

## Chatterbox #142 – Differences between Canada and America

### 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
- **wanna**: want to
- **'cause**: because
- **alota**: a lot of
- **kinda**: kind of

### Transcript

Harp: Hello everyone, this is Harp.

Andrew: And I'm Andrew and we're back with another Culips episode.

Harp: Yes, check out our website at [culips.com](http://culips.com). That's c-u-l-i-p-s dot com. Because there you can sign up and become a member. And when you're a member you have access to lots of great stuff.

Andrew: Yup, you get transcripts to each and every episode that we've ever recorded, so if you want to read while you listen, you can do that easily. You also get detailed explanations of the most important expressions and idioms that come up in our discussions, and finally, you get quizzes that will help you test your comprehension.

Harp: Yes. You should definitely sign up and become a member.

Andrew: Mhmm. We recommend it!

Harp: Yes, and remember that we're on Facebook and Twitter so you can come on over and say hello to us there. And maybe leave us a comment or a suggestion for an upcoming episode.

Andrew: Yeah! And if you listen to the podcast through iTunes, give us a 5-star rating on iTunes. That would help us out a bunch!

Harp: Yes, we would love that.

Andrew: So, Harp. What's new with you? How was your day?

Harp: Ah it was pretty good. Life's good, it's pretty boring. What about you?

Andrew: Yeah, you know what? I had a pretty busy day today. My parents and my sister, they're all coming to visit me in a couple days actually. So I've just been cleaning my apartment and getting it ready for their visit.

Harp: That's exciting is it the first time they're coming to visit?

Andrew: Um, nope. This is actually- this will be my sister's second time and my parents- my dad's third time and my mom's second time. So they've been here before.

Harp: Ok, so are you going to do some of the tourist stuff? Or what are you gonna do with them?

Andrew: Yeah, you know, we'll probably hit up all the tourist sites. Maybe grab some dinner and just hang out and spend some time together.

Harp: That's nice.

Andrew: Yeah, it'll be fun. I'm looking forward to it.

Harp: Cool. Alright, so let's get down to business. Today we're going to do a Chatterbox episode and that's where we chat about different topics, current events, sometimes we interview people. We just talk.

Andrew: Mhmm and I think we have an interesting topic today. We are going to talk about some of the differences between Canada and America.

Harp: Yes. I think we should get started.

Andrew: Sure. So, Canada and America. We have a very close relationship. We're really best friends.

Harp: Yup, I agree. And there are a lot of similarities between us. And because we're so close and we share such a long border, it's uh- we kinda have to get along.

Andrew: Yeah, it's true we're right beside each other. We share the same language, we share a lot of the same culture, so really some people might think *oh what are the differences between Canadians and Americans? They seem the same to me.*

Harp: Yup. It's a lot of subtle differences and a lot of it's based on perception and depending on where you're from, so we'll try to explain it the best we can, but this is just our opinion.

Andrew: Yeah. So we're not really using data or scientific surveys to help us with this episode. We're just going to tell you, in our opinion, what the differences that we've noticed between the two countries are.

Harp: Yup. So I think one of the first differences you'll notice, if you're say driving in the US or driving in Canada, is the system here. The metric system in Canada and the imperial system in the US.

Andrew: Mhmm so usually when I visit the US, I drive across the border and as soon as I cross the border, one of the first things I notice is all the speed signs seem really slow to me. Like the highway in Canada will be 100 kilometers and then the all the sudden it says 60 on the sign. And I'm like *woah why is it so slow?* And then I have to realize that *oh it's in miles per hour, not kilometers per hour.*

Harp: Yup and so you're always ending up doing some mental calculations of- what is the math, how fast should I be going? And most cars in Canada have both the kilometers and miles on it, but it's still always a bit of a shock to see the sign and the numbers. Like you said, it seems like you're going slower and you can't really gauge how fast you're supposed to be going.

Andrew: And actually when I was travelling to the States one time with my friend, he was driving and as soon as we crossed the border, almost immediately after we crossed the border we got pulled over by a cop for speeding. And my friend used the excuse, you know *oh it's miles per hour here, I'm not used to it, I'm sorry.* He apologized by the cop didn't buy any of it and we still got a ticket.

Harp: Ah that's a pretty good try from your friend, though.

Andrew: Yeah it was a good excuse, I thought, but it didn't work out, unfortunately.

