

Chatterbox #171 – Video games

Episode description

Video games aren't just for kids anymore! Join Andrew and Morag for this chatterbox episode as they have a natural conversation about one of the biggest time sinks—video games.

Fun fact

Video games have come very far since they first appeared on the scene in the late 1950s, even incorporating artificial intelligence to simulate human-like intelligence and flexibility in non-player characters or avatars.

For instance, through a combination of sensors and artificial intelligence, Milo, unveiled several years ago as a technology demo, is a character that can respond to questions and learn like a real child.

Expressions included in the learning materials

- A 180
- An RPG
- A time sink
- To be suckered into something
- To get your hands on something



Transcript

Note: The words and expressions that appear in **bold text** within the transcript are discussed in more detail in the Detailed Explanations section that follows the transcript.

Andrew: Hi, I'm Andrew.

Morag: And I'm Morag.

Andrew: And you are listening to Culips.

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Andrew: Hey, Morag. How's it going?

Morag: Pretty darn well. How are you doing, Andrew?

Andrew: I'm doing pretty well. You know, I'm on vacation right now, so my life is pretty stress-free and relaxed, but what's new with you?

Morag: Not too much, except I have been engaging in some activities that run right along with our theme today of video games.

Andrew: Oh, so does that mean you have been playing a lot of video games?

Morag: I have. I kinda **got suckered in earlier in the month by a sale**, and I bought *The Sims 4*. I don't know if many of our listeners will have played *The Sims* games; they've sold extremely well, all of them, but, uh, they are **a time sink**.

Andrew: Well, if you haven't guessed by now, our topic for today is video games. So Morag and I are, I guess you could say, both gamers, but maybe with different levels of interest in video games. But we're going to do a Chatterbox episode, where we have a natural conversation about video games and our experiences with them. And today, Morag, I want to start the episode by asking you about your first experiences with video games. How did you get into gaming?

Morag: Well, it's actually kind of funny. I wasn't allowed to play games for a while, and it's not by my parents. It's just because I was a tomboy, and I hung out with boys, but they wouldn't let me play games, usually, 'cause I was a girl.

Andrew: Mmm, that is weird.

Morag: I spent a lot of time watching boys play games, and I really wanted to play. Like, I spent hours watching my guy friends when I was a kid, playing, like, *Duke Nukem 3D* or *Doom*, or all of those shooters.

Andrew: *Wolfenstein 3D*.

Morag: *Wolfenstein*, yup. But I didn't have any gaming capacity when I was a kid, and so I just watched other people, but was so interested in it that, as soon as I was able to play games for myself, I got really into it.

Andrew: So what was the first game then that you were able to play?

Morag: I remember I talked my mom into renting an N64 with the *Legend of Zelda: Ocarina of Time*.

Andrew: One of my favourite games ever.

Morag: It's so good, right?

Andrew: It's so good.

Morag: But I never finished it when I was a kid because, um, I didn't own the console. We just had to rent it, so I played the first bit of that game so many times, any time I rented it. But that was my first taste.

Andrew: OK.

Morag: So I still really love third-person **RPGs** a lot.

Andrew: Yeah, it's interesting here that you're talking about renting a console ...

Morag: Mmhmm.

Andrew: Because this is something you can't do anymore.

Morag: No.

Andrew: But yeah, when we were younger, you could go to a video rental store, and rent a console or rent video games. And I would rent video games almost every weekend.

Morag: Mmhmm.

Andrew: And it was great. But, like you said, if you rented **an RPG** or a longer game, you could never finish it.

Morag: It was quite frustrating. I remember I finally finished the *Ocarina of Time* when I was 16 ...

Andrew: Mmhmm.

Morag: And I started playing it when I was eight.

Andrew: Oh, my gosh.

Morag: I know, right?

Andrew: The 8-year saga.

Morag: Eight years! But it was so satisfying when I finally beat that game. Oh, my God, it was one of the best feelings.

Andrew: And then did you move on to *Majora's Mask*?

Morag: Uh, yeah, I never actually **got my hands on that one**, except for renting. So, oh well.

Andrew: One day.

Morag: So what was your first experience with video games, Andrew?

Andrew: I guess I played games a lot when I was younger. I remember having the original Nintendo Entertainment System, the NES.

