

Chatterbox #138 – An interview with Ross

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:

- **'cause**: because
- **gonna**: going to
- **kinda**: kind of
- **wanna**: want to

Transcript

Andrew: Hey everyone! I'm Andrew and you're listening to the Culips podcast. On today's show we have a very special guest: my friend Ross. You'll be able to hear my conversation with Ross in just a moment. But before we get started, I want to remind you to check out our website at Culips.com, C-U-L-I-P-S.com.

And while you're there, I encourage you to sign up and become a member. Culips members get access to our Learning Materials, which help take your English studies to the next level. You receive detailed explanations of all the key expressions that we talk about on the show, as well as full transcripts and comprehension quizzes for every one of our more than 300 episodes.

So, if you like Culips, show us your support by signing up and becoming a member today.

I also want to take a moment to remind you that we're on Facebook and Twitter. So, make sure to like us on Facebook and follow us on Twitter. I post interesting articles about language learning, current events, and Canadian culture on our Facebook page every week, and I love it when you comment on these posts. So keep the feedback coming because I really enjoy hearing from you.

All right, so let's get started with the show. Here it is, my interview with Ross. Enjoy!

- Andrew: Today I have my friend Ross here with me and I would like to welcome you to the show, Ross.
- Ross: Hi Andrew. Thanks.
- Andrew: No problem. How are you doing today?
- Ross: Oh, pretty good.
- Andrew: Ross, I know that you are not originally from Montreal. I was just hoping that you could tell us when you moved to Montreal, and why you came here, and also where you're from originally.
- Ross: Sure, OK. Well I first moved to Montreal about 4, 4 and a half years ago. I'm originally from Calgary, or near... a small town near Calgary. And I moved here after living in Calgary for maybe 7 years. I moved with my wife. She was doing her master's in English at **McGill**. So, I was working from home at the time. And we moved and after a couple of years of living here, studying French, I decided to enrol in the program at **Concordia**, actually. And I have been there now for almost... almost 2 years, maybe.
- Andrew: Very cool. So you're originally from wild rose country.
- Ross: Yeah. A small town called Didsbury, actually.
- Andrew: Didsbury. That's the provincial **slogan** of Alberta, right? *Wild Rose Country*?
- Ross: Yeah. I think so, yeah. *Wild Rose Country*. It's on the licence plate.
- Andrew: Yeah. I like that. That's a good **slogan**. Cool, so you've been here for several years now. And do you enjoy Montreal?
- Ross: Yeah. I love it here, actually. I have a hard time imagining being somewhere else. **You know**, the opportunity to meet a lot of different people, speak a lot of different languages, experience a pretty lively culture, and the walkability is probably one of my favourite things. **You know**, living and being able to walk to coffee shops and stores and everything easily is a nice benefit.
- Andrew: Yeah. That's true. Montreal is a very **walkable** city. And now, it's funny, Ross, that you mention walking because I know that you've travelled a lot and during some of your travels, you've had some interesting walking experiences. Do you mind telling us a little bit about those?

- Ross: Sure. Yeah, I guess... I mean, I love hiking and I've done some hiking in South America. Most recently, not last summer, the summer before, so yeah, two summers ago, my wife Jacqueline and I walked across Spain. We did the Camino de Santiago, as it's known. So it's about an 800 km walk from France, near the border with Spain, across the northern part of the country through the wine regions, through the mountains, and things like that.
- Andrew: That's insane. Eight hundred kilometres!
- Ross: Yeah. So, I mean, we spent just a little over a month, I guess, walking every day in the sun, drinking lots of water.
- Andrew: And so how far would you go each day?
- Ross: It varied a lot. I would say we tried to, **you know**, average somewhere around 25 km a day. Maybe at the... Our longest day was maybe around 42 km, so about the same as a marathon. And then we had some shorter days, **you know**, if we were sore, hurt, or, **you know**, if we did a couple long days then we'd change it up and we'd do, **you know**, maybe a couple of shorter days in there as well.
- Andrew: Hmm. Very interesting. And during this, were you camping overnight? Or are there hotels along the route that you can stay in?
- Ross: There's actually... You can camp. A few people do, but because... I mean, this is... People have been walking this trail for, I guess, over 1000 years. And so because of that, it's pretty... It's set up for people in an interesting way. There's what they call *albergues*, which are just small little, sort of, inns where you can usually get some food and stay the night. So there're these places and they're really **affordable**, they're very cheap, where you can... You stop, you eat a meal with, **you know**, some of the other people who are travelling, **you know**, have some... have a bottle of wine and then you sleep and get up and walk the next day.
- Andrew: That sounds pretty fun.
- Ross: Yeah, yeah. No, it's nice. Over the course of the month you really get to know a lot of the other people who are on the trail.
- Andrew: I guess that's true, right? Because you're all walking at a similar speed, I would imagine. So if you meet some people, you're probably likely to finish the trip with them, right?
- Ross: Yeah. See them again and again, yeah.