Harp: Yup. No I remember when I was young and we would always take road trips in Canada. It was easy to calculate how long it would take to get somewhere. If the speed limit is 100 kilometers an hour, and it's 300 kilometers away, you know it's going to take three hours. But I find when I got into the US, I was thinking *ok 60 miles per hour here and how many miles do I have to go?* and it's just not as simple as when it's 100 as a measurement.

Andrew: Yeah exactly. I think it gets even more confusing to me when you talk about the size of things, like if somebody says something is 6 feet and 9 inches and 6/16th of a quarter inch or something I get very confused. I like the metric system. Maybe it's cause

it's what I'm used to but to me it just makes sense. So America, c'mon, wake up. Use the metric system.

Harp: That's funny though. Because I, when someone asks me how tall I am, I always say it in the imperial system. I always say 5 foot 8 inches. I never say in centimeters but for example on our driver's license it's written how tall you are and how much you weigh in centimeters and kilograms.

Andrew: Yeah, it's probably cause I'm like, a real big nerd, but I've tried not using the imperial all together. And it actually, when I moved to Korea, this is the first time that I made the switch. Because everybody there is fully into the metric system. But you're right it's because Canada used to use the imperial system until I think sometime in the 60s or 70s, we switched so. For example, my parents generation still uses the imperial system for almost everything. And it gets confusing.

Harp: Yup, it does. It's so much easier in the metric system. It's amazing when you're trying to teach someone the metric system and how easy it goes and the imperial system is just complicated with pounds and inches.

Andrew: So yup Harp you gotta wisen up too. You got to start telling people your height in the metric system.

Harp: Yes, I do.

Andrew: Ok. So that is one of the differences that is very noticeable between the two countries. Another one is the spelling system.

Harp: Yes, there are words that are spelt quite differently between the US and Canada. For example, *colour*.

Andrew: *Colour* and *harbour*.

Harp: And *favourite*.

Andrew: The difference is the U. In Canada we include a U. So we spell colour c-o-l-o-u-r. And in America they just drop that U.

Harp: Yup, there are actually a lot of differences in the spelling. Just minor differences but they definitely exist. So it's always important when I'm typing a document to make sure that I put it- put the spelling and the language in Canadian English so that it corrects me there. And I think actually a lot of the Culips listeners have noticed that we follow the Canadian system. So they noticed when we first started and they said to us *oh you're spelling this incorrectly* because they learned the American spelling. And so we had to explain *no we're in Canada and we follow the Canadian spelling*.

Andrew: Just out of curiosity, how do you pronounce the last letter of the alphabet?

Harp: Now I'm thinking about how I normally pronounce it. Zed?

Andrew: Zed! See this is a Canadian pronunciation. Americans say Zee.

Harp: Ahh yes that is true.

Andrew: So there's another slight difference between some of the language things between us.

Harp: Yup. There, there are quite a few but again they are very small differences but they're there.

Andrew: Yeah so this is just a different- really it's America that's alone on this one. The rest of the English speaking world in Australia, New Zealand, Scotland. They will all spell words the Canadian way. If we can call it the Canadian way.

Harp: I think it's more the British way but we can say the Canadian way right now.

Andrew: Yup, it's the British way but America is different in this so that's, you know, another difference between the two countries.

Harp: Yup.

Andrew: So another thing that I always notice when I cross the border into the USA is just how patriotic that country is.

Harp: Yup. And I think you notice it as soon as you cross the border because you see all of the Americans flags in front of almost every house it seems.

Andrew: There are so many flags and I guess Americans just really like to display their patriotism. More so than Canadians do.

Harp: Yeah. I think Canadians have sort of a softer sense of patriotism. And they don't show it as much. They don't have a lot of Canadian flags. It's usually when they start travelling that people start displaying a Canadian flag on their backpack but for example, my parent's house doesn't have a Canadian flag outside of it but they're very proud to be Canadian.

Andrew: Yeah I don't have a Canadian flag. I'm proud to be Canadian too but it's something that I feel I need to display to the world. It's just a part of who I am but I can't really help that I'm Canadian. It was a just a lucky twist of fate so I'm happy to be a part of this country but I don't need to rub it in other people's faces.

Harp: No and I think it's more kinda the idea that a lot of Americans think that America is the best country in the world, while Canadians think that Canada is a great country but there are many great countries. I think that is maybe a way to explain the difference.

