

Chatterbox #107 – Meet Andrew, the new Culips co-host

Informal Contractions in this Episode

Informal contractions are unofficial short forms of other words, and they're usually only used in casual conversation. For example, when a native English speaker talks casually, they might say *gonna* instead of *going to*, or *whaddya* instead of *what do you*. Even though informal contractions are usually only used in spoken English, we include them in the Culips written transcripts to help you get used to how they're used and what they sound like.

These are the informal contractions used in today's episode, along with their meanings:

- **gonna**: going to
- **gotta**: got to
- **wanna**: want to

Transcript

Maura: Hello everyone. It's Maura.

Harp: And Harp.

Maura: And we're here with another Culips English episode for you.

Harp: Yes. Remember, always check out our website Culips.com, that's C-U-L-I-P-S.com, because there, you'll find all of our wonderful, wonderful episodes. And you should definitely **join up** and become a member.

Maura: That's right. Because when you're a member, you have access to our transcripts, more detailed explanations, and quizzes for many expressions that we use in our episodes.

Harp: Yes. And remember, you can listen to us on our website, or you can go to iTunes or Stitcher.

Maura: Now today we have a very, very, very special episode.

Harp: Yes, we do. We're very excited about this episode.

Maura: Today is a Chatterbox episode, and that is where we chat. And sometimes we interview people. Today we're going to interview someone who's very important.

Harp: Yes. Today, Maura is going to interview Andrew. And Andrew is the newest member of Culips.

- Maura: That's right. Harp and I have been co-hosts at Culips for a long time, but we are **adding Andrew to the mix**.
- Harp: Yes. So Andrew will be joining us and co-hosting episodes with Maura or me.
- Maura: That's right. So, this is the first time that you'll be hearing Andrew's voice, but it definitely won't be the last. We're really excited. He has a lot of experience teaching English and learning languages, and is really excited to start helping you learn to speak English better.
- Harp: Yes. So we thought we'd start by giving you an interview with him so you could learn a little bit more about Andrew.
- Maura: That's right. Now you can hear about what kind of person he is and what he's into.
- Harp: So, I'm gonna leave it to you Maura.
- Maura: All right. Let's go.
- All right. So, Andrew, why don't you tell us a little bit about yourself?
- Andrew: Sure, absolutely. OK, my name is Andrew and I was born in Toronto. And when I was a toddler, I moved to a city called Langley, which is right outside of Vancouver. When I was a teenager, I moved to Kelowna and I went to high school in Kelowna, British Columbia. And I moved to Victoria to go to the University of Victoria, where I majored in history and English. Upon graduation, I moved to Korea. I taught English at an elementary school in Seoul, South Korea, for 3 years. And then I moved to Montreal, and here I am. I'm currently attending Concordia University, studying linguistics.
- Maura: Cool. So you've been around the country and the world a little bit.
- Andrew: Yeah. A very long life, yes.
- Maura: So, what was it like growing up in Kelowna? I know I'm from Ontario, which doesn't have mountains and is a little bit more flat, and I'm always jealous of people who are from the West Coast and have beautiful natural scenes around them.
- Andrew: Yeah, absolutely. Well, the nice thing about Kelowna is the four seasons, I think. We have summer, a beautiful long summer, and the winter. It's fairly grey in the winter but it's not too cold, which is nice. And of course there's skiing, lots of mountains. And **I'm a big snowboarder**, so, yeah, it was great for that.

