

Catch Word #263 – Turn a blind eye

Episode description

There's always someone in a friend group that's not very observant. Maybe it takes them too long to understand a joke, or maybe they always say the wrong thing at the wrong time. There are many different phrases in the English language to describe these oblivious kinds of friends. Today, Kassy and Andrew explain two of these expressions: tone-deaf and turn a blind eye.

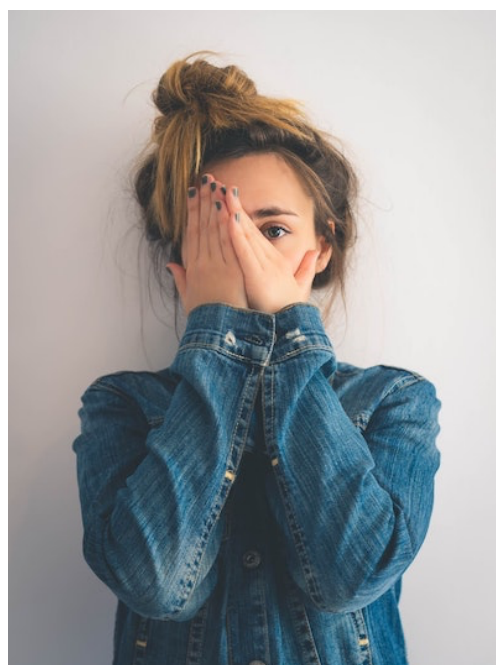
Culips' Catch Word series teaches you idioms, phrasal verbs, and expressions that help improve your English listening and speaking skills. With Catch Word, you learn common phrases used by native English speakers while listening to a casual, natural conversation.

Fun fact

When travelling the world, it is very easy to commit a faux pas or act tone-deaf. That's because each culture has unique social rules and etiquette. Before you travel, it's always a good idea to look up the common mistakes that tourists make at your destination so that you won't be a tone-deaf tourist, or accidentally commit a faux pas!

Expressions included in the study guide

- Tone-deaf
- Turn a blind eye
- Faux pas
- To be/get roasted
- Average Joe
- Grain of truth



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: Hello there, everyone. My name's Andrew.

Kassy: And I'm Kassy.

Andrew: And this is the Culips English Podcast.

Hello friends, welcome back to Culips. This is Catch Word, the series for intermediate and advanced English learners, where we teach you idioms, phrasal verbs and expressions that will help improve your English listening and speaking. Today I'm joined by my trusty cohost, Kassy. Hello, Kassy.

Kassy: Hey, Andrew. And hey, listeners. So, guys, today we're going to teach you a couple of expressions that are about not noticing something or not perceiving something, either accidentally or on purpose.

Andrew: Yes, that is right. And the two key expressions that we'll be teaching in this episode are, to be **tone-deaf**, and, to **turn a blind eye**. One of these expressions, we used to describe people who are terrible at noticing something. Maybe it's the vibe or the atmosphere of a situation. And the other one is used to describe people who can notice the reality of a situation or notice what the facts are, but they choose to ignore them on purpose.

Kassy: Don't you hate those kinds of people, Andrew?

Andrew: They're the worst, yes.

Kassy: Listeners will realize that after we explain these two phrases. But before we get started with this episode, we do want to let you guys know that there is a transcript and study guide for this episode available to all Culips Members. We've designed the practice exercises that are in the guide specifically to teach you the important parts of this lesson. By following along with the guide, it'll help you boost your English fluency and help your English sound more natural. To learn about the details, and to become a Culips Member, and get the study guide visit Culips.com.

Andrew: We also want to give a shout out to one of our Brazilian listeners named Rogerio, who left us a really kind review and a five-star rating on Apple Podcasts. Rogerio wrote, "I'd like to share with you my experience in signing up with Culips. It's really, really amazing. We don't need to have anything else, all we need is there. They have study

guides for smartphones, tablets, and PCs, which are very user-friendly. And don't worry, because there are videos where Andrew teaches you how to use them. So, if you're looking for something nice and fun to learn English with, go there." Wow, thanks Rogerio. Sounds like almost like you're advertising for us. So, I really appreciate that. It's a fantastic review and thank you for sharing your experience about what it is like to be a Culips Member.