- Andrew: Yeah, exactly. Cool. Have you done any of these big trips in Canada too? Like, for example, **the West Coast Trail**, maybe?
- Ross: I haven't. I've had a lot of friends who have hiked **the West Coast Trail**. I have hiked a lot in the Rockies, though, most of them being either day trips or maybe up to 3 to 5 days. **You know**, short backpacking trips in the mountain where we would be camping along the way. So I've done a bit of that when I lived in Alberta.
- Andrew: Yeah. It's always been one of my dreams to one day go and do **the West Coast Trail**. But I think I need to train a little bit first because I hear it's pretty **rough on the body**.
- Ross: Yeah. I've heard that as well.
- Andrew: OK, so I guess, Ross, now I would like to transition out of travels and talk to you a little bit about languages.
- Ross: Mmhmm.
- Andrew: So you mentioned earlier that when you first arrived in Montreal, you studied French pretty actively. And I was wondering how that is going.
- Ross: Yeah. I started studying, I guess, just before moving to Montreal. And then when I arrived here, I did a lot of study on my own. I took a couple classes, I would read a lot, and tried to find ways to learn, I guess, every day, and tried to make a habit of it. I listened to some podcasts as well.
- And, **you know**, over the last number of years there've been times where I do it more intensively or less intensively. I've taken some writing courses and things like that. And right now I'm starting to feel pretty **comfortable**. I've signed up, actually, for another writing course coming up next week. So, **you know**, it's a never-ending journey, but one that I'm still engaged in.
- Andrew: Yeah. That's very cool because a lot of the people, or a lot of the English speakers who you meet in Montreal, myself included, we come to Montreal with the dream of learning French, but not that many people actually get good at French. But I think you're one of the exceptions here. You've got a good level of French that you've learned, actually, in Montreal.
- Ross: Yeah. I don't know how good I would say it is, but I understand the difficulty. It's easy... **You know**, a lot of the time that I'm spending at **Concordia**, I'm using English a lot. So to find the opportunity to still use French regularly can sometimes be a challenge. **You know**, I have to be very intentional, I guess, about it.

- Andrew: I guess that's a good tip for anybody learning a language, is just to be disciplined.
- Ross: Yeah. I would say, **you know**, if you can do a little bit every day then it's a good habit to form.
- Andrew: Yeah, absolutely. And what about other languages? One of the things that I like about talking to you is you're always like, "Ah, that reminds me of Swedish" or "That's like in Spanish, they have this construction." 'Cause we talk a lot about language, between the two of us.
- Ross: Yeah, we do.
- Andrew: So, what about some other languages you study?
- Ross: Yeah. I mean, I really love learning languages and studying them **so...** Before French, I actually studied Spanish for a while, and in travels I've used it quite a bit. And over the last few years I've fit in studying a little bit of Russian and German. I travelled to Iceland, so before, I found a free class that I could join and studied Icelandic for 3 months. And like you said, I've done a little bit of Danish and Swedish.
- I was working, actually, for a company in India, and so I studied a little bit of Hindi. Although I have to say, I didn't get very far. I **get sidetracked** easily and I jump around, **you know**. I have interests in a lot of different things so I don't always... I'm not able to stick with all of them.
- Andrew: And another shared passion of ours is music. We're both pretty crazy about music, I would say.
- Ross: Yeah.
- Andrew: And so we've combined this in our studies, really. Projects that we've worked on in the past have looked at using music to study languages. And I know you're still actively researching this topic and I was hoping you could tell us just a little bit about what you do at the university regarding this.
- Ross: Yeah, sure. I... Like you said, we started out working on, basically, building an application where we could use French music to help teach people French, or help them to learn outside of the classroom. And so we've gathered this music together, and currently what I'm working on is creating a bunch of videos and a database that can be accessed online via, for example, a mobile phone or something like that. And you can listen to French music and it will give you the lyrics in both French and English. It'll highlight different aspects, like maybe the *liaison* or gender or something like that.

Ross: And it's also organized by the level of difficulty, so that you can choose easier music at the beginning and then make way your way through to more difficult music, kind of based on vocabulary level, what you already know.

Andrew: So this a great tool. If you're listening and you're learning French, stay tuned on the Internet because you can maybe use Ross's application in the future. But I think most of our listeners are actually learning English. And I'm curious: Do you think that listening to English music could also help you learn English?