Andrew: Yeah, I like that distinction.

Harp: You know another thing I notice every time I go to the US?

Andrew: What's that?

Harp: The portion sizes. Every time I'm eating out at a restaurant in the US, I'm always shocked at how big the portion is. So I'm given so much food that it's impossible for me to finish it. And I think that a lot of people coming from Asia or Europe would think that Canadian sizes are big. But if you see American portion sizes versus Canadian portion sizes, they're even bigger.

Andrew: Have you been to Texas?

Harp: I've never been to Texas. But I'm sure if you order a plate of ribs there you're going to get a lot of food!

Andrew: I've never been to Texas either. I really wanna go but one of the, sort of, unofficial slogans for the state is *everything's bigger in Texas!* So I imagine that things are even bigger down there. If you're listening from Texas, let us know if we're right about this.

Harp: Yup.

Andrew: So another difference between the two countries is the price of going to school. University tuition is crazy different between the two countries.

Harp: Yup. It's astonishing how expensive university can be in the US. And I don't mean even just the private Ivy League schools like Harvard, which I think is something like \$100,000 a year. I mean even just the public state schools, which can run 15, 20, 30 thousand dollars a year. I don't know how people can afford to go to university there.

Andrew: This is one of the things that I'm really happy about being Canadian for, is because our university tuition is pretty cheap.

Harp: Yup and Quebec is very lucky to have some of the cheapest tuition in Canada. Around 3,000 dollars a year or less. And I think the most expensive it would get is maybe \$12,000 a year. And that's for a specialized program, so it's much, much cheaper in Canada.

Andrew: All of my university schooling, my undergrad degree and my master's degree was all cheaper than one year of American university.

Harp: And even, I know a lot of people for example at McGill, who go there, who are Americans. And it is cheaper to pay the international tuition at McGill, than to go to a university in the US.

Andrew: Yeah, no it's wild the difference between the two countries. And I think one of the reasons for this is that Canadian schools are subsidized by the government. So the government is going to pay a portion of every student's tuition, to help bring the cost down.

Harp: Yup, exactly. We don't really have a lot of private universities. It's mainly all publicly funded where the government is helping and I think that's great because I don't know honestly how people can afford it there.

Andrew: It levels the playing field so that students from all sorts of socio-economic backgrounds have the opportunity to attend. And although university is still expensive, it costs a lot for tuition and being a student in general, it is a lot more practical to study in Canada than in America, in my opinion.

Harp: I agree.

Andrew: One more thing that we're going to talk to you about today is stereotypes. And there is the stereotype that exists that Canadians are super polite.

Harp: Yup, that is definitely a stereotype, that Canadians are very, very polite people. And, while I find most Canadians are polite. Every time I go to the US, I find that people are polite there. So I've never really noticed or met a lot of rude people there. I think you're just as likely to find a rude person in Canada as you are in the US. So, I'm not sure about this stereotype being true.

Andrew: Yeah, you know it's funny because Americans always say *oh you Canadians are so polite! Always saying thank you and always saying please* but to me this doesn't strike me as odd. Because when I'm in America I always hear people say thank you and I always hear people say please. So, I don't know where this is coming from. It's an interesting stereotype.

Harp: Yeah it's very interesting. And I don't know. I really do- I think Canadians are very nice, polite people but like I said I think I find most Americans are like that to, so.

Andrew: Yeah, so this is interesting. Now they say with every stereotype that exists there's a maybe of grain of truth to them, but I don't know about this one. I don't see where it's comin' from.

Harp: Nope, me neither.

Andrew: So, here we are, bustin' the stereotype. I like it.

Harp: Yup!

Andrew: These are some of the differences between Canada and the USA that we feel were worth talking about.

Harp: Yup, there are many small little differences but it really depends what part of the US or what part of Canada, so these are some of the main, big ones that people notice.

Andrew: Of course there's many different regions, many different accents, many different cultures that exist both in Canada and the States, so to try and talk about black and white differences as we've been doing is pretty tough. But this was just our opinion of some things we've noticed.

Harp: Yup, exactly. So remember check out our website [culips.com](http://culips.com). That's c-u-l-i-p-s dot com because there you can sign up and become a member!

Andrew: And send us a message or leave us a comment if you've been to Canada and the States and you've noticed something that's different between the two countries, let us know. We'd love to hear your thoughts.