Kassy: Yeah, Rogerio, thanks so much. And thank you to everyone who has been supporting Culips with your messages, reviews, likes, and follows. We really appreciate all of it, guys.

So now let's get started with today's lesson. As we mentioned earlier, today, we're gonna be learning two expressions about not noticing something. And the first expression that we'll be covering today is, **tone-deaf**, **tone-deaf**. Andrew, what does it mean to be **tone-deaf**?

Andrew: Yeah, let's break this expression down for everyone so they can understand exactly what it means. And I think we should maybe define these two words on their own. And then we can put them together and it will make perfect sense. So, tone is like a sound, right? It's just another way to say a sound. If you hit a key on a piano and a musical sound comes out of the piano, we can call that a tone. And to be deaf, D-E-A-F, deaf, that means to be unable to hear sounds, it's a medical condition where your ears don't work, and you can't hear any sounds. So, if you guys go to the dictionary and you type in tone-deaf, what you will actually see is a medical condition that means to be unable to hear differences in musical notes, OK? Kassy, have you ever heard someone sing and they're really off key and it just sounds terrible because they're not in the same musical key as the song that they're trying to sing along to. You know, here in South Korea, where we live, going to the karaoke room, the singing room is a really, really popular pastime. And I have definitely visited the singing room with some friends who are **tone-deaf**, they can't sing very well, they have no musical sense at all.

Kassy: Yeah, my fiancé is one of those, I love going to the singing room with him but it's more of a laugh than actual musical performance.

Andrew: So that is the dictionary definition of **tone-deaf**. It means to be unable to perceive differences in musical notes. However, there is an idiomatic version of this expression as well, **tone-deaf**, it means to be unable to notice a situation, OK? You are deaf to the situation; you can't pick up on it. You can't sense it; you can't notice it. So, let's say for example, Kassy, I'm on a diet and I'm trying to lose weight, so I'm avoiding eating lots of carbs and food that is not diet friendly. And then Kassy, maybe you came over to my house for a visit, and you brought with you a huge extra-large pizza, and you're like, "Andrew, let's eat this pizza together." And, Kassy, in that situation, you would be kind of **tone-deaf**, right? I could say, "Oh, Kassy made such a **tone-deaf** decision to bring that pizza over here." You weren't fully aware of my diet situation and because of that, you made a decision that actually put me into an awkward position because I was tempted to

eat that pizza. You know, it looks so delicious but I'm on a diet. What do I do? OK, this is kind of what it means to be **tone-deaf**, it's to be unable to notice the situation that other people are in.

Kassy: Exactly. I can think of one really great example of this expression, **tone-deaf**, as well. As you know, Andrew, and maybe as listeners know, who have visited North America. North Americans can be quite loud in public. And one time I was on a bus in Korea with my friend, and she had just arrived in Korea, like two months before. And I knew that when we ride buses in Korea is customary to be quiet. Everybody's on their phones or taking a nap or, you know, just minding their own business quietly. But my friend, she's used to, you know, talking very loudly in a public space, doesn't matter if it's public or private. And I could tell you know, as we were riding this bus, there were people kind of looking at us and hearing us, like speaking or I was not speaking loudly, but my friend was, and she had no idea. She was completely tone-deaf to the situation.

Andrew: That's a great example. And I've been in a similar situation like that, Kassy, it's a little bit awkward. And I think, yeah, you could use **tone-deaf** in many different cultural situations where cultures are maybe interacting with each other. And there are some cultural **faux pas** that are happening, and people just aren't aware of how to behave or how to act when visiting a different country or experiencing a different culture. So that's a great example of a kind of situation where we can use this expression, **tone-deaf**. So, guys, I think you have enough information to help you understand this expression now. And so, we're gonna give you a couple of conversation examples with it. And we'll take a listen to the first conversation example right now.

Kassy: Let's do it.

Friend 1: Did you see that video that's going viral of all the celebrities singing John Lennon's Imagine?

Friend 2: I did. It was so cringey and **tone-deaf**. I couldn't believe they thought making that was a good idea.

Friend 1: I know, right? What were they thinking?

Friend 2: They obviously weren't thinking. They're **getting absolutely roasted** on social media over this.

Friend 1: It's like they tried to make people feel better, but in the end, they only made people angry and resentful.

Friend 2: Exactly.