- Maura: Yeah. That's something that I think a lot of people maybe don't know; that there are parts of Canada where the winter isn't that bad.
- Andrew: Yeah, yeah, yeah. I think the coldest it would get in Kelowna during the winter is maybe minus 10. So it's not that bad in Kelowna. And then in the summer it's... Yeah, it's really warm.
- Maura: Yeah. Minus 10. It seems not bad at all, actually.
- Andrew: It's not bad compared to Montreal.
- Maura: No. OK, cool. And then you moved to Victoria, which is a pretty **chill** place.
- Andrew: Yeah, yeah, absolutely. It's very laid back. It's on Vancouver Island, so it's got a bit of **an island mentality**.
- Maura: And then you decided to go to Korea. Now, what made you, first of all, decide to travel, and also choose Korea?
- Andrew: OK. This is a long story.
- Maura: All right. I'm ready.
- Andrew: Is that all right, a long story? OK, well I was studying history at the University of Victoria and I was deciding on my speciality, what I wanted to focus in for my history degree. And I was originally interested in European history, but there was a job posting for a job with a Chinese history professor. And I got the job being his research assistant, so he got me really interested in Chinese history. So I began to study Chinese history and I chose that as my speciality. And once I graduated, I thought, "I want to keep studying Chinese history, but I can't speak Chinese, so this is a big problem." So I decided to move to China and start studying Chinese. But...
- Maura: Yeah. Where does Korea come into this?
- Andrew: But I decided not to go to China in the end, because I couldn't find a job that would pay me enough. The Korean jobs paid a lot more money. So I went to Korea and I thought, "After a little bit of time in Korea, I can save up some money and I can go to China." But once I got to Korea, I enjoyed it so much, I loved the Korean culture and the Korean way of life, that I just stayed there for 3 years.
- Maura: So, tell us one of your most favourite things about Korea then, because I've never been.

- Andrew: My favourite thing about Korea. There're lots of things that I like. Probably the food. I love Korean food and... Yeah, Korean food. I'll say that's my answer, my favourite thing.
- Maura: What are some of the really good dishes that they have?
- Andrew: The really good... Ah, my favourite Korean dish is called dak galbi, sort of a Korean barbeque chicken stir-fry combination. Yeah. It's spicy but it's amazing.
- Maura: I've never had that, but I feel kind of hungry listening to the description.
- Andrew: You should try it. You should try it, yeah.
- Maura: Yeah. And while you were in Korea, you decided to learn Korean as well?
- Andrew: That's right, yeah. I... Like I said, I wanted to study Chinese and learn Chinese but Korean **won me over** and I started studying Korean. And I went to classes at night. I taught English during the day at an elementary school, like I said, and then at night I went to Korean language classes.
- Maura: OK. So you learned Korean mostly from taking classes?
- Andrew: Classes were helpful. Also the Internet is a great resource. And making friends, hanging out with Korean people, that was definitely a helpful factor, yeah.
- Maura: Cool. So, would you say now you're very satisfied with your level of Korean or are you always interested in learning more?
- Andrew: I'm always interested in learning more. I feel like I was right on the edge of making a big breakthrough in my Korean studies and then I came back to Canada. If I had stayed in Korea longer, it would have been helpful. **But here I am.**
- Maura: Since you've come back, have you had much chance to speak Korean? Do you know any Koreans in Montreal?
- Andrew: Yeah, well, I still stay in contact with my Korean friends. The Internet makes that very easy to do, but the Korean community in Montreal is fairly small. I haven't met anybody. Well, a couple students, but not too many people. So if you're listening, let's talk in Korean.
- Maura: So, then after Korea, you decided to come here. What made you want to come to Montreal?

- Andrew: Well. There're a lot of reasons that made me want to come to Montreal. The first, I think, is being from the West Coast of Canada, Montreal has always seemed like a very interesting place to me. It's got a lot of culture, the English culture and the French culture sort mixing together. It seems very vibrant. And, unfortunately I'm not a French speaker, so I thought getting a job in Montreal might be difficult. But as a student, I can easily live in Montreal. So I thought this would be a good place to do grad school. Also, the program that I'm studying at university is fairly well respected, so that was a big factor motivating my decision to come here. And my girlfriend is here, too. So those three reasons are why I decided to come to Montreal.
- Maura: Yeah. For love. That always helps, right?
- Andrew: Yeah, for love.
- Maura: So you said that you're not a French speaker, but we talk so often about learning French, because we're in Canada, and we're in Montreal. And so many Canadians do learn to speak French. How did you not learn French?
- Andrew: Well, most people have to take French in elementary school, middle school, high school, as you know. But I snuck through and I took German in school. At my school, they offered French and German, and maybe Spanish. I think Spanish as well. But I chose German and, yeah, so I know a little bit of German but my French is fairly lacking, fairly basic, so...
- Maura: How's **your German** then?
- Andrew: **My German?** I was in Germany 2 years ago and it was OK. I could get around. But, yeah.
- Maura: So now that you're in Montreal, I know that you're also planning to take a French class. How do you feel about that? **Taking on** another language? Because sometimes, for me anyways, it can get a little mixed up. Do you get mixed up between the languages?
- Andrew: I'm worried about this, actually, to tell you the truth. I think... But, I don't know... I think when you're living in a city, or in a country, you should try to learn the language. I think that's very important, so, yeah I'm interested. Especially as a Canadian, knowing French is just something I've really wanted to do for a long time. I'm sort of sad **to put my Korean studies on the back burner**, but that'll be there for a later time. French for now. That's my decision.
- Maura: Cool. And why don't you tell us a little bit more about what you're doing in school right now? Because everyone listening is obviously interested in language, and you're studying language.