Harp: Yeah, I would love to hear an outside perspective.

Andrew: Definitely! Well thanks for listening everybody and we'll catch ya next time.

Harp: Bye everyone!

## **Detailed Explanation**

### **The USA's different names**

You may have noticed that in this episode, Harp and Andrew refer to the USA by using many different names. There are five common ways to talk about the USA.

The first is to use this initials **USA**. This is short for the United States of America. Most people don't call the country by its full name because it is too long. However, in formal situations it is most appropriate to use the United States of America.

The second way Harp and Andrew refer to the USA is to call it **America**.

A third way to talk about the country is to call it the **US**. This is an abbreviation of the United States.

Another common name is **the States**.



Finally, although Harp and Andrew don't say it in this episode, it is common for Canadians to use the expression **south of the border** when talking about the USA.

As you can see, there are many expressions that are used to talk about the United States of America. They are all common and can be used interchangeably. Except for the expression **south of the border**, which can only be used when you are in Canada.

Here are a couple of dialogue examples with these expressions:

Harvey: What did you do last weekend?

Rose: I went **south of the border** to visit some friends and do a little shopping.

Harvey: Oh cool! Seattle?

Rose: I actually went to Portland. I took the train down there. It's a beautiful trip.

Harvey: sounds great!

Jason: My cousin is coming to visit next week. I'm pretty excited.

Lisa: Oh cool. Where's she from?

Jason: **The states**.

Lisa: Right on. Well, enjoy the visit!

Jason: Thanks!

### The metric and imperial systems

In this episode, Harp and Andrew talk about the **metric** and **imperial** systems and mention that this is a big difference between Canada and the USA.

The **metric** and **imperial** systems are systems of measurement. The **imperial** system is used by the United States and in fact the USA is the only country in the world where the imperial system is the official unit of measurement. Some of the **imperial** system's common units of measurement are the inch, foot, pound, and mile.

On the other hand, the **metric** system is used by many countries throughout the world because it is an internationally agreed upon standard of measurement. Harp tells us, in this episode, that she likes the **metric** system because it is easy to calculate. In fact, this is one of the advantages of the **metric** system. It is a decimal based system which makes it precise and easy to count. Some common metric units are centimeters, kilometers, and kilograms.

### To Buy (accept the truth of something)

In this episode, Andrew tells us a story about getting stopped by a policeman for speeding. Andrew and his friend give an excuse for why they were speeding, but the policeman doesn't **buy** it.

In this context, **buy** means *believe*. In other words, the policeman didn't believe that Andrew and his friend told the truth. He didn't accept that their excuse was sincere.

So, when someone hasn't believed that something is true (like an excuse or a story), we can say that they don't **buy** it.

The opposite situation also applies with this expression -- when someone has believed a false excuse or story, then we can say that they **bought** it.

Using this meaning of **to buy** is informal and casual. It should be avoided in formal situations.

Here are some examples with **to buy**:

Michael: Did you manage to hand your homework in on time?

Nina: No, I still haven't finished it.

Michael: You're going to fail for sure.

Nina: Nah I just told the teacher that I was sick last night and couldn't finish the assignment.

Michael: And did she believe you?

Nina: Yeah, she totally **bought** it.

Michael: That gives you a little extra time, then. Good luck!

Nina: Thanks.

John: How'd your job interview go?

Tina: Not very well.

John: Why's that?

Tina: Well, I actually lied a little bit on my resume to make myself look a little more experienced than I really am.

John: Uh oh.

Tina: Yeah, the interviewer didn't **buy** my story about working for IBM for five years.

John: So I guess you won't be getting a call back?

Tina: Yeah, don't think so.

### **To wake up (realize an error)**

In this episode, Harp and Andrew talk about the metric system vs the imperial system. Andrew doesn't like the imperial system and says *c'mon America, **wake up***, use the metric system.

The expression that Andrew uses is a shortened version of the longer expression **wake up and smell the coffee**. We use this expression whenever we want to warn someone that they are wrong and need to change. In other words, Andrew tells the USA that using the imperial system is a mistake and they should join the rest of the world in using the metric system.

So, if someone does something incorrectly or holds an incorrect viewpoint about something you can tell them to **wake up** and realize that they are wrong and that they need to get real.