Andrew: So, let's break down that conversation that we just heard, and we'll explain it for you all. So, in that conversation, two friends are talking about a viral video that made the

rounds on social media when the COVID pandemic first started. And in that video, many famous American celebrities sang an a cappella version of the song “Imagine” by the singer John Lennon. And the celebrities, I think they meant well. They wanted to try and encourage people to stay positive during the COVID pandemic. But in the end, that video really just came off as **tone-deaf**, and they were criticized very, very heavily for making that video because, you know, regular people, so many people, were going through really hard economic times. Maybe losing their job, or getting sick and having loved ones pass away. All of these terrible things. Yet, in this video, you see a bunch of absolutely rich people who had no economic hardship whatsoever, singing a song, and to try and make people feel better. It just came off as **tone-deaf** or kind of patronizing, almost like they were communicating to children or something. And as that example conversation said, Kassy, they **got absolutely roasted** on social media. What does that mean? What does it mean, if you **get roasted** on social media?

Kassy: That means when it’s not just the internet trolls making bad comments towards you, everyone is saying, “Wow, I can’t believe you did that. What a horrible video. You suck.” Like that.

Andrew: Yeah, you just get really, really heavily criticized by everyone online, that is **being roasted**. All right, Kassy, with that being said, why don’t we take a listen to the second conversation example with **tone-deaf**?

Kassy: Yes, let’s.

Friend 1: So, what did you think of the mayor’s announcement yesterday?

Friend 2: I couldn’t believe my ears. He actually thinks that building more high-priced luxury condos is a good idea. How tone-deaf can you be?

Friend 1: Right? We need affordable housing that regular people can live in, not more expensive housing that only the rich can afford.

Friend 2: I can’t wait for election day so we can vote this guy out of office.

Friend 1: Me too.

Kassy: All right. In this example conversation, we have two friends talking about the mayor’s latest announcement. In this announcement, the mayor says that he has a plan to build more high-priced luxury condos. And the friends are saying how ridiculous this idea sounds, how **tone-deaf** the mayor is. These days, you know, housing prices are skyrocketing. People are complaining every day that they can’t find affordable housing. And this mayor goes and ignores all those complaints and decides to build even more high-priced luxury condos.

Andrew: Exactly. So, the mayor here, he can't really sense what just the regular people want, right? What the **average Joe**, the regular citizen wants. Instead, he is just catering to the small percentage of people who are in the upper class. So, this is why he is **tone-deaf**. And I like how the speaker in that conversation used the expression. He said, "How **tone-deaf** can you be?" "How **tone-deaf** can you be?" And this kind of structure is what we can use when we want to really emphasize something, right? If somebody is really stupid, we can say, "How stupid can you be?" Or if somebody is really slow, like, "How slow can you be?" Right? When we want to criticize, I think we mostly use this for negative expressions. I'm realizing as I'm saying this, we wouldn't say like Kassy, if you're a genius, we wouldn't say, "How smart can you be?" No, it doesn't work like that. It's only for negative expressions but when we really wanna focus on the fact that somebody has this negative quality, we can use that structure. How stupid can you be? How slow can you be? How **tone-deaf** can you be?

Kassy: That's a good point, Andrew, and I agree. I feel like a lot of negative expressions can be used as a question to emphasize it, like, "Can you believe this guy?" Anything that you just can't believe how horrible it is, then you say it as a question to emphasize it.

Andrew: Yeah, absolutely. Absolutely. Well, I think we should now transition to our second key expression for this episode. And guys, like we said, it's similar to being **tone-deaf** but slightly different. So, please pay close attention to our explanation here so that you can perceive the differences between the two of them. Now, key expression number two is a verb, OK? It is **turn a blind eye to something**. OK, so we're using it as a verb, to turn, **to turn a blind eye**. And we can sometimes say it just like that **to turn a blind eye**. And then sometimes we turn a blind eye to something. So, if you want to talk about the fact or the situation that is being ignored, then we can use it with the preposition *to*. And you'll hear some examples of us using it in that way in just a moment. But let's break down the meaning. So, **to turn a blind eye**, means to be able to notice a situation, but you choose to ignore it.

