying in your place. This is considered rude because everyone is supposed to wait their turn. The phrase "**to cut in line**" is more common in North American English, while "**to push in**" is used in British English.

In the episode, Anna talks about waiting in line for hours for an important ID card. She says, "I really waited in line for that. And I didn't **push in**. I was always very British, and, you know, never sort of tried **to push in**." This means she followed the rules and waited her turn instead of trying to skip ahead. Andrew explains that in North America, the common phrase for this is "**to cut in line**," and people might also say "to budge in line" or "to butt in line."

Let's say you are waiting at a coffee shop. You have been standing in line for 10 minutes, and suddenly, someone walks straight to the front and orders their drink before you. That person just **cut in line**. In the UK, someone might say, "That guy just **pushed in**!" In the US or Canada, people would likely say, "That guy just **cut in line**!" or "Hey, no **cutting**!"

The American verb comes from the idea of "cutting" through a line of people, like slicing through a group instead of waiting at the end. The British phrase "push in" suggests the idea of pushing ahead where you don't belong. Both expressions describe breaking the rules of fair waiting.

Another thing to note is that "cutting in" can also be used in conversations. If someone interrupts while you're speaking, you might say, "Sorry **to cut in**, but I have something to add." However, this use is different from "**cut in line**," which specifically refers to skipping ahead when waiting.

Here are a couple more examples with **to cut in line** / **to push in**:

Thomas: We were in line for the concert for hours, and then some people **pushed in** at the front.

Gracie: Ugh, I hate it when people do that! Do they think they're better than the rest of us or something?

Luke: I can't believe how crowded the amusement park is today.

Kiera: Seriously! And some kids just **cut in line** right in front of us for the roller coaster.

Luke: That's so annoying! If everyone did that, we'd never get to ride.

To split hairs

Idiomatic verb

To split hairs means to argue or focus on very small, unimportant details. People use this phrase when someone is being too picky about small differences that don't really matter. It often suggests that someone is overanalyzing or making a big deal out of something minor.

In the episode, Andrew says, "This is maybe me **splitting hairs** here and being a little bit of a grumpy old man." He is talking about the difference between Canada and South Korea in how fast things get done. He realizes that he might be paying too much attention to small details, like how quickly people expect service, and that these differences may not be very important overall.

For example, imagine two friends arguing about whether a meal was served in 19 minutes or 20 minutes. One person insists it was 19 minutes, and the other insists it was 20. In this case, they **are splitting hairs** because that small difference doesn't change anything important.

Another example is when someone corrects a tiny grammar mistake in a casual conversation. If a friend says, "You knew what I meant, so stop **splitting hairs**!" they are saying that the small mistake doesn't matter.

The phrase comes from the idea that splitting a single hair into smaller pieces is extremely difficult and unnecessary. A hair is already very thin, so trying to split it into even smaller parts is pointless—just like arguing over tiny, unimportant details.

Similar expressions include "nitpicking" (focusing too much on small mistakes), "making a big deal out of nothing" (overreacting to something small), and "quibbling" (arguing over small details).

Here are a couple more examples with **to split hairs**:

Mark: Ethan keeps saying the difference between navy blue and midnight blue is huge.

Riley: He's just **splitting hairs**. They look almost identical.

Jasmine: Remember when we saw Coldplay two years ago?

Kevin: **Not to split hairs**, but I believe it was three years ago.

Jasmine: Oh, whatever. Wasn't that a great concert?

To cope (with something)

Verb

To cope (with something) means to handle or deal with a difficult situation. People use this word when talking about how they manage stress, problems, or challenges in life. If something is hard, but you find a way to keep going, you are **coping with it**.

In the episode, Andrew talks about "**coping** mechanisms for waiting." He asks Anna, "What kind of **coping** strategies and mechanisms do you have?" This means he is asking her how she deals with waiting in different situations. Some people might read a book, listen to music, or distract themselves in other ways while they wait. These are different ways of **coping with** waiting.

For example, if someone loses their job, they might feel very stressed. **To cope with** the stress, they might talk to friends, exercise, or make a plan to find a new job. Another example is when a student feels nervous before a big test. **To cope with** the pressure, they might study with a friend, take deep breaths, or remind themselves that they have prepared well.

One important thing to note is that "cope" is often used with "with." You usually say "**cope with** stress" or "**cope with** a problem," NOT just "cope stress" or "cope a problem." However, sometimes people just say "**cope**" on its own, like "I don't know how he **cope**s!"

Similar expressions include "deal with" (She is dealing with a lot of stress at work), "manage" (He is managing his problems well), and "handle" (I don't know how she handles so much pressure).

Here are a couple more examples with **to cope (with something)**:

Stephan: I've been feeling homesick since I moved abroad.

Miriam: That's tough. What do you do **to cope with** it?

Stephan: I video call my family every weekend and try to stay busy with new hobbies.

Violet: My grandmother lost her best friend recently. I'm worried about her.

James: That's really sad. How **is** she **coping**?

Violet: She spends time with her neighbors and has been seeing a grief counselor.