Here are a couple of examples with this expression:

Jin: Check out this cool new car I bought last week.

Frieda: Wow, it's awesome. Is it an electric car?

Jin: Yeah it is!

Frieda: Good for you. I wish more people would **wake up** and make the switch to electric vehicles.

Jin: Yeah, I just felt it was the responsible thing to do considering the realities of climate change.

Frieda: Absolutely!

Evan: Are you voting in the election tomorrow?

Rob: Yeah, how about you?

Evan: Probably not. It's too much hassle.

Rob: Man, you need to **wake up**. This whole country will fall apart if citizens don't vote. Let's go together, it will only take a few minutes.

Evan: Ok, fine. Let's meet around 11.

Rob: Perfect!

### To **wisen up**

When you tell someone to **wisen up**, you want them to become smarter, more wise, or more critical. You hope that when they **wisen up**, they will understand the reality of a situation.

For example, in this episode Andrew tells Harp to **wisen up** because she tells people her height in the imperial system, not the metric system. Andrew would like her to start using the metric system because Canada's official measurement system is the metric system.

In other words, when Andrew tells Harp to **wisen up** he hopes she will become aware that the metric system is better than the imperial system. He hopes that Harp will realize the fact that the imperial system is out of date and not as good as the metric system.

The expression **wisen up** was borrowed from the Dutch language. These days, the verb *wisen* (meaning to become wise) is not used very often in English except for in this expression. Many people also use the expression *to wise up*. This has the exact same meaning and can be used interchangeably with **to wisen up**.

So, when you want someone to realize that they have an incorrect viewpoint and you want them to think critically about their opinion, you can tell them to **wisen up**.

In this episode, Andrew jokes with Harp by telling her to **wisen up**. He isn't seriously trying to change her mind about measurement systems. It's a joke because Harp and Andrew are friends. However, if you used **wisen up** with a stranger, it could be offensive. When you use this expression, be careful you don't accidentally offend your conversation partner.

Here are a couple examples with **wisen/wise up**:

Rachel: I wish the mayor would **wisen up** and lower property taxes. The cost of living is so expensive these days, I have a hard time paying my bills.

Geoff: Yeah, I agree with you completely. I would really appreciate a tax cut.

Rachel: I'm going to send an email to the mayor's office and complain.

Geoff: Good idea! It's good to make your opinion known.

Robert: How much longer until you leave for your big trip?

Frank: I leave in two weeks. I'm so excited!

Robert: So you're visiting Europe right. What part are you going to check out?

Frank: I'm going to try and visit every European country!

Robert: Isn't your holiday only a week long? If you think you can see all of Europe in only a week, then you've got to **wisen up**. It's such a big place!

Frank: Yeah, I know. But I really just want to see as much as I can. I'll go back sometime in the future and spend more time in the places I like.

Robert: Ok, well have a nice time!

Frank: Thanks!

### Twist of fate

A **twist of fate** is an unpredictable and random occurrence or event. In this episode, Andrew tells us that being born a Canadian was a **twist of fate**. This is because no one can choose where they want to be born. It is random and uncontrollable, it is a **twist of fate**.

So, any strange or random event can be called a **twist of fate**.

In UK English, it is common to say *quirk of fate*. This has the same meaning as **twist of fate** but is not used in North American English.

This expression's meaning is easy to visualize. If we think about *fate* as something that is predetermined by a higher power, then if fate gets twisted, it becomes something random and unpredictable.

To see how this expression is used, check out these examples:

Bruce: So I heard that you and your ex are getting back together. Is that true?

Wilma: It is! George and I are an item again.

Bruce: Wow, good for you guys. How did it happen?

Wilma: Well by a **twist of fate** we went both went to the same party last month. We started talking and realized that we still had feelings for each other.

Bruce: Cool! I'm really happy for you two.

Jenny: How was your flight?

Juan: Amazing!

Jenny: Oh yeah?

Juan: Yeah I was upgraded to first class! What an experience! I got to sip champagne and relax in the big, comfy chair.

Jenny: Why did they upgrade you?

Juan: No clue! Just a nice **twist of fate**.

Jenny: You're so lucky!

### To rub something in someone's face

Whenever you brag about something repeatedly, you are **rubbing** that thing in **someone's face**. For example, let's say you just got a promotion at work. For the next week, you constantly brag to all of your coworkers about the promotion. You boast about how you'll be getting a raise, a new office, and a longer vacation. When you do this, you are **rubbing it in their faces**. The constant bragging is something your co-workers would be unable to escape because you repeatedly talk about it.