OK, so maybe, Kassy, we could go back to that example we just heard about the mayor. OK—building the high-priced luxury condos. In the example, the two friends who are criticizing him, they said that he was **tone-deaf**, because he couldn't sense that the citizens wanted affordable housing and instead, he chose to build luxury housing. But we don't know all the details. Maybe he wasn't **tone-deaf**. Maybe he actually knew that the citizens wanted affordable housing, but he chose to ignore that fact and instead, he just decided to build luxury housing. In that kind of situation, he wouldn't be **tone-deaf**, he would be **turning a blind eye**, right? Because he is aware of all the facts, he knows everything, but he chooses to ignore the facts. So, he notices the situation completely and chooses to ignore it.

Or if we were to talk about your friend on the bus, right? That was visiting you here in Korea, if you told that friend, like, "You know, actually, when we're riding the bus in this country, it's good if you keep your voice down, and maybe try to be quiet." If you told her that, but then she just ignored that and wanted to speak loudly in public anyways, even

though that's against the kind of cultural custom, then she would be **turning a blind eye** to that situation and to that cultural custom.

Kassy: Exactly. The distinction between these two is important, because if you're **tone-deaf**, it's not purposeful, you're just kind of ignorant about something. But like Andrew says, if you're **turning a blind eye**, it means you're purposely doing it. So, it gets like a feeling when you hear of someone being **tone-deaf**, you think, "Ah, come on, they should know better. Why are they so ignorant?" But when you hear of someone **turning a blind eye** towards something bad, then you think, really negative thoughts about that person, like, "Wow, they knew that something bad was happening, and they ignored it, they didn't care." So, **turning a blind eye** is much more severe and purposeful than to be **tone-deaf**.

Andrew: Right. If you're **tone-deaf**, just like you said, Kassy, you're ignorant. And maybe you're not educated about something, like, maybe you have to learn more about a situation because you're kind of out of your element, and you're talking about something that you don't really understand very well. But if you **turn a blind eye**, it's like evil almost—could be evil in some situations, because you know the truth, but you purposely avoid the truth. And yes, it is a much more serious expression, I completely agree with you. So, I think maybe the best thing to do now is to actually listen to a couple of example conversations. And why don't we get started with the first one right now?

Kassy: Yep, let's do it.

Friend 1: So, I watched a documentary last night about bullying in schools.

Friend 2: Oh, I saw that one too. It's so horrible what's happening.

Friend 1: Yeah. And so often school administrators **turn a blind eye** and ignore the problem.

Friend 2: Isn't that just so frustrating? I can't imagine what it's like to be a student these days.

Friend 1: Absolutely. Not only do they have to worry about getting high grades and getting into a good college, but they also have to deal with bullying, cyberbullying and social media. I'm glad we didn't have to deal with that when we were students.

Andrew: So, in this example, we hear two friends talking about a documentary that they just watched, and it was about bullying in schools. And I guess some of the content that was covered in that documentary was about how the problem of bullying is being ignored by school administrators, OK? The school administrators are **turning a blind eye** to solving this problem of bullying. So, what that means is that the school administrators know bullying is happening and they know it is a problem for many students, but they don't do anything to solve the problem. So, that is exactly what **turning a blind eye** is all about.

Kassy: You see this a lot in high school dramas, TV shows, movies—the administration is always **turning a blind eye** to the problems going on in the student body.

Andrew: Exactly. Yeah, we hear this expression used a lot when talking about schools, and a ton when talking about government, right? Because the government knows that there are a lot of problems out there in the world but sometimes fixing them is more difficult than ignoring them. So, they can choose to ignore them, **turn a blind eye**, and maybe just move on to dealing with other issues. So yeah, definitely when talking about politics and the government, we use this expression all the time. Kassy, why don't we listen to that second conversation example, our final one for this episode, right now?

Kassy: Yep, let's do it.

Roommate 1: Have you noticed that Jerry hasn't been doing his dishes for a few days? They're starting to pile up in the sink.

Roommate 2: I noticed all right, how could I not?

Roommate 1: I think we should talk to him about it **Turning a blind eye** isn't gonna make this problem go away.

Roommate 2: Yeah, you're right. OK, I'll text him now, and let him know that we're going to have a roommate meeting later tonight.

Roommate 1: Good idea.

Kassy: All right. In this example of conversation, we have two roommates talking about their fellow, dirty roommate, OK? This roommate has been leaving dishes in the sink to pile up for several days and his friends can no longer **turn a blind eye** to this issue. They know that if they continue to ignore this problem, their friend is never going to change. He's going to leave dirty dishes in the sink forever. So, they decide that they're going to have a roommate meeting tonight to talk to this roommate and solve this problem.

