

## Chatterbox #182 – Nicknames

### Episode description

Are you ready for a good laugh? If so, then this episode is for you. Join Andrew and Suzanne for this fun-filled Chatterbox episode as they share some of their former and unfortunate nicknames!

### Fun fact

A pet name, or a hypocorism, means a nickname of affection. It is an informal name that a person uses for someone else to express endearment, love, or intimacy.

### Expressions included in the learning materials

- A nickname
- A dumbo
- A vibe/to vibe
- To switch it up
- To push [someone's] buttons



## Transcript

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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.

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Andrew: Hello everyone. My name is Andrew.

Suzanne: And I'm Suzanne.

Andrew: And we are back with another Culips episode.

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Andrew: Hey, Suzanne. How are you today?

Suzanne: Hey, Andrew. I'm well. How are you?

Andrew: I'm doing pretty well, yeah. Thanks.

Suzanne: It's nighttime for you, right?

Andrew: Yeah. You and I are on opposite sides of the world. So it's nighttime for me and it's morning for you. And thanks to the power of the internet, we can record this podcast for all our listeners.

Suzanne: Yes. And normally I have my coffee with me when we record in the morning. But today I decided **to switch it up**.

Andrew: **Switch it up?**

Suzanne: Yeah.

Andrew: So you're drinking orange juice?

Suzanne: Oh no. I'm not a big juice fan.

Andrew: No? No juice?

Suzanne: I don't really **vibe** on the juice.

Andrew: OK.

Suzanne: It's too sweet, I think.

Andrew: Fair enough. So milk?

Suzanne: Milk? No. I drink maybe almond milk.

Andrew: OK.

Suzanne: But just like in, you know, cereal or something. One more guess, you have one more guess.

Andrew: Uh, well, it's not coffee, it's not juice, it's not milk. It must be tea.

Suzanne: Ding! Ding! Ding! Ding! Yes, sir.

Andrew: Nice.

Suzanne: I'm drinking tea, caffeinated tea. So it has caffeine in it, but it's definitely not as strong as the coffee.

Andrew: Right on. Well, Suzanne, I think we should move on to today's episode. Today we're doing a Chatterbox episode, and this is where we chat. We have a natural conversation about an interesting topic.

So today, Suzanne, what is our topic?

Suzanne: Today, Andrew, we're going to talk about **nicknames**.

Andrew: **Nicknames**. I love it.

Suzanne: Yeah!

Andrew: What is a **nickname**?

Suzanne: **A nickname** is a shortened version of your name.

Andrew: Mmhmm.

Suzanne: For example, my name is Suzanne but a lot of my friends just like to call me Sue.

Andrew: Mmhmm, so this is your **nickname**?

Suzanne: That's a **nickname**. But sometimes a **nickname** can be like a quirky, short name that has nothing to do with your name, but maybe has to do with a character trait about you. Maybe you like to wear blue shirts all the time, and so some people start calling you a Smurf.

- Andrew: Or the Blue Shirt Guy.
- Suzanne: Exactly.
- Andrew: Yeah, that's exactly it. And I've found that, in my life, I had different **nicknames** throughout different stages of my life.
- Suzanne: Yeah?
- Andrew: When I was a kid, I had a certain **nickname**, and now that I'm older, I have different **nicknames** and different groups of friends call me different things.
- But let's start right at the very beginning, when we were kids.
- Suzanne: Yeah, yeah.
- Andrew: I'm curious. Did you have **a nickname** when you were a kid?
- Suzanne: Yes. When I was a kid I was called Sue or Susie Q.
- Andrew: Susie Q.
- Suzanne: Susie Q. And sometimes they would just shorten it to Q.
- Andrew: Ah.
- Suzanne: So some people, some aunts and uncles of mine, called me Q.
- Andrew: Interesting.
- Suzanne: Isn't that funny?
- Andrew: Many people who have your name, or maybe they're named Susan or just Sue, for some reason it's common to give them the **nickname** Susie Q. And I have no idea why we call people named Sue Susie Q. Do you have any idea?
- Suzanne: Well, it's an interesting question, Andrew. But a little research revealed that Susie Q was actually a dance that was introduced in 1936. So it was popular way back in the day. And it came from a famous dance club called The Cotton Club in New York City. And it's a dance of African-American origin.
- Andrew: Cool. So your **nickname** is originally a dance. That's so cool.
- Suzanne: Yeah, that's pretty cool. Because, actually, I was a dancer as kid, so that makes a lot of sense.

- Andrew: Very fitting.
- Suzanne: Yeah. And how about you, Andrew? What was your **nickname** as a kid?
- Andrew: Well, my **nickname** wasn't as cool as yours. Actually, it made me a little sad because—
- Suzanne: Oh no!
- Andrew: When I was a kid, I had very big ears. And I still think that I have big ears. Well, some people say I just have a small head and my ears are regular size. I don't know which is true.
- Suzanne: I have never noticed. I would never look at you, Andrew, and think, "Oh, that guy's got big ears," so.
- Andrew: Well, some of my friends did when I was younger. And they would call me **Dumbo**.
- Suzanne: Oh! Oh, my gosh. Now, for our listeners, maybe explain what **Dumbo** is?
- Andrew: Right. So **Dumbo** is the name of a Disney movie that also is pretty old. It's probably from the '50s or '60s, and it was about an elephant with very big ears, **Dumbo** the Elephant. So because I also had big ears, they would call me **Dumbo**.
- Suzanne: Just like the elephant.
- Andrew: Just like the elephant, yeah.
- Suzanne: But **Dumbo** also ... Those big ears allowed him to fly, right?
- Andrew: It's true. Yeah, he was able to fly. Something I was never able to do with my ears.
- Suzanne: Well, I guess I meant that they became an asset for **Dumbo**, so.
- Andrew: Hmm, it's very true. So there's—
- Suzanne: You know?
- Andrew: A good aspect to this story.
- Suzanne: Yeah. You're a good listener.
- Andrew: There we go. OK, let's bring it up to the modern time, these days.
- Suzanne: OK.