- Andrew: Right, yeah. I'm studying second language acquisition. My goal is to be an English teacher. I've done that at the elementary school level with kids, and I really enjoyed it. And here in Canada, I wanna keep teaching English, but I want to teach at more of a university level. So I'm studying all about how languages can be learned and how the best way to teach them is, and, yeah, that's what I'm studying.
- Maura: Do you have any secrets or advice for the listeners who are learning English as a second language?
- Andrew: Don't give up. Keep trying, keep going. It'll happen. Just work hard.
- Maura: It's so funny because it's such an obvious piece of advice, but it's so true, that if you **keep at it** long enough, it will happen.
- Andrew: Yeah. It's just like any skill, I think, that you learn. Practice makes perfect.
- Maura: And, so, it hasn't even been quite a year that you've been in Montreal.
- Andrew: That's right.
- Maura: What do you think of the city so far?
- Andrew: It's fantastic. I love it. I was out for a bike ride the other day. And it's just a very vibrant city. I was in the old quarter, the old town. Is that what it's called?
- Maura: Yeah. The Old Port or Old Montreal?
- Andrew: Old Montreal, there we go. My girlfriend's parents are in town visiting so I was **playing tour guide** for the last couple of days and we saw all the touristy sites. Yeah, it's lovely. It's just a nice place to be.
- Maura: Yeah. I definitely agree. And you're right. The winter this year was particularly long.
- Andrew: Yeah, long. Too long.
- Maura: But I think we're even more excited that the nice weather is here.
- Andrew: Yeah.
- Harp: Well, I hope you enjoyed listening to this interview and learning more about Andrew.
- Maura: Yeah. Because, like I said, you're going to be hearing a lot more from him in the future.

- Harp: Yes. So that's it for us today. Don't forget to check out our website, Culips.com. That's C-U-L-I-P-S.com.
- Maura: That's right. Because it's only there that you can become a member, and when you become a member, your Culips experience is... It just gets better.
- Harp: It really does, so go check it out. And remember to leave us a comment or a question on Facebook. We love hearing from you.
- Maura: Right. And if you're interested in some of our past episodes, because we've got hundreds to choose from, you can listen on our website, on iTunes, or you can also check us out on Stitcher Radio.
- Harp: That's it for us today. We'll talk to you again soon.
- Maura: And Andrew will talk to you again soon, too.
- Harp: Yes, he will.
- Maura: Bye.
- Harp: Bye everyone.

Detailed Explanation

To join up

To join up means to enroll or to meet up. It means the same thing as *to join*, but **to join up** is usually used in place of the verb *to sign up*, which means to enroll. *To join* can mean to take part in any form of participation in or connection with something. For example, you can join a party, or you can join two ends of something together with glue. But you can't **join up** a party, or **join up** two ends of something. **To join up** implies an intentional signing up or registration for something.

In this episode, Maura uses the expression **to join up** to tell listeners to sign up or register for Culips. She could've said *join* instead of **join up**, but this would imply a more general invitation to listen or participate, rather than to register. *To join* means to participate and **to join up** means to register.

Here's another example with **to join up**, which also includes the expression *to join* for comparison:

Sebastian: How was the horseback riding championship?

Mina: It was great! My sister is so good at it. She makes it look so easy. I wish I could join.

Sebastian: Why can't you?

Mina: Well, I have to sign up for lessons first, then I can get into the championships. You can't just participate without **joining up** for classes first.

Sebastian: Oh, I see. You should take some classes then!