In this episode, Andrew says that he isn't patriotic because he doesn't want to **rub the fact he's Canadian in other people's faces**. In other words, he is proud to be Canadian but doesn't need to brag about it by waving a flag outside of his house or being patriotic.

A related expression is *to rub something in someone's nose*. It has the same meaning as **to rub something in someone's face**. That is, to repeatedly brag about something.

Here are some examples with this expression:

David: Did you have fun bowling last night?

Jasmine: Not really, actually.

David: That's 'cause I beat you 3 games in a row!

Jasmine: Can you stop talking about that? You don't need to keep **rubbing it in my face**.

David: Yeah, you're right. Sorry.

Tanya: This guy at work Pete is so annoying!

Gus: Why's that?

Tanya: He bought a new house last week and he keeps bragging about it. He thinks he's better than everyone else just because of his new house.

Gus: I hate when people **rub stuff in your face** like that. Super annoying.

Tanya: Yeah I 100% agree!

**Crazy (adverb of degree)**

In this episode, Andrew says that the price of university tuition between Canada and the USA is **crazy** different. Here he uses **crazy** as an adverb to modify the adjective *different*.

Usually crazy is used as an adjective which means insane or out of the ordinary but here we see it used in a slang context, as an adverb.

When **crazy** is an adverb, it means *very* or *to a great extent*. So in other words, Andrew says that tuition fees in Canada and the USA are very different.

Technically, when we turn **crazy** into an adverb, we should use the adverbial form *crazily*. However, these days it is common for native speakers of English to not use the -ly adverb ending. So, when you are speaking or writing in an informal situation, it is ok to use **crazy** as an adverb.

Here are some usage examples:

Drew: I'm going to the basketball game tomorrow and I have an extra ticket. Do you want to come along?

Stephanie: Aren't the tickets **crazy** expensive? I don't think I can afford to go.

Drew: Nah, don't worry. I'll just give it to you.

Stephanie: Really? Well in that case, I'll definitely go with you.

Drew: Awesome!

Richard: What do you want to do for dinner?

Lily: Let's check out the new restaurant that opened around the block.

Richard: Oh yeah good idea! I read a review online that said they serve **crazy** delicious food.

Lily: Perfect. Let's go!

**To level the playing field**

When you **level the playing field**, you make things equal for everyone. This is an expression that is used to talk about economics and finance. When there is a **level playing field** all people are treated fairly and equally.

This is a sports idiom. You can visualize a match between two teams that is just about to start. At the beginning of the game, the two teams are equal. They have the same number of players and both teams need to play by the same rules. In other words, there is a **level playing field**. No one is disadvantaged at the start of the game.

So when we talk about **leveling the playing field** we mean that we want to make sure that everyone has equal status or standing.

In this episode Andrew mentions that in Canada, university tuition is subsidized by the government. He argues that this **levels the playing field** because the cheap tuition allows

people from all different socio-economic situations to afford university. In the USA, this is not always the case because high tuition fees sometimes discourage people from attending university.

So, when a situation is equal for everyone, we can say that the **playing field is level**.

Here's a few examples with this expression:

Misha: Do you want to play basketball tomorrow?

Fiona: No, last time it wasn't fun. Remember? Only 5 players came out to play so the teams were unequal.

Misha: Yeah, that wasn't fair. Tomorrow there will be equal teams guaranteed. If there's a **level playing field**, will you join us?

Fiona: Ok, I guess so.

Misha: Sweet. See you tomorrow!

Ruth: Guess what?

Cass: What?

Ruth: I'm taking a computer programming class next month.

Cass: That's so cool!

Ruth: Yeah, everyone will be a beginner so there's a **level playing field**. I'm really excited.

Cass: That's awesome. Good luck!

### A grain of truth

In this episode, Andrew says that there is a **grain of truth** to some stereotypes. Whenever something contains a **grain of truth** it means that is only a little bit true. In other words, Andrew thinks that although stereotypes are mostly inaccurate, sometimes there is a little bit of truth to some of them.

So when something (like a story, rumor, description, etc.) is mostly wrong, incorrect, or inaccurate but there is a little bit of it that is true, then we can say that it contains a **grain of truth**.