Andrew: Exactly. Yeah, **turning a blind eye**—ignoring the problem isn't going to solve it, right? So, they decide, hey, let's get together and talk it out and see if we can't fix this problem and get our roommate to clean up those dirty dishes. And this example may be inspired from some of my past roommate experiences, Kassy. I think there's a **grain of truth** in that one, at least for me, that rings true.

Kassy: Bad memories are coming back at the sound of this conversation, Andrew?

Andrew: Something like that, yes.

Well, everyone that brings us to the end of this episode. We hope you enjoyed it, and we hope you're able to learn something new with us here today. And congrats on getting in your daily dose of English listening practice and vocabulary study. This is exactly the kind of thing that you need to be doing to improve your English fluency and word power. So, great job, keep up the good work.

Kassy: So, Andrew and I taught you two idiomatic expressions today about people who can't or choose not to notice something. And once again, those expressions are **tone-deaf**, and **to turn a blind eye**. You can practice these expressions by making some example sentences and leaving them in our discussion forum or comment section on our website, Culips.com.

Andrew: This episode was made possible thanks to all of our wonderful Culips Members. If you enjoy Culips and find us useful for building your English skills, we would love it if you could help us by leaving a five-star rating and a positive review on your favourite podcast app, following us on Instagram or YouTube, or telling your friends who are learning English to check us out.

Kassy: We'll be back with another brand-new episode soon and we'll talk to you then. Bye, everyone.

Andrew: Goodbye.

Detailed Explanations

Tone-deaf Adjective

If someone is **tone-deaf**, it means that they are oblivious to, or intentionally ignoring, public opinion or preference. **Tone-deaf** people are unable to pick up on social cues. As Andrew explained in this episode, “it means to be unable to notice a situation [. . .] You are deaf to the situation. You can't pick up on it. You can't sense it. You can't notice it.” Being **tone-deaf** is the same as being insensitive or unsympathetic—whether it is intentional or not.

This adjective describes people, and their actions, thoughts and speech. For example, let's say there's a neighbourhood where residents complain about late-night noise. If the organization in charge of that neighbourhood decides to then host concerts every weekend, that would be a **tone-deaf** decision, since it would cause more late-night noise.

Here are a couple more examples with **tone-deaf**:

Darcie: Wow, I can't believe our mayor. It's like he doesn't know anything about the people who live in our city, you know?

Guanya: I know. Did you see that article about how he treated a group of high school vegetarians to a fried chicken dinner?

Darcie: I did! What about that time he asked the imam to share his favourite bible verse? I was shocked. He is so **tone-deaf**.

Guanya: I was shocked too! Hopefully someone more informed on what people actually want will run for mayor soon.

Young-Gi: I've been reading over this plan submitted by management, and I have a few questions.

Lukas: I also have questions. When I read it, I felt that the plan was really **tone-deaf**. It doesn't fix any of the concerns employees brought up at our last meeting.

Young-Gi: It really doesn't. In fact, I can already tell that several of these changes will make employees angrier. They wrote that we must buy all our own office supplies. This one that stands out to me right away. And I'm only on page one.

To turn a blind eye

Idiom

To turn a blind eye means to pretend not to notice something, or to ignore something you know is wrong. This idiom is often used when ignoring something bad or illegal. It describes people who know what is going on in a situation, but choose to pretend that they don't know, or that the situation isn't even happening. Related idioms include "turn a deaf ear" and "close your eyes to".

It is believed that this idiom dates back to the battle of Copenhagen in 1801, when Lord Horatio Nelson, of the English fleet, was ordered to retreat. The Lord pretended he wasn't able to see the signals for retreat because he had been blinded in one eye during the battle. So, he **turned his blind eye** to the signal and continued fighting.

Here are a couple more examples with **to turn a blind eye**:

Naruhito: I'm all set for the movie! I have my drink and my snacks.

Yuko: Wait, we can bring food and drink in from outside? Don't we have to buy drinks and snacks at the theatre's concession stand?

Naruhito: Well, usually, yeah. But I'm friends with the manager, and he is working tonight. He **turns a blind eye** to when he sees me come in with stuff, so don't worry!