To add something (or someone) to the mix

To add something to the mix means to put something more into something that already exists. For example, this expression is often used to describe committing to a responsibility when you already have a lot to deal with. So somebody taking on a new project at work could say, "I'm already so busy with my existing clients, and now the boss wants me to **add a new one to the mix.**"

In this episode, Maura uses this expression to talk about adding Andrew to the Culips group, saying, "We are **adding Andrew to the mix.**"

The expression comes from cooking terminology, when you add more ingredients to a recipe. Every time you add another ingredient, you mix all the ingredients together. In the same way, **adding Andrew to the Culips mix** means that he is being combined with the existing Culips group.

Here's another example with **to add something to the mix**:

Ramona: Do you want to see a picture of my new dog?

Santiago: You got a new dog? Don't you already have three?

Ramona: Yeah, but two of them are really close and they sort of leave the other one out when they play, so I thought it would be good **to add a fourth dog to the mix**.

I'm a big snowboarder

To say that **you're a big snowboarder** means you really like snowboarding and do it often. Usually, **big** is a word that we associate with physical size. But sometimes it's also used to mean passionate or enthusiastic, which is how Andrew uses it in this episode to say that he loves snowboarding. You could be **a big fan** of a certain rock star, or **a big chess player**.

Here's another example with **I'm a big something**:

Robin: Would you like a cupcake?

Jack: Yes please! I love cupcakes! Where did you get them?

Robin: I made them.

Jack: Really? That's amazing. I didn't know you like to bake.

Robin: Yeah, **I'm actually a big baker**. It's one of my favourite things to do.

Chill

Chill means laid back or relaxed. In this episode, Maura says that Victoria, a city in the Canadian province of British Columbia, is a **chill** place. When we refer to a place as **chill**, we usually mean that the people in that place are **chill**, rather than the place itself.

This expression comes from the idea that emotions are related to temperature. When someone is angry or anxious, they tend to feel a little hot, or they get sweaty. So, when someone is the opposite of angry or anxious, like if they are calm and content, they are said to be cool or **chill**.

Here's another example with the adjective **chill** used to describe a place:

Andrea: What are your plans for the holidays?

Dario: Nothing, actually. You?

Andrea: We're going up to my cottage. Do you want to come?

Dario: Really? Your parents wouldn't mind?

Andrea: Not at all. Most of my relatives will be up there, actually. But they're all very laid back. My cottage is a very **chill** place.

Dario: That sounds great! I'd love to come.

An island mentality

In this episode, Andrew uses the expression **an island mentality** to describe a place on an island that is laid back and casual. Andrew uses this expression to describe Victoria, British Columbia, a place known for its relaxed attitude.

This expression, **an island mentality**, is something used in North America to describe places on islands that are relaxed, like islands in the Caribbean or other tropical places. This is how Andrew uses the expression in this episode.

But to say that a group of people have **an island mentality** can also mean that they are ignorant or self-centred. In this context, a group with **an island mentality** see themselves as separate (like an island), and better than everyone else.

To win someone over

To win someone over means to convince them to agree with you or like you after a while. **Winning someone over** usually implies that you have convinced them to do something, such as supporting you or a belief you have. A person can **win someone else over**, or an idea or thing can **win someone over**.

Saying that you **won someone over** also means that they were resistant or hesitant to support you in the beginning, but something you did changed their mind.

In this episode, Andrew says that the Korean language **won him over**. What he means is that he ended up liking Korean, even though he set out to learn Chinese.

Here's another example with **to win someone over**:

Lena: I love my science class. You should take it next term if Mr. Ryan is still teaching it.

Magnus: Mr. Ryan? I thought you didn't like him as a teacher.

Lena: I didn't at first. But he eventually **won me over**. He's pretty strict, but he's actually quite kind, and very fair.

But here I am

But here I am is an expression used at the end of a sentence to say that even though you have gone through different stages or even though you began something in a different way, you ended up where you are now. This is used to express how strange or interesting it is that you ended up where you are, because it seemed like you would end up somewhere else.

In this episode, Andrew uses this expression when he talks about how he ended up in Montreal, even though he was really enjoying Korea.

Here's another example with **but here I am**:

Ines: Did you go to school to be a veterinary assistant? You're very good.

Romain: I didn't, actually. I wanted to be a doctor. I took all the courses, **but here I am**.

Ines: Oh, wow. You'll have to tell me all about that one day!

Your German

When the word *your* (or any other possessive pronoun, like *his*, *her*, *my*, etc.) is followed by a skill or educational subject, such as swimming or math, *your* is actually short for *your ability to do this thing*. So in this episode, when Maura asks Andrew how **his German** is, she's asking him how good his ability to speak German is.