Ross: Yeah, absolutely. I think one of the great things about music is that it's really repetitive. There're not that many things that we are willing to listen to over and over again, **you know**? So we get a lot of repetitive exposure to language in music. It's often... A lot of times, it's slower. If you're listening to pop music, for example, it's... It can be up to 50% of the speed of regular speech. So you have an opportunity to listen to something a little bit slower at times, **you know**?

At the same time, I mean, I should maybe mention that there are... Music can sometimes seem more difficult when you're first learning a language. But I think that if you're able to select music, **you know**, and work your way from something that is a little bit easier to something harder, something that's easier for you to understand, the benefit of working with listening to a lot of music will really **pay off**.

Andrew: For sure. So it's slower and it's a little more repetitive than just listening to maybe a podcast, for example. And so, if you listen to music, what type of benefits can you expect to get? Like, if I just listen to music, will it make me a better speaker?

Ross: Well, I think it depends, one, on what you pay attention to and what you're able to notice. So, if you're really engaged when you're listening to music, there's... I think they're a lot of benefits that might come from it. So, for example, you might learn new words in a really rich context. You're listening to something that often has maybe a bit of a story to it. And learning, getting short bits of exposure to language in a sort of story, is a really great way of remembering things.

Another aspect that is really beneficial is the fact that it's a good way of improving your comprehension fluency; how well you understand the language. To learn a language you need a lot of experience listening, and so music is one way where you can get this experience of listening to something. And your ability to understand when you start listening to other people or the radio or whatever, podcasts, is gonna go up when you, **you know**, have more and more opportunity to listen, **you know**?

Ross: And actually, one thing that Andrew and I were talking about before was that music often will get stuck in your head. So even when you've finished listening, you're still kind of practising certain structures and things in your head over and over again, which is another great benefit.

Andrew: Actually, I have a little story to tell about this.

Ross: Yeah.

Andrew: I've been listening to a Korean singer. Her name is Neon Bunny; the translation is Neon Bunny. And it was an interesting experience. I was just listening to this song and it was very catchy and it actually got stuck in my head, this one chunk of lyric, but I didn't understand it. I didn't know what the words were, but, **you know**, it was stuck in my head and it was kind of in my consciousness. And then about a week later, I was reading and doing some studying online in Korean and I saw the word that was stuck in my head. And because, I think, that it got stuck in my head, I was able to make a connection and actually understand, "Oh, that's the word that I heard in the song." And now I've learnt that vocabulary item.

So I think that's the type of benefit you can expect from music. You're just sort of getting a little bit of extra learning power from something that's fun to do anyways, like listening to music.

Ross: Yeah, exactly. That makes me think. Actually, when I was first learning Spanish, a friend of mine gave me a whole bunch of Spanish music. He was from Ecuador, and there were all kinds of genres and all kinds of music on there. And I remember, actually, listening to a Shakira song and learning the word... In Spanish it was *equivocarse*, which basically means to make a mistake.

Andrew: OK.

Ross: And it's actually... When you're learning a language, it's a very useful word to know. And so I remember having Shakira's lyrics stuck in my head and remembering how to say "*Me equivoco*," like, I'm making a mistake or something like that, in Spanish. And, **you know**, learning it in that musical way was really, I found, quite beneficial.

Andrew: I imagine that if you sing along, if you **have the guts** to sing along to the music that you're listening to, maybe this could help you with your pronunciation, as well. Do you think so?

Ross: Yeah. And actually, I think there's a lot of research that shows that when you are copying a native speaker, **you know**, sometimes it's even called **shadowing**. But it's when you're essentially copying another speaker by doing this quite a bit, and especially in a repetitive way, your pronunciation can really improve. Because you're... All of the sounds that you're... The sounds that you're practising, you're practising right after hearing them. And so it's... It's actually a really great way of practising pronunciation.

And in music, all of the sounds, even though the tones change, all of the sounds remain the same, even within music. Like I said, sometimes the intonation changes, but still with certain things, like questions, the intonation actually, even in music, remains the same. So it can still be a great way of practising pronunciation.

Andrew: Mmhmm. So, I always feel shy when I'm singing to myself in the shower or something like that. But this is... It has some benefits, so it's maybe something that I need to start doing more often.

Ross: Yeah.

Andrew: Cool. Well, Ross, to end the interview, I wanna do something that I do with everybody who I interview, and that is just to ask you five random questions. Do you think that's OK?

Ross: All right.

Andrew: All right. So question number one: Do you consider yourself **an old-fashioned kinda guy**?