Morag: Ooh!

Andrew: And I remember playing *Mario Bros.* on an NES, hooked up to my dad's computer monitor, which was only a black and orange display. So ...

Morag: Black and orange?

Andrew: Yeah, before computers ...

Morag: I remember black and green.

Andrew: Yeah, there was black and green too. I believe this one was black and orange.

Morag: Oh, wow.

Andrew: So I mean this is really old school. This is a long time ago.

Morag: Super old school.

- Andrew: Yeah. So that was my first memory of playing Nintendo. But then, yeah, I moved on to the Super Nintendo, SNES. I also had a Nintendo 64.
- Morag: Mmhmm.
- Andrew: Um, and when I was at the peak of my gaming life, I saved up all my money, and on September 9th, 1999—9/9/99—I bought a Dreamcast.
- Morag: Mmhmm.
- Andrew: This is when the Dreamcast launched.
- Morag: Oh, no way.
- Andrew: And I got into that pretty heavily. This was sort of, like, the new generation of 3D video gaming.
- Morag: You, uh ... You backed the wrong horse.
- Andrew: And, yeah, in the end, I did, but I still have a fondness ...
- Morag: Yeah, yeah.
- Andrew: For the Dreamcast.
- Morag: That's funny 'cause that was one of the ones that I totally skipped over. My gaming life was early PC stuff and the N64, and then went directly into the Xbox 360.
- Andrew: Hmm, yeah. So we both kind of skipped over the PlayStation.
- Morag: And we're also basically talking about consoles here instead of PC.
- Andrew: Mmhmm.
- Morag: Because that is a major war, but I think I have more console experience than PC. It sounds like you do too.
- Andrew: I did play, uh, strategy games, especially a title called *Age of Empires* and the sequel, *Age of Empires II*. I played those a ton, and I loved playing online with my friends. There was a Microsoft gaming site called The Zone, and you could log into The Zone and play with eight people. So this was kind of early internet ...
- Morag: Wow!
- Andrew: Massive multiplayer, I mean, only eight people, but it was fun. And this was in the dial-up days, so I remember occasionally my mom getting very angry

at me when she wanted to use the phone because these games would go on for 2 or 3 hours. She'd want to use the phone, and she'd pick up the phone to use it, and I would get disconnected from the game. So everybody was angry. My mom was angry that I was hogging the phone line. I was angry that I'd get disconnected from the game. So what I'd end up doing is just staying up, as teenagers do, really late at night, playing when nobody needed to call us and nobody needed to use the phone.

Morag: That's quite funny. Those are called RTSs, right? Real-time strategy?

Andrew: Exactly, yes.

Morag: Yeah, and I played *Age of Mythology*, which I think was the same ... Might have been the same developer.

Andrew: Yes, related title.

Morag: A related title. So I played those, but that was post-dial-up. And instead of annoying my mom, I would actually be on the phone with my friend, and we'd play, like, 2v2 matches. I'm pretty sure.

Andrew: Mmhmm.

Morag: If I'm remembering this correctly. I might be entirely wrong. But anyway, we would be on the phone, and we would team up against people because the people that we were playing against wouldn't be able to contact each other 'cause they didn't have voice chat yet.

Andrew: Right, right, right.

Morag: But we did. So yeah, that was pretty awesome.

Andrew: Yeah, that's ... You were cheating, sneaky player.

Morag: Super cheating, yeah. Ah, man, well, this has been a nice little trip down memory lane, but I do want to ask, what are you playing now, Andrew?

Andrew: Yeah, so now I could say that my gaming habits have pulled a **180**, and are completely different because I don't really play video games anymore. And it's not because I don't want to. It's because I'm afraid that they will eat up all of my time if I open that Pandora's box, so to speak. But I do play one specific type of video game, and this is chess. I play internet chess frequently.

Morag: That's pretty cool. Strategy games are fantastic to play online. The one that I play the most these days would probably be *Hearthstone*.

Andrew: OK. What is that?