Yuko: Really? That's awesome! Can we stop at the store then? I want to get a drink and some snacks too! They're so much cheaper at the store than at the theatre.

Naruhito: For sure! We've got about 30 minutes until the movie starts.

Sonny: So, my sister said you stood up for her in the locker room today when the other girls were being mean to her. So, thank you for doing that.

Christine: Oh, well, I had to! I **can't turn a blind eye** when someone is being bullied. Plus, those girls had no reason for being so mean.

Sonny: Yeah, my sister told me the whole story. Still, I'm relieved to know she has a friend there to help when the other kids are bullying her.

Faux pas

Noun

A **faux pas** is an embarrassing slip, blunder, error, mistake, act or remark made in a social situation. **Faux pas** are breaches of etiquette, manners, or conduct where there's a socially accepted norm. A fashion **faux pas**, for example, is a situation where someone wears something out of style or inappropriate. In this episode, Andrew and Kassy discuss a cultural **faux pas**. In Korea, it's the norm to be quiet on public transit. In America, it's not. So, when Kassy's friend visited and was loud on the bus, she was making an embarrassing blunder or mistake.

Faux pas is a French expression that translates literally to "false step" in English. Faux is pronounced like "foe". Pas, when singular, is pronounced like "pa", and when plural, you add a "z" sound at the end – so it's "paz".

Here are a couple more examples with **faux pas**:

Khadija: Last night, I was at a dinner party, and I used my phone to take a picture of my meal. Everyone gave me these weird looks, like I was doing something rude. Was I imagining that?

Erica: You used your phone at a dinner party? Was it like, a bunch of friends or were they colleagues or clients?

Khadija: It was a work dinner. Some clients, some colleagues.

Erica: Oh no. That's a huge **faux pas** here! It's like, the rudest thing you can do when you're out with people. I mean, there's nothing you can do about it now, but like, next time, just don't take out your phone.

Qianfan: Oh man. I can't believe what happened in the game last night! The fans were booing the ref for his call.

Douglas: I saw that too. I think the ref made the right call. What the player did during the game is a pretty big **faux pas**. And dangerous too.

Qianfan: I can see why it's dangerous, but I didn't know it was bad enough to warrant that bad of a penalty. Don't players do that by accident sometimes?

Douglas: Sure, and I think if it had been an accident this time, then the ref wouldn't have penalized him. But it was obviously on purpose.

To be/get roasted

Idiom

To be/get roasted means to be criticized, reprimanded, or insulted. When someone is **roasted**, they might feel hurt emotionally or mentally. In this episode's conversation example, Friend 2 says, "They're **getting absolutely roasted** on social media over this." This means that people on social media are criticizing these celebrities for their video.

In addition to the above definition, there is a second meaning. In North America, it also means to criticize or insult in a comedic way. In fact, "roasts" are speeches done by different people that honour a single person while also making fun of them. You can determine which definition applies to a situation by looking at the circumstance, the relationship between the people, and the intention of the person doing the criticizing. For example, during a gathering with friends, one friend **roasts** the other in a joking manner. This would fit the comedic definition—the person criticizing isn't doing it to harm or insult the other person.

Here are a couple more examples with **to be/get roasted**:

George: Um, dude? What are you wearing on your feet?

Allen: These? Aren't they cool? I got them yesterday and they're so comfortable and good-looking.

George: No, those are not cool. I don't care how comfortable they are either. If you wear those, you're gonna **get roasted** by everyone, dude.

Allen: What? Why?

George: They look like something our grandpas would wear.

Allen: Well, I like them! Who cares what the other guys are going to say.

Aaliyah: Have you seen David?

Heather: Yeah, he's in the boss's office **getting roasted**.

Aaliyah: Oh dear. Is that where the yelling is coming from? I guess I'll come back later then. Thanks!

Average Joe

Noun

Average Joe is a nickname that we use to describe a normal or ordinary person. **Average Joes** are just like everyone else. They have normal nine to five jobs, come home after work to watch TV, and follow popular sports or watch popular TV shows. They're neither smart nor dumb, rich nor poor, and usually have no desire to improve or change their lives. You can use this expression to describe a specific person—"He's your average Joe"—or to give an image of a hypothetical "completely average person"—we're looking for an Average Joe.