Ross: Ah. This is a tough question **right off the bat**. Why didn't you save this for last? Let's see. I guess in some ways I would say yes and in some ways I would say no. And I don't really know why, but there's... I think that there's a lot that I still enjoy from tradition. I mean, tradition is there for a reason and they develop in culture.

Andrew: Mmhmm.

Ross: So, I wouldn't say I'm always looking for something new or to abandon something that has been a part of, **you know**, our culture. But at the same time, what is maybe new can often can be interesting or intriguing or innovative in some way. So, the best I guess I can answer is maybe a little bit of both. I don't know.

Andrew: No. I think that's a good answer. It's kind of a silly question, but...

Ross: Yeah.

- Andrew: You were talking about walking earlier, right? This is a very old-fashioned thing.
- Ross: Yeah. Abandoning a car and going back to the second... One of my friends says, the second slowest form of transportation next to swimming.
- Andrew: Oh. I was just gonna ask what was number one, but, yeah, swimming is slower. Good, OK. So we'll move on to question two, which is: Have you ever won a trophy?
- Ross: Yes, actually. When I was young I used to... I played hockey, and so I was obviously in a lot of different tournaments, **you know**? Some of them might have been for participation, or whatever the case may be, but nonetheless...
- Andrew: Yeah. I definitely played in a lot of hockey tournaments where they give every kid who plays a trophy, just for coming out. Yeah. That's cool. OK, so number three. Let's say you're going out for breakfast or brunch, with your friends and...
- Ross: A common thing to do in Montreal.
- Andrew: A very popular thing. And the waiter or the server asks you, "How do you like your eggs?" What do you answer?
- Ross: I'd say almost always I go with **sunny side up**.
- Andrew: **Sunny side up**. Classic.
- Ross: Yeah.
- Andrew: Yeah. I ask you this because I had a conversation with my friend about this the other day. We were trying **to brainstorm** all the different ways you can get your eggs cooked. And it's funny, because when I'm at home, I'm super lazy so I always cook scrambled eggs.
- Ross: Ah. They're inferior.
- Andrew: They are inferior. This is why I save **sunny side up** for when I go out. I make somebody else do it for me.
- Ross: Do the work, yeah. They take a little bit more finesse. You have to be more careful.
- Andrew: Exactly. OK, question number four: What do you find boring? What types of things bore you?
- Ross: Boring? Uh... **You know**, that's a really tough one. **You know**, one of the

first things that comes up is like, **you know**, when you're travelling or sitting around in airports or waiting around. But, **you know**, I feel like in some ways I've actually become pretty good at waiting.

Andrew: Pretty good at waiting, really?

Ross: Yeah. But what I find boring? For me it probably overlaps with things that I just dislike.

Andrew: Yeah.

Ross: **You know?** Like, for example, when I'm biking. Biking can be really **enjoyable**, but if you're biking into the wind, **you know**, it's no longer really a fun activity anymore and I find it maybe a little bit boring.

Andrew: No, that's a good answer, I think. I've never thought about that, but it's true. Boring and not fun, they're kind of synonyms, right? They're almost things that are exactly the same.

Ross: Yeah. Some of the time, yup.

Andrew: Like, for example, I don't like doing chores around the house. I find them boring. But at the same time, I also hate doing them. So you're right; it's the same thing. Cool. And we'll move on to the last question, question number five. Can you tell me one thing that you learned last week?

Ross: Well, I've just been recently exploring some... going back to the topic of music, actually, some high-definition music. This is not something that I was really familiar with before last week. But somebody recently was teaching me and showing me a little about high-definition music, and maybe it's something we'll see more of in the future. But yeah, I was just learning a little bit about different qualities of music. I don't know.

Andrew: Cool. So this is digital music that's encoded at a very high rate, a high quality.

Ross: Yeah.

Andrew: So when you listen to it, do you notice a difference from a regular MP3?

- Ross: That's a... It's a tough question. I would say I notice the difference with some MP3s. But then comparing to, let's say, CD quality to something that's higher than CD quality, it's not really a difference that I really am able to pick out. I've been told it's something that you learn. Maybe it's kind of like wine. Higher-quality wine is not something you are able to pick up on at the very beginning but maybe it can be learned, so, **you know**. I don't know. We'll see if it's something that I learn at some point. I don't know.
- Andrew: OK, very cool. We'll have to follow up next time we have you on the show and ask if you've picked up the subtleties of high-definition music.
- Ross: Yeah. It's really random, but your question was random, **so...**
- Andrew: Yeah, definitely. All right, Ross, well thanks for coming in today.
- Ross: No problem.
- Andrew: So there you have it. That was my interview with Ross. He's a super interesting guy and I hope you enjoyed listening to our conversation. Before I let you go, I'm going to remind you to visit us on our website at Culips.com. And also check out our Facebook page and our Twitter page too. Thanks for listening. We will be back soon with another episode and we'll speak to you then. Bye!