- Morag: *Hearthstone* is a Blizzard game. You know, the same people who did *Warcraft* and *World of Warcraft* and *StarCraft*, and all that.
- Andrew: Yeah.
- Morag: And it is a collectible card game.
- Andrew: Oh, OK.
- Morag: Sometimes, depending on what you're playing, games can last a long time, but they'll never really go for more than half an hour, or something like that, and that's if you're playing a very slow kind of deck. So it's something kind of like *Magic: The Gathering*, where you, you know, you have ... You build a deck, and you respond to what your opponent is playing, but it's extremely simplified. And, um, it's much more condensed, and there's less choice about how you're actually going to play. But it's really fun and casual, and you also play online against people. So it's pretty great.
- Andrew: OK, so now it's the summer.
- Morag: Mmhmm.
- Andrew: We're recording this in the summer, and would you say that your gaming habits are affected by the seasons? Are you ... Like, I think for me, I play a lot more chess in the winter when I can't go outside, and in the summer, it kind of tapers off a little bit. Is that the same for you?
- Morag: It's totally the same for me. I play sometimes longer in the summer because I am an incredibly pale person, and I do not like being in direct sunlight. So sometimes, I will hide inside playing video games when it's really, really bright and sunny outside for a couple of hours.
- Andrew: OK, yeah.
- Morag: But most of the time, I like to be outside more in the summer, you know, riding bikes and taking walks, and going for hikes, and that kind of stuff. So definitely, when it's super cold and nasty outside, I will spend way more time playing video games.
- Andrew: That makes sense. I think that's a natural thing to do.
- Morag: Mmhmm, I think that the winter feels like focus time. I think that's just from being in the school system for so long. It's like winter is time to exercise your brain.
- Andrew: Yeah. Right, right.
- Morag: So and summer is time to exercise your body. So ...

Andrew: There you go. Yeah.

Morag: Yeah.

Andrew: You know, in doing some research for this episode, I came across a fact that really surprised me.

Morag: Mmhmm.

Andrew: Because I read that the average male game player is 35 years old.

Morag: Mmhmm.

Andrew: And the average female player is 43 years old.

Morag: Mmhmm.

Andrew: And this kind of just blew away this notion that I had that only kids played video games, and in fact, it looks like the opposite. It's mostly adults, and in fact, adults that are older than me.

Morag: Yeah, I don't know if it's going to turn into a generational thing so much. But there's definitely a generation of people that grew up with video games as a part of their lives, socially in a lot of ways, and that never really stopped playing.

Andrew: Mmhmm.

Morag: Because they're very foundational. It's a lot of the sort of culture that we had.

Andrew: Yeah. Anyways, that was a really surprising fact to me.

Morag: Yeah. Well, 'cause I mean it's not just for kids. They're interesting pieces of art and media. I don't know. Obviously, I really like them.

Andrew: Well, one thing I'm really excited about, actually, is the future of video gaming 'cause I feel ...

Morag: Mmhmm.

Andrew: That we are sort of on the edge of some big breakthroughs that will just make gaming a completely different experience than it is now.

Morag: Hmm.

Andrew: And so I'm curious, I think maybe you have a bit more expertise in this area of video games.

- Morag: Mmhmm.
- Andrew: But what are your predictions for the future of gaming?
- Morag: Well, one of the things that I've been pretty fascinated to watch, over say the past 10 years, is the rise of mobile gaming.
- Andrew: OK.
- Morag: That is a huge market, and so many more people are playing casual games or invested with small amounts of time on games on their phone. So instead of sitting down for the traditional 30-, to 60-, to a 100-hour game, they're playing something that is sort of a continuous small period of time experience. And I think that just seems to be growing and growing and growing. And I don't know if that's good or bad, but I definitely think that that's the way a lot of games are going.
- Andrew: Yeah. It seems like, you know, all you have to do it ride a bus to look at ...
- Morag: Mmhmm.
- Andrew: How many people are playing video games on their phone, to know that a lot of people do play games on mobile devices, for sure.
- Morag: Yeah. There's so much less of a sunk cost in it. You know? Like, you don't have to buy the \$400 console or the \$1,500 gaming PC.
- Andrew: Yeah, definitely.
- Morag: So it's just much more accessible. Yeah, and I think, seeing how many games there are now, it seems to be it's much easier to produce them. And I think that's honestly where a lot of things are going to be focused.
- Andrew: I think you're right about that. And one of the areas that I'm excited about for the future is virtual reality.
- Morag: Mmhmm.
- Andrew: And being able to actually enter a game. Like, if I think about Zelda—that we talked about at the top of the show—if I could enter Hyrule, you know, and live in that environment and sort of be Zelda, I think that would be such a cool, cool thing.
- Morag: There is a lot of really cool stuff for VR that is hopefully around the corner. I just know that I would be more excited about it if it didn't kind of make me feel sick to wear a headset.
- Andrew: Hmm.