Average Joe is mostly said when talking about middle class Americans, and it symbolizes the average American person (usually male). Other similar expressions include: ordinary Joe, Joe Sixpack, Joe Lunchbucket, Joe Snuffy, Joe Blow, or Joe Schmo. The female equivalent is Ordinary Jane, Average Jane, and Plain Jane.

Here are a couple more examples with **average Joe**:

Salesperson: This here is our top-of-the-line model. It has the best specs and is designed for users who need the operating power to run graphic heavy games or programs, like video editing and design software.

Customer: Oh, I don't think I'll need anything that impressive. I'm just your **average Joe**. I just need something that'll let me work on documents, and maybe watch some videos from time to time.

Salesperson: I understand. In that case, this model here would likely be perfect for you. It's also a bit more affordable than our top-of-the-line model.

Julie: Sigh. I'm sorry I'm late.

Daiyu: No problem! I wasn't waiting long. Did something happen?

Julie: No. It's just that Steve takes so long to get ready to go. I swear, it takes him longer than the **average Joe**. It doesn't matter what time I tell him we're leaving, he's never ready.

Daiyu: Well, he's a teenager now. That's the age where they're very worried about their appearance and style. I'm sure he'll learn how to take less time when getting ready in the future.

Julie: I'm sure he will. Until then, I'll just have to be okay with being late all the time.

Grain of truth

Idiom

A **grain of truth** is a small amount of truth that can be found in a statement or situation that is generally false or that doesn't make sense. For example, think about a popular fairy tale or myth. Even though it's fictional (made up), there's a small part of it that makes sense or can be considered "true". That small part might be a lesson or moral of the story, or perhaps the myth is based on real people.

For example, in the *Three Little Pigs* fairy tale, the lesson "always be prepared" is the story's **grain of truth**. The story of the Egyptian god Imhotep has **grains of truth** to it, since the god is based on a real man of the same name.

Here are a couple more examples with **grain of truth**:

Francis: Man, that joke that Dave told was so mean. Are you okay?

Shota: Yeah, I'm okay. I am a bit bummed, but the only reason why it bothered me so much is because there was a **grain of truth** to it. I really am awkward a lot of the time.

Francis: I mean. Sure, you can be awkward. But that's part of your charm, you know? We all love having you around. I hope you don't feel like you're a problem, or whatever. You know?

Shota: I know. Thank you for saying that. I'm really okay though.

Crystal: So then, we all drove off into the sunset while the crowd cheered for us like we were their heroes!

Lixin: Wow, that's so impressive! You really saved that whole family from a stampede? That's just unbelievable!

Crystal: Unbelievable is the right word for it!

Lixin: Wait. There wasn't a single **grain of truth** in what you just told me, was there?

Crystal: Nope! I made it all up. Hahaha!

Lixin: Oh you. You're so funny. But you won't see me ever believing one of your stories again.

Quiz

1. Which of the following means an ordinary or normal person?

- a) Anxious Joe
- b) Average Joe
- c) Advanced Joe
- d) Antsy Joe

2. A teacher roasted their student for misbehaving. What did the teacher do?

- a) Put the student in an oven
- b) Made the student dinner
- c) Rewarded the student
- d) Reprimanded the student

3. Which of the following means oblivious to or intentionally ignoring public opinion or preference?

- a) Colour blind
- b) Taste sensitive
- c) Tone-deaf
- d) Touch deficient

4. What do you call that small part that makes sense in a story or situation?

- a) Grain of truth
- b) Lick of sense
- c) Drop of a hat
- d) Kernel of an idea

5. Which of the following means to pretend not to notice something, or to ignore something you know is wrong?

- a) Turn the other cheek
- b) Turn a blind eye
- c) Turn over a new leaf
- d) Turn of mind

Writing and Discussion Questions

1. Describe a time when you or someone you know said or did something **tone-deaf**.
2. Have you ever **turned a blind eye** to something? What was it and why did you ignore it?
3. In this episode, Kassy and Andrew talked about the cultural **faux pas** of being loud on public transit. Does your city have a similar cultural **faux pas**? If so, what is it?
4. Who do you know that is the least observant and most likely to do something **tone-deaf** or commit a **faux pas**? Why do you think they're like that?
5. What advice would you give to that person to help them be more observant?

Quiz Answers

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

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