Detailed Explanation

McGill University and Concordia University

McGill University and **Concordia University** are the two largest English-language universities in Montreal. In this episode, Ross mentions that his wife graduated from **McGill** and that he is studying at **Concordia**.

Nearly 40,000 students attend **McGill**, and it is consistently ranked as one of the top universities in Canada. **Concordia** has approximately 45,000 students and two campuses in Montreal. Both schools have good reputations as being excellent places to study and learn.

Montreal is a popular city for students. The two English universities, **Concordia** and **McGill**, along with several French universities, make Montreal a very student-friendly city. In fact, there are nearly 250,000 students living in Montreal, making the city one of the biggest student centres in the world.

A slogan

A **slogan** is a short, catchy, and memorable phrase that is used to advertise a product, service, or place. In this episode, Andrew mentions that *Wild Rose Country* is the official **slogan** of Alberta.

Other famous **slogans** include Nike's *Just do it*, KFC's *Finger lickin' good*, and Google's *Don't be evil*.

Effective **slogans** are short and easy to remember. Often politicians develop **slogans** to help advertise their election campaigns. American President Barack Obama used the **slogan** *Yes we can* for his 2008 campaign.

Here are a couple more examples with **a slogan**:

Mac: How was your day today?

Sally: I had a really great day at work.

Mac: What happened?

Sally: My team was put in charge of developing an ad campaign for a new company.

Mac: Cool. What will you have to do?

Sally: We'll have to design the advertising strategy from top to bottom. We'll be in charge of creating the company's **slogan** as well as developing print and Internet ads.

Terry: When I was in high school I always wore T-shirts with funny **slogans** on them.

Jordan: Oh yeah? What kinds of things were printed on them?

Terry: My favourite one said "I'm kind of a big deal" and another one said "I'm with stupid" and had an arrow pointing to my left.

Jordan: Ah, yeah. I remember those shirts. They were pretty popular a few years ago.

–able

–able is a suffix that we can attach to verbs to turn them into adjectives with the general meaning of able to or suitable for. Native speakers of English turn verbs into adjectives with the **–able** ending often and will understand what these words mean even if some of them may not be common.

In this episode, Ross says that Montreal is a very **walkable** city. This means that Montreal is a good city for walking. It's easy to get around Montreal on foot.

There are lots of other common examples of verbs turned into adjectives with the suffix **–able**. A **printable** document is one that's able to be printed. A **downloadable** file can be downloaded. A **kissable** person is someone who you'd like to kiss. And a **recyclable** material is something that can be recycled.

Here are a couple more examples with the suffix **–able**:

Frank: Hey man. I really need a favour.

Garth: Oh yeah? What's up?

Frank: Could you give me a ride to work tomorrow? My car just broke down and I can't get it fixed until next week.

Garth: Sure. That's **doable**. No problem. I'll come pick you up tomorrow at 7am.

Frank: Awesome. Thanks!

Mia: Jane and I are going to ride our bikes to the lake next week. Would you like to come?

Kathy: Is the road hilly? I'm not in great shape, it might be hard for me to keep up.

Mia: Nope, the road is flat and very **rideable**. You'll have no problem.

Kathy: OK, sounds good. Let's do it!

You know

Many speakers insert discourse markers into their speech. In this episode, Ross uses the discourse marker **you know** several times. Some other discourse markers are *actually*, *basically*, *like*, *I mean*, *OK*, and *so*.

Discourse markers serve several different functions. Although they do not have a lot of meaning attached to them, they are used strategically by speakers to achieve other goals. For example, a speaker might use a discourse marker as a placeholder while they think of what to say next or to plan their speech. Using a discourse marker can buy a speaker time.

Discourse markers are also used to lessen the impact or directness of speech. In this episode, both Andrew and Ross use the discourse marker *kind of* to hedge their speech and affect its strength or straightforwardness (for example, this could make their utterance more polite or vague).

Another reason a speaker might use a discourse marker such as ***you know*** is to keep the conversation moving forward. Using an expression like this makes sure that your listener is engaged in the conversation and is listening to you.

Here are a couple more examples with discourse markers:

Julie: Want to go to the movies with me on Friday?

Thomas: Oh, I'm actually busy on Friday. Sorry.

Julie: Oh, OK. Some other time then.

Thomas: Sure.

Dawn: That's, like, the coolest backpack I've ever seen. Where did you buy it?

Rene: Oh, thanks! I got it at the mall last weekend.

Dawn: It's super cool. I want one too!