- Morag: Because I know that's a problem.
- Andrew: I guess I would have to try it and see how it feels. But I haven't tried it for myself, so I don't know personally.
- Morag: I think they're gonna get a lot better at it. It's a whole new technical problem ...
- Andrew: Mmhmm.
- Morag: About how to make it feel like you're actually in that space 'cause you need to trick your eyes and trick your brain ...
- Andrew: Mmhmm.
- Morag: Into seeing enough depth.
- Andrew: Mmhmm.
- Morag: Because, otherwise, you're just really confusing your senses. But the possibilities for VR are so cool. You're right; to be able to be inside those worlds, to really feel like you are taking part in that, like, to have it be your whole sensory experience, would be so cool.
- Andrew: Very, very cool. Yeah.
- Morag: Mmhmm.
- Andrew: And so I'll ask you one last question.
- Morag: Mmhmm.
- Andrew: Is there anything that worries you about the future of gaming?
- Morag: Um, well, one thing, speaking as a woman who started out my gaming experience not always being able to play games, is there ... It is a massively, massively male-dominated thing.
- Andrew: Mmhmm.
- Morag: And I really hope that that can change, or that the general community of gamers becomes a little bit more accepting of women in their midst because it's ... Especially some of the online communities around some of the games that I love are pretty weird about girls. So I really hope that changes.
- Andrew: Yeah, I agree. I think there needs to be a culture change within the gaming community.

- Morag: Mmhmm.
- Andrew: Because it is sometimes not the friendliest place to certain people.
- Morag: But I hope that, as games continue to become more and more normal for adults in our society, that, hopefully, it will become more inclusive as well. That's my honest hope.
- Andrew: Yeah. Well, I hope for the same thing.
- Morag: Yeah.
- Andrew: I think that would be a positive change ...
- Morag: Yeah.
- Andrew: For the gaming world.
- Morag: Totally.
- Andrew: Definitely.
- Morag: Well, Andrew, I think that's all the time we have for today.
- Andrew: Yeah. I think so. But before we go, I want to remind everybody to check out our website, Culips.com. That's C-U-L-I-P-S.com. Because it's the place where you can learn about becoming a Culips member.
- Morag: Yeah, I definitely think that's a good idea because, I mean, studying English is probably not as fun as playing video games, but if you want to maximize your English studies, a Culips membership can really help with that.
- Andrew: Yeah, totally. I think that using the learning materials while listening to our podcast is a great way to study. And so in the learning materials, you'll get transcripts, detailed explanations of the key expressions and vocabulary you hear us use, and quizzes for each episode.
- Morag: Yeah. So that's actually pretty fun. So I mean I love quizzes. They're games, right? So I think you guys ...
- Andrew: Yeah, it's another type of game.
- Morag: Yeah, so I think you guys should definitely check out Culips.com to learn about becoming a Culips member.
- Andrew: Yeah. And so today, we have a special announcement to make because we're going to give away a 6-month Culips membership for free.

- Morag: Oh, my God! That's super exciting. So all you have to do is head on over to our Facebook page at facebook.com/culipspodcast, and leave a comment. Just tell us about your gaming habits. We wanna know what you like to do.
- Andrew: Yeah. Are you a gamer? What's your favourite video game, or do you hate video games? I don't know. Anything is cool. Just leave us a comment, and you'll be automatically entered to win.
- Morag: Thanks for listening everybody, and we'll be back soon with another Culips episode.
- Andrew: Bye.
- Morag: Bye.

Detailed Explanations

A 180

The expression **a 180** means the sudden reversal of an opinion, an action, or a plan. The term comes from geometry, in which **180** degrees represents half of a circle (semicircle). Imagine that you're walking in a straight line. If you turn **180** degrees, you would be facing the opposite direction. So if your opinion, action, or plan has changed direction and is the opposite of what it used to be, it has changed **180** degrees, or you have pulled or done **a 180**.