A **grain** is a very small piece of a hard material. For example, one piece of sand is called a *grain of sand* and one piece of salt is called a *grain of salt*. So a **grain of truth** is a small amount of truth.

Here are some examples with this expression:

Ruby: I heard a rumour that Mary is leaving the company.

Henry: There's not even a **grain of truth** to that rumour. I just talked to Mary and she said nothing about leaving.

Ruby: That's a relief! I'd be so sad if she left.



Lucie: Would you say you're an outgoing person?

Frank: There's a **grain of truth** to that description but overall I'd say I'm more of an introvert. What about you?

Lucie: Oh I'm absolutely an outgoing, people person. I love meeting new people and socialising.

### Black and white

When something is **black and white** is very clear and simple to understand. In this episode, Andrew tells us that the differences between the USA and Canada are not always **black and white**. That is, the differences can be subtle and not easy to detect. On top of this, because the two countries are so big and have so much regional variation, it is hard to describe differences that apply to everyone and everything.

So, whenever something is described as being **black and white** then it is easy to understand or very easy to follow. The good aspects of that thing are easy to see, and the negative aspects are also easy to see.

This expression is mostly used when talking about issues, debates, or making decisions.

To see how to use **black and white** in a sentence, check out the following dialogue examples:

Hyojin: Who are you going to vote for in the upcoming election?

Chelsea: I'm not sure. To me it isn't **black and white**. I think all of the candidates have some strong qualities and some weaknesses as well.

Hyojin: I agree with you. I'm undecided about who I want to vote for too.

Brock: What do you think about the issue of gun control in the USA?

James: I have pretty strong feelings about this issue. I know a lot of people will disagree with me but I think the issue is **black and white**.

Brock: How so?

James: I'm completely against violence so I think guns should be banned. They do no good, in my opinion.

Brock: Interesting viewpoint! I don't completely agree with you but I respect your opinion.

### To catch someone later / next time

Andrew ends this episode by saying **catch ya next time**. This is a casual way to say goodbye. When you use the expression **catch you later / next time** it implies that you will see and talk to that person sometime in the near future. Andrew uses this goodbye at the end of the episode because he knows he will record more podcasts in the future and will be talking to Culips listeners again soon.

So, you can use the goodbye **catch someone later / next time** as a casual farewell whenever you know that you will see that person again sometime soon.



Here are some examples with this expression:

Charlie: I'd love to stay and chat with you some more but I have to leave now or I'll be late for work.

Ross: Ok no problem, **catch you later**.

Charlie: Bye.

Angela: Wow what a great workout!

Esther: Yeah, I love our instructor. She really knows how to lead an aerobics class!

Angela: Are you going to come to the gym next week too?

Esther: You bet!

Angela: Alright, I'll **catch you next week** then!

Esther: For sure, take care!

## Quiz

1. If you make an excuse and someone believes it, what has person done?

- a) sold it
- b) bought it
- c) traded it
- d) exchanged it

2. Which of the following is NOT a name for the USA?

- a) the Republic
- b) the States
- c) America
- d) USA

3. If a situation is equal for everyone, we can describe the situation as...

- a) a level plane
- b) an imbalanced pitch
- c) a level playing field
- d) a crooked track

4. In this episode, Andrew and Harp talk about the differences between Canadian and American spelling. What letter is sometimes left out of words in American spelling?

- a) u
- b) o

- c) e
- d) a

**5. When a story is only partially true, we can say that it contains...**

- a) heaps of truth
- b) bombs of truth
- c) particles of truth
- d) grains of truth

**6. What do you do when you *rub something in someone's face*?**

- a) give away a secret
- b) wash another person's face for them
- c) repeatedly brag about something
- d) avoid talking about something directly

**7. If an issue is easy to understand and the positive and negative points are easy to see, then we can describe the issue as....**

- a) white and red
- b) black and blue
- c) light and dark
- d) black and white

**8. What reason does Andrew give for not being patriotic?**

- a) he thinks the Canadian flag is unattractive
- b) being born in Canada was a twist of fate
- c) he isn't proud of Canada
- d) he doesn't give a reason because he is patriotic

**9. What is a difference between Canada and the USA that Harp and Andrew DON'T discuss?**

- a) university tuition
- b) measurement systems
- c) portion sizes
- d) political systems

**Answers:**

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