The West Coast Trail

The West Coast Trail is a 75 km hiking trail that stretches along the western coast of Vancouver Island in British Columbia. It was originally built in the 1900s so that shipwrecked sailors could be more easily rescued. Nowadays, it is a popular destination for hikers and other outdoors enthusiasts.

The trail passes through forests, beaches, and bogs. Hikers frequently see different kinds of wildlife, like deer, bears, eagles, whales, and sea lions. Anyone who wishes to hike **the West Coast Trail** must take a safety class before leaving. The class teaches hikers what to do in an emergency and what to do if they encounter a dangerous animal.

The West Coast Trail is very rugged. It is recommended that only experienced hikers who are in good physical shape hike this difficult trail.

This photo shows one of the waterfalls that hikers pass while trekking on **the West Coast Trail**.



To be rough on something/someone

When something is difficult, intense, or severe we can communicate this by using the phrasal verb **to be rough on**. In this episode, Andrew mentions that the West Coast Trail **is rough on the body**. In other words, because the hike is difficult and physically demanding, it can cause pain or injury if you are not in proper shape.

When something is difficult to endure, tolerate, or deal with, we can say it **is rough on something or someone**.

Here are a couple more examples with this expression:

Sara: Hey! You started a new job last week, right? How is it?

Fred: It's pretty stressful. The company operates differently than my previous employer and I feel pretty lost. It's going to take me a while before I learn how to do my job properly.

Sara: Don't worry too much. That's to be expected. The first month or so of a new job **is rough on everyone**.

Jerry: So, I finally got the nerve to ask out Alex.

Rob: Oh yeah? What did she say?

Jerry: She said she'd never date me in a million years.

Rob: Ouch! Sorry man.

Jerry: Yeah, I didn't think she'd say yes, but that was really **rough on my ego**.

A dangling so

When someone ends a sentence with the word **so**, we call this a dangling **so**. There are a few instances of the dangling **so** in this episode. At one point in the episode, Andrew asks Ross a random question about what he learned this week. Ross talks about high-definition music and ends his answer by saying, "It's really random, but your question was random, **so...**"

This is an example of a dangling **so**. Speakers sometimes end sentences with **so** like this when there is a shared understanding between the conversation partners. In the above example, Ross ends his sentence with **so** as a way to justify why he gave a random answer. Instead, he could have said, "It's really random, but your question was random, so I gave you a random answer." However, by using a dangling **so**, Ross can communicate his thought in fewer words because both Andrew and Ross understand the context of Ross's statement. By ending his sentence with **so**, Ross avoids being redundant.

You can use a dangling **so** at the end of your sentence when you expect that your listener will understand what you mean anyways. However, this is a very casual speech strategy and it is best to always use full sentences in formal situations.

Here are a couple more examples with the dangling **so**:

Amanda: Want to come over and hang out for a bit?

Alison: Well, I'm not feeling very well, actually, **so**...

Amanda: Ah, OK. No problem. Some other time then.

Jake: I'm thinking about going fishing tomorrow.

Miguel: Oh yeah?

Jake: Yeah. You want to come too?

Miguel: I heard it's supposed to rain tomorrow, **so**...

Jake: Maybe we should wait until the weather is supposed to be better then.

Miguel: Yeah. That sounds better to me.

To get sidetracked

In this episode, Ross mentions that he **gets sidetracked** easily when learning foreign languages. This means that he is easily distracted and loses focus with one language, in this case, because he begins to study another.

This expression is usually used in the passive voice. So, someone **gets sidetracked** by something. In other words they are distracted from concentrating or focusing on a task.

When you **get sidetracked**, your attention is diverted away from an important issue or task by something else.

Here are a couple more examples with this expression:

Peter: How's school going?

Jessica: I'm finding this semester difficult. I have a hard time concentrating and I **get sidetracked** all the time. Do you have any study tips?

Peter: I always find it helpful to disconnect from the Internet before I start to study. That way I don't get interrupted by email and Facebook.

Jessica: That's a good idea. I'll try it out.

Laura: Have you finished the report yet?

Sebastian: No, sorry. I **got sidetracked** by the Tokyo file. I'll get right to it.

Laura: Thanks. If you could get it to me by the end of the day, that would be great.

To pay off

In this episode, Ross says that the benefits of music can really **pay off** when studying a foreign language. In this context, the phrasal verb **to pay off** means to bring good results. In other words, Ross thinks that studying with music is an effective way to study foreign languages, one that will bring good results.

When a job, a plan, or a method of doing something turns out to be successful or effective in the end, we can say that it **paid off**.

Here are a couple more examples with this expression:

Stu: You'll never guess what happened today at work!

Brenda: What happened?