A 180 is often preceded by the verbs *to pull* or *to do*. For example, in this episode, Andrew mentions that his "gaming habits have pulled **a 180**" in the last few years. In other words, Andrew used to play a lot of video games, but now, he doesn't play any video games. So because his video game habits are the opposite of what they used to be, going from playing frequently to not playing at all, we can say, "Andrew has done **a 180** with video games."

Here are a couple more examples with **a 180**:

Kurt:	Lauren, have you seen Dave lately?
Lauren:	Dave from high school? The one who used to have a Mohawk and yell about the school turning us all into mindless tools of the establishment?
Kurt:	That's the one! I ran into him a few days ago. He has completely pulled a 180 . He was wearing a suit and walking into a law office downtown. As it turns out, he's a corporate lawyer now!
Lauren:	That's crazy!

Paul:	Where do you want to go for lunch?
Linda:	I was thinking of just hitting up the diner down the street. I haven't been there in a long time, but the food is so good!
Paul:	I think we should go somewhere else.
Linda:	Why?
Paul:	That place has done a 180 . They used to have cheap food, big portions, and a cozy atmosphere. However, they remodelled a little while ago, and now, the food is expensive, the portions are tiny, and it's full of hipsters.

An RPG

When talking about video games, **RPG** is an initialism for *role-playing game*. The term comes from tabletop games, such as *Dungeons & Dragons*, where players assume the role of a character when playing the game. In these types of games, the players speak for their characters and describe their actions through speech.

In a **video game RPG**, the players take control of a character or a group of characters in a well-defined imaginary world. While there are many different sub-categories of **RPGs**, they all involve the players experiencing the world of the game from the position of a character or group of characters.

In this episode, Morag mentions that she loves third-person **RPGs**, like the *Legend of Zelda*. In this series, players take control of one character, Link, who is their avatar in the game world.

Playing video games in English can be a fun way to practice your language and conversational skills. If you are not accustomed to playing video games, don't be discouraged if some of the vocabulary in the games is confusing. The more often you play, the easier it will become!

Here are a couple more examples with **an RPG**:

Una:	My little brother is really into video games. I'm trying to figure out what to buy him for his birthday. Can you help me?
Harold:	Do you know what type of games he likes?
Una:	He said that he likes RPGs .
Harold:	If he has a PS4 and hasn't played it already, you should get him <i>The Witcher 3: Wild Hunt</i> . It's amazing!

Betty:	I didn't know that you played <i>Hearthstone: Heroes of Warcraft</i> .
Steve:	Of course! It's so much fun! Why? Do you not like it?
Betty:	I only enjoy hard-core high-fantasy RPGs , like <i>Dark Souls</i> .
Steve:	You should stop being such a snob! Casual games can be just as fun.

A time sink

A time sink is any activity that takes up a lot of your time and you get very little in return. In other words, **a time sink** is an activity that is considered a waste of time. People often talk about video games being **time sinks** because they take a long time to finish, and when you're done, you don't have anything to show for all the time you've spent playing.

However, many **time sinks** are also fun! Watching movies or TV could be called **a time sink**, but it can also be fun and relaxing. You can also call an activity **a time sink** if it was supposed to be or was productive, but it took up more time than it was worth. For instance, if you organized a bake sale to raise money for a charity, and you ended up raising very little money, you could say, "The bake sale was **a time sink**."

Here are a couple more examples with **a time sink**:

Joe:	How was your weekend?
Sarah:	Not bad, but I didn't have time to relax.
Joe:	How come?
Sarah:	My air conditioner broke on Thursday, and without it, my apartment is unbearably hot. I didn't want to spend money on having a repair guy come to the house, so I decided to fix it myself.
Joe:	That sounds like it would be difficult!
Sarah:	Trying to fix that air conditioner was a real time sink . I spent hours researching the problem, going to the hardware store to get the parts I needed, and trying to fix it. In the end, it didn't work! I still had to call in someone to repair it.
Joe:	What a pain!