James: Good, I'm glad she's getting some support.

Instant gratification

Noun

Instant gratification means getting what you want right away and feeling satisfied immediately. It happens when you do something and see the results quickly, without having to wait. People often talk about **instant gratification** when comparing it to **delayed gratification**, which is when you wait and work hard for something before enjoying the reward.

In the episode, Andrew explains that **instant gratification** is when you achieve something and feel good about it right away. For example, if you are hungry and eat a snack, you get **instant gratification** because your hunger goes away immediately. On the other hand, if you cook a big meal instead of eating a snack, you have to wait longer, but you might enjoy the food even more.

Another common example of **instant gratification** is using social media. When you post a picture and get likes and comments right away, you feel happy instantly. In other words, you feel **instant gratification**. However, this feeling does not last long. In contrast, learning a new skill, like playing the piano or running a marathon, takes time and effort, but the reward in the end can feel even better.

Similar expressions include "short-term reward" (something that gives you happiness right away), "quick fix" (something that solves a problem fast but may not last), and "immediate pleasure" (something that feels good instantly).

Here are a couple more examples with **instant gratification**:

Carla: I'm trying a new juice cleanse diet in order to lose 10 lbs before the wedding.

Harry: Carla, diets like that never work. You have to give up the desire for **instant gratification** and make slow, gradual lifestyle changes if you want to actually lose weight.

Carla: I know, I know...

Chloe: How was your trip to Miami, Ben?

Ben: It was amazing. The resort we went to had everything we needed – drinks, food, sunscreen, games... It was **instant gratification** all weekend. I felt very pampered.

Chloe: Sounds amazing!

Ben: It was, but ever since I came home, I've been feeling too lazy to cook my own meals!

Expressions Quiz

1. Which of the following sentences correctly uses "to be made redundant"?

- a) She was made redundant because her job was no longer needed.
- b) He redundant his responsibilities at work.
- c) The company decided to redundant all of its employees.
- d) She made redundant her old clothes by donating them.

2. Which of the following is an example of "splitting hairs"?

- a) Discussing the best way to save money for a house.
- b) Arguing about whether a store opened at 9:01 AM or 9:02 AM.
- c) Asking for advice on how to handle a difficult boss.
- d) Choosing between two different jobs.

3. Which of the following is a synonym for the verb "cope"?

- a) To wonder.
- b) To stop.
- c) To ignore.
- d) To deal with.

4. What is an example of "*delaying* instant gratification"?

- a) Watching TV instead of doing homework.
- b) Eating cake before dinner.
- c) Saving money for a year instead of spending it right away.
- d) Buying a new gadget on impulse.

5. Which sentence best demonstrates the phrase "to go so far as to"?

- a) She traveled so far as to visit every country in Europe.
- b) She went far on her journey.
- c) She enjoyed going so far on long walks.
- d) She went so far as to sell her car just to afford concert tickets.

Listening Comprehension Quiz

6. What does Andrew say some businesses do to attract customers and create the appearance of popularity?
7. What happened when Anna tried to get her ID card when she first moved to Spain?
8. How does Anna describe British people's reaction to someone who pushes in line?
9. Why does Andrew share a story about opening a condiment bottle in front of his wife?
10. Does Anna think you can experience personal growth and value from the experience of waiting?

Writing and Discussion Questions

1. How do you usually feel when you have to wait? Do you generally consider yourself a patient or impatient person? What are some strategies you use **to cope with** waiting?
2. What is the longest you have ever waited for something? Was it worth it?
3. What would you do if someone tried **to push in** or **cut in line**? Have you ever done this before?
4. Some people say that waiting can be a good thing because it helps build patience and self-control. Do you agree? Why or why not?
5. Do you think there are benefits to **delayed gratification**? Can you think of a time when waiting for something made you appreciate it more?

Quiz Answers

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

6. Andrew says that some businesses hire extras to stand in line outside their stores to make them look more popular and attract real customers.
7. Anna had to wait in line for hours in the cold for several days because there was no appointment system. One day, she was next in line when they stopped letting people in. After multiple attempts, she finally got her ID card.
8. Anna says that British people dislike when someone pushes in line, but instead of confronting them, they usually just roll their eyes, sigh, or quietly show their frustration.
9. Andrew shares the story to highlight how people in South Korea expect things to be done quickly. His wife immediately wanted to take over when he struggled to open a bottle, showing how efficiency and speed are valued in Korean culture.
10. Yes, Anna believes that waiting can lead to personal growth and has value. She explains that waiting teaches patience and discipline, especially when working toward long-term goals. She gives the example of building a podcast, where success doesn't come overnight but requires consistent effort over time. She also mentions that waiting for something special, like a holiday, can bring joy and anticipation, making the experience even more meaningful.

Episode credits

Hosts: Andrew Bates and Anna Connelly
Episode preparation/research: Andrew Bates
Audio editor: Andrew Bates
Transcriptionist: Andrew Bates
Study guide writer: Indiana Brown
English editor: Alina Morozova
Operations: Tsuyoshi Kaneshima
Image: David Clode (unsplash.com)