Stu: My boss gave me a big bonus.

Brenda: Wow. Congratulations! What for?

Stu: He said he was really impressed with my work over the past 6 months.

Brenda: He should be. You really gave it your all. I guess all that overtime and weekend work you did **paid off**.

Ryan: Thanks for agreeing to help me move. I don't think I could do this without you.

Nick: No problem. That's what friends are for.

Ryan: So, do you have any ideas about how we should do this?

Nick: I think it will **pay off** if we move all the boxes into the moving truck first and then load in the furniture. That way we can stay organized.

Ryan: OK, sounds good to me. Let's do it.

To have the guts to do something

When you **have the guts to do something**, you are brave enough and have enough courage to do that thing. For example, in this episode Andrew mentions that if you **have the guts** to sing in the shower, you might be able to improve your foreign language pronunciation.

In other words, people who have the courage to sing in the shower and are not embarrassed by doing this have a nice opportunity to practice their pronunciation.

The word *guts* is a synonym for intestines and organs that are inside our bodies. Although it may seem strange, we consider someone who **has guts** to be brave and courageous.

Here are a couple more examples with this expression:

Sheila: I wish I **had the guts** to ask Brad out on a date. I've liked him for a long time but he acts like I don't even exist.

Wendy: I think you should just go for it. What's the worst that can happen?

Sheila: Yeah. Maybe you're right.

Wendy: Of course I'm right. Just give it a shot. And if he says no, who cares?

Sheila: Yeah, OK! I'm going to do it. Wish me luck!

Lizette: Hey, some friends and I are planning to go skydiving next month. I was wondering if you wanted to come along with us.

Ji Sun: Well, I appreciate that you thought of me but there is no way I'm going to go skydiving. I just don't **have the guts** to do that kind of thing. No offense, but it seems like one of the stupidest things you could do.

Lizette: What? Really? I think it looks fun. I'm really excited to go, but I understand if you don't want to.

Shadowing

Shadowing is a study technique that can be used when learning a foreign language. The technique was made famous by professor Alexander Arguelles. Essentially, the technique requires students to listen to dialogues or audio books in the language they are learning and then repeat back what they hear out loud, as soon as they hear it. In other words, you must parrot or echo the audio you hear. Professor Arguelles argues that his technique is most effective if you do this while walking outdoors.

In this episode, Ross tells us that there is research that demonstrates that **shadowing** can be an effective way to improve your foreign language pronunciation. If you are interested in learning more about this study technique, try looking up professor Arguelles on YouTube. He has several videos when he explains and demonstrates the technique. If you want to try the technique yourself, Culips episodes would make for excellent study material.

A something kind of person

In this episode, Andrew asks Ross whether he is **an old-fashioned kinda guy**. This expression, **a something kind of person**, can be used when we want to describe someone as being certain way or liking a certain thing.

For example, **an old-fashioned kind of person** is someone who values traditions and looks towards the past with respect. So **an old-fashioned kind of person** may resist change and prefer to write letters instead of emails, listen to vinyl records instead of MP3s, or read paper books instead of reading on an e-reader. So when we use the expression **a something kind of person**, we describe the person as someone who possesses certain characteristics or likes something.

Here are a couple more examples with this expression:

Lauren: Thanks for dinner. That was delicious!

Keith: No problem at all. Now what would you like for dessert? I have two options: apple pie or chocolate cake.

Lauren: Oh wow. Well, I'm **a chocolate kinda girl**, so I'll go with the cake, please.

Keith: Sounds good!

Duncan: Are you a glass-half-full or **a glass-half-empty kind of person**?

Sheila: You mean am I an optimist or a pessimist?

Duncan: Exactly.

Sheila: Well, I always try to be positive about things and have a good outlook on life, so I'd say I'm an optimist.

Duncan: Me too. It's the best attitude to have, I think.

Sheila: Yup. I agree.

Right off the bat

When something occurs **right off the bat**, it means that it happens immediately or without delay. In this episode, Ross mentions that Andrew asked him a difficult question to answer **right off the bat**. In other words, Andrew asked a difficult question immediately after the start of the five random questions section of the interview.

As we have discussed in previous Culips episodes, there are many idioms and expressions in the English language that are related to baseball. **Right off the bat** is an example of a baseball idiom. When a player hits the ball, they must run to first base immediately after the ball is hit (or comes **right off the bat**). This is now a widely used expression that means immediately, without delay, or done in a hurry.

Maybe because baseball is "America's game", **right off the bat** is used more commonly in North American English than in other varieties of English.

Here are a couple more examples with **right off the bat**.

Teresa: Wow. That's a cool car. Is it yours?