Here's another example with possessive pronouns used in this way:

Zoe: My brother is dating an Italian girl, and she always makes fun of **his Italian** when he tries to speak it.

Noam: That's funny. Does he get insulted by that?

Zoe: No, he just laughs and tells her that **his cooking** is so good that she shouldn't care about his Italian.

Noam: What a cute couple.

To take something on

To take something on means to attempt something, or to make a commitment to do something. It can also be used to describe acquiring something that you are responsible for.

In this episode, Maura asks Andrew how he feels about **taking on** a new language when he already knows so many. Maura is asking Andrew how he feels about attempting to learn another language when he already knows a few others.

Here's another example with **to something take on**:

Nora: Do you want to go to that new sandwich shop for lunch?

Habib: Actually, I don't have time. I signed up for another class during my lunch hour.

Nora: Another class? Are you sure you want **to take on** that much work? That's a lot of extra homework.

Habib: Yeah, it should be OK. My other classes are pretty easy.

To put something on the back burner

To put something on the back burner means to temporarily put it on hold, or to put something further down on your to-do list because something else more important has come up.

We talked about this expression in a previous Culips episode, called *Let's put it on the shelf for now*, so head over there to get some more information about how this expression is used.

To keep at something

To keep at something means to not give up on doing it, or to continue doing it regularly even though it's difficult. In this episode, Maura and Andrew talk about advice for people learning a new language, and Maura says that people should **keep at it** and it'll eventually happen. Even though studying a new language can be hard, if you do it regularly and don't give up, you'll eventually be able to speak fluently.

Here's another example with **to keep at something**:

Salome: My swimming classes are so frustrating.

Ammar: Why?

Salome: I have to learn to swim underwater before I can progress to the next level, and I'm having a hard time.

Ammar: Oh, yeah. Swimming underwater without plugging your nose is tough. But once you get it, you never forget how to do it, and it'll seem so easy. You just gotta **keep at it**, and one day you'll get it.

Salome: Yeah. I should start practicing more.

To play a role

In this episode, Andrew talks about **playing tour guide** while his girlfriend's parents are visiting Montreal. When someone says they are **playing a role**, like this, such as a tour guide or a nurse, it usually means that they are temporarily acting like that type of person, even though they do not do that job professionally. For example, someone who bandages up another person could be said to be **playing nurse**, even though they're not really a nurse.

To play a role is used casually to describe an activity that someone is doing that resembles a professional role. Andrew may have not done all the things a professional tour guide would do, and someone bandaging up another person may not do it the way a professional nurse would do it. But because what they are doing resembles a profession, they can be said to be **playing that profession**.

Here's another example with ***to play a role***:

Summer: Who was that kid I saw you with this afternoon?

Les: That's Kirk. I'm helping him with math this year.

Summer: Oh, so you get **to play teacher** for a while? That's good. Then you'll be able to tell whether you want to be a professional teacher someday.

Les: That's what I was thinking. **Playing teacher** for a couple months will give me a better idea of whether I want go into teaching when I'm older.

Quiz

- 1. What does *to add something to the mix* mean?**
 - a) to take something away from someone
 - b) to add something extra to something that already exists
 - c) to trade something with a friend
 - d) to worry about the future

- 2. What does it mean if someone calls themselves a big swimmer?**
 - a) They swim a lot.
 - b) They don't know how to swim.
 - c) They only like to swim in big lakes or the ocean.
 - d) They like to swim and they are very tall.

- 3. What is a chill place?**
 - a) a relaxed area
 - b) a place to cool off
 - c) a dry area with no water
 - d) a stressful place

- 4. If you are winning someone over, what are you doing?**
 - a) getting them to agree with you or like you
 - b) beating them at a game
 - c) letting them win a game
 - d) making them dislike you

- 5. What does *to put something on the back burner* mean?**
 - a) to do too many things at once
 - b) to skip classes
 - c) to cook on a broken stove
 - d) to temporarily put something on hold

- 6. Which of the following is an example of someone playing doctor?**
- a) checking someone's fever
 - b) dressing in an all-white uniform
 - c) going to medical school
 - d) giving someone a tour of your city

Answers:

1.b 2.a 3.a 4.a 5.d 6.a