Jesse:	Hey Lina. What game are you playing? It looks cool.
Lina:	Oh this? It's <i>World of Warcraft</i> . It's really fun, but be careful; it's a huge time sink . I wouldn't recommend getting into it unless you have a lot of free time.
Jesse:	Thanks for the warning! Maybe I'll stay away.
Lina:	Wise decision.

To be suckered into something

To be suckered into something is an informal, North American phrase that means to be persuaded or tricked into doing something. A *sucker* is a person who is easy to trick or deceive. They are overly trusting and gullible, believing almost everything they are told. So when you are **suckered into something**, you are turned into a sucker, either by believing something that's not true or by being exploited.

In this episode, Morag mentions that she was **suckered into buying a video game** because it was on sale. In this case, she wasn't actually deceived—the video game really was on sale. However, she was persuaded to buy something she didn't need because the sale made it seem like she was getting a good deal.

Here are a couple more examples with ***to be suckered into something***:

Meredith:	Nice shoes, Adam!
Adam:	Thanks, but I regret buying them.
Meredith:	Why?
Adam:	They're pretty flimsy, and not practical. I was looking for good running shoes for the gym, and I got suckered into buying these shoes instead. The salesman was just so convincing!
Meredith:	At least you ended up with a nice-looking pair of shoes!

Tina:	You look pretty tired. Are you OK?
Nick:	I'm all right. I've just been working too much!
Tina:	I thought you had dropped a couple of your shifts at work?
Nick:	I did! But, last week, one of my co-workers suckered me into taking three of his shifts . He said he had family emergency and had to visit his hometown. It turns out he was just going on vacation!
Tina:	That sucks! I hate when people take advantage of others.

To get your hands on something

The expression **to get your hands on something** means to find and acquire something. It usually includes the process of discovering and procuring something, whether for a short period of time or for a long period of time. You can use **to get your hands on something** to talk about something that you borrowed or purchased.

In this episode, Morag mentions that she never **got her hands on a particular game**. In other words, she never owned or played that particular game.

Here are a couple more examples with **to get your hands on something**:

Yannick:	Your new apartment is looking awesome! I can't believe you've only been here for a week.
Geraldine:	That's very sweet of you to say, but I'm still unhappy with the kitchen.
Yannick:	Why? It looks like a perfectly functional kitchen to me.
Geraldine:	I hate this old table! It ruins the room. I've been trying to get my hands on a new kitchen table for a week now, but I just can't find one!
Yannick:	Dude, you need to relax. Your apartment looks 10 times better than mine, and I've been living in my apartment for 2 years.

Daphne:	Guess what?
Stacey:	What?
Daphne:	I finally got my hands on tickets to see Jerry Seinfeld!
Stacey:	You're so lucky! By the time that I heard he was coming to town, his show was sold out. His show's supposed to be hilarious. My sister saw him in Edmonton, and said that her stomach hurt from laughing so much.
Daphne:	I can't wait! Mike said he is not sure if he has a business trip that week. If he can't come, do you want to come with me?
Stacey:	Absolutely!

Quiz

1. When talking about video games, what does *RPG* stand for?

- a) reverie-product game
- b) random-puzzle game
- c) rhythm-percussion game
- d) role-playing game

2. What does the expression *a 180* mean?

- a) to reverse an opinion
- b) to agree with an opinion
- c) to be indecisive about a plan
- d) to make a plan

3. A sucker is someone who is _____.

- a) easily fooled
- b) hesitant
- c) suspicious
- d) difficult to influence

4. Jordan collects baseball cards, and he got his hands on a rare Babe Ruth card. In other words, Jordan _____.

- a) touched the Babe Ruth card
- b) saw the Babe Ruth card in a museum
- c) learned that the Babe Ruth card is worth a lot of money
- d) found and acquired the Babe Ruth card

5. What is a time sink?

- a) an activity that wastes time
- b) an activity that is difficult to finish
- c) an activity that is difficult to start
- d) an activity that saves time

Quiz Answers

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

Episode credits

Hosts: Andrew Bates and Morag St.Clair
Episode preparation/research: Andrew Bates
Audio editor: Andrew Bates
Transcription: Transcript Heroes Transcription Services
Learning materials writer: Morag St.Clair
English editor: Stephanie Minelga
Webmaster: Hussain Mohammed
Business manager: Tsuyoshi Kaneshima
Project manager: Jessica Cox