Greg: Yeah. I just bought it last week!

Teresa: Nice. I didn't know you were planning on buying a new car.

Greg: Well, I wasn't really, but I was passing by the car dealership and saw this car. **Right off the bat** I knew I had to own it.

Teresa: Awesome. Take me for a ride someday, will you?

Greg: Sure thing!

Tech support person: Hi. Thanks for calling ABC computers. How can I help you today?

Ian: Hi. I just bought a new computer from your store and I'm having a lot of issues with it.

Tech support: What seems to be the matter, sir?

Ian: Everything. **Right off the bat** it started having problems. It froze up immediately after I turned it on and it's been stuck like this ever since.

Tech support: I'm sorry to hear that. If you bring it down to the store I'll be happy to fix or replace it for you at no charge.

Ian: OK. I'll come down this afternoon.

Tech support: Excellent. See you then.

Sunny side up

Eggs that are cooked **sunny side up** are fried on one side so that the egg white is cooked thoroughly but the yolk remains partially liquid and soft.

In this episode, Ross says that his favourite type of eggs to eat are **sunny side up** eggs.

The name **sunny side up** comes from the way the eggs look. The big yellow yolk in the middle looks like a sun. Usually **sunny side up** eggs are cooked in a frying pan in a little bit of oil or butter.



This picture shows a traditional North American breakfast, with two eggs cooked **sunny side up**, hash browns, bacon, and toast.

Here's one more example with this expression:

Server: Good morning. What can I get you?

Henry: I'll have the big breakfast special, please.

Server: Sounds good. Toast on white or whole wheat?

Henry: Whole wheat.

Server: And how would you like your eggs?

Henry: **Sunny side up.**

Server: Anything else?

Henry: Just a cup of coffee, please.

Server: Perfect, thanks. I'll be right out with your coffee.

Henry: Awesome. Thanks.

To brainstorm

Towards the end of this episode, Andrew talks about a time when he and his friends were trying **to brainstorm** all the different ways you can cook eggs while they were at a restaurant. When people **brainstorm**, they work together to generate many ideas or ways to solve problems.

In Andrew's example, he and his friends worked together to try to figure out how many different ways there are to cook eggs. This is exactly what **brainstorming** is: working together to produce lots of different ideas or solutions to problems.

This expression is often used when we talk about people (business people, students, teachers, government workers, etc.) working together to produce creative new products, ideas, or problem-solving methods.



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Here are a couple more examples with this expression:

Philip: Hey. I just wanted to let you know that we're holding a **brainstorming** meeting today at 3pm to try to develop some new ideas for the networking conference next week.

Rachel: Oh, excellent. I'll be there.

Philip: Great. See you then.

Gerry: OK, so the boss would like our sales projections by next Friday. Does anyone have any ideas about how we could generate more revenue for the next quarter?

Lisa: Mary, Walter, and I were actually **brainstorming** ideas the other day and we think that an expanded advertising campaign has the potential to pay off big time.

Gerry: I like the sound of that. Why don't you three work together to develop a plan and then please include your findings in the report.

Lisa: Absolutely. We'd be happy to.

Gerry: Great. I look forward to hearing what you have to say.

Quiz

1. **What is Ross's favourite way to get around in Montreal?**
 - a) driving
 - b) riding the metro
 - c) cycling
 - d) walking

2. **Which of the following is NOT a discourse marker?**
 - a) like
 - b) you know
 - c) any
 - d) actually

3. **The expression *right off the bat* means immediately or without delay. Which sport gave life to this idiom?**
 - a) hockey
 - b) baseball
 - c) tennis
 - d) football

4. **Ross is working on an app that will help making learning languages fun and effective by using which of the following?**
 - a) comics
 - b) videos
 - c) music
 - d) podcasts

5. **If you have guts, what kind of person are you?**
 - a) brave
 - b) pathetic
 - c) light-hearted
 - d) easy-going

- 6. If a technique or method pays off, what is the result?**
- a) failure
 - b) a fee
 - c) success
 - d) risk
- 7. What do people do when they brainstorm?**
- a) work alone to generate ideas
 - b) go to the hospital to get a brain scan
 - c) meditate
 - d) work together to generate ideas
- 8. What happens when you get sidetracked?**
- a) You become engaged in your activity.
 - b) You get distracted.
 - c) You focus and concentrate.
 - d) You get lost while driving.
- 9. When something is difficult for someone to endure, which of the following expressions can we use?**
- a) It's rough on them.
 - b) It's brutal up them.
 - c) It's wicked for them.
 - d) It's harsh by them.

Answers:

1.d 2.c 3.b 4.c 5.a 6.c 7.d 8.b 9.a