Andrew: Do people still call you Q?

Suzanne: No, they don't. In college, I was called Sue Bee. Sue Bee like the honey. There is a brand of honey that you can put in your tea. It's a sweetener, and the bottle is a shape of a bear, and it's called Sue Bee Honey. And this was **a nickname** at university.

At one point, people shortened that to Bee, just to Bee.

Andrew: OK.

Suzanne: Every time I get **a nickname**, they dropped off the Sue.

Andrew: Right.

Suzanne: And they go for the other one. So a lot of my old college friends will still call me, "Hey, Bee." Hey, Bee, even though I don't have a B in my name at all.

And then a more recent one, I was doing a show—

Andrew: Mmhmm.

Suzanne: With one of my best friends in New York, and our group name was Sukee and the DJ.

Andrew: Sukee and the DJ.

Suzanne: Yeah. And I was Sukee.

Andrew: OK.

Suzanne: Because some people called me Sukee. That was **a nickname**.

Andrew: OK.

Suzanne: And then it shortened that to Suke.

Andrew: Suke?

Suzanne: Suke. So people would say, "Hey, Suke, hey, Suke." It's weird.

Andrew: Suzanne, you have some very complicated **nicknames**.

Suzanne: Right? They're weird. They're very weird.

Andrew: All of them have two stages.

Suzanne: Yeah.

- Andrew: I guess your friends are really lazy and they want to make it as easy as possible to call you something.
- Suzanne: I don't know. I find it endearing because I feel like it becomes a slang word, you know?
- Andrew: Yeah
- Suzanne: You know how when we speak ... Instead of saying, "Oh yeah, totally. Totally, I know what you mean," sometimes I'll say, "Yeah, totes, totes."
- Andrew: Mmhmm.
- Suzanne: It's like it becomes part of the vernacular, part of the everyday vocabulary. So I find it OK.
- Andrew: I like it. I think both of those are good **nicknames**.
- Suzanne: Thanks. Yeah, they're fun.
- Andrew: Yeah.
- Suzanne: And what about yours, more current **nicknames**?
- Andrew: Yeah, so my **nicknames** now are more variations of my name.
- Suzanne: OK.
- Andrew: Because ... Well, my name is Andrew, two syllables, An-drew.
- Suzanne: Right.
- Andrew: But it's easier to just cut this into one syllable, I think. So most of my family calls me Drew, just Drew.
- Suzanne: OK. That's cool.
- Andrew: Actually, to be honest, when I was an elementary school student I was called Drew sometimes also. Because Andrew is a very popular name, and there were two Andrews in my class. Another student also had the same name.
- Suzanne: OK.
- Andrew: So he was Andrew and I was Drew. This is how we would distinguish ourselves.
- Suzanne: Nice.

- Andrew: My family calls me Drew, but a lot of my friends call me Andy.
- Suzanne: Oh!
- Andrew: From that, from Andy, some of my friends ... Some of my close friends, you can **push the buttons of your close friends** and get away with it, right?
- Suzanne: Yeah.
- Andrew: Maybe you can't do that to acquaintances or people you don't know well, but your closest friends you can tease them a bit. So some of my closest friends call me Blandy.
- Suzanne: No way!
- Andrew: They mix the two words together, bland and Andy.
- Suzanne: Why would they say that about you?
- Andrew: I ... I think they know that I want to be a funny person, and if I'm acting kind of boring they can call me Blandy.
- Suzanne: It's really funny, just because it's ... It's a funny word, you know? Like ...
- Andrew: So, yeah, occasionally I get called this and it always makes me laugh and try to be an entertaining and funny person all the time.
- Suzanne: Well, I think you're entertaining.
- Andrew: Awesome! Thank you, I appreciate it. Before we finish, Suzanne, I just wanted to talk quickly about a very common nicknaming pattern that you'll hear Canadians use a lot, especially hockey players.
- Suzanne: Oh.
- Andrew: If you watch a hockey game, after the game, they always do interviews with the players. And the other hockey players never call somebody by their name. For example, if the hockey player's name is Justin, the other players will always call him Justy. They'll cut the name in half and add a y.
- Suzanne: I've never heard the word Justy in my whole life, yeah.
- Andrew: Or if the hockey player's name is Nick, they'll call him Nicky.
- Suzanne: OK.



- Andrew: Anything—you would be Suzy, I would be Andy. I do this with all my friends, too. For example, I did an interview with one of my friends, Marshall, for the Culips podcast.
- Suzanne: Mmhmm.
- Andrew: And during the podcast, I call him Marshall. But when I hang out with him, I always call him Marshy. I never call him Marshall.
- Suzanne: That's funny ... Marshy.
- Andrew: When you call somebody this **nickname**, when you cut their name in half and add a y, it kind of shows that they're close to this person.
- Suzanne: Yeah.
- Andrew: You're close enough to this person that you can use this **nickname**. And, yeah, this is very common in Canada. I'm not sure if other English-speaking countries do this or not. But, yeah, a lot of my friends use this **nickname** pattern.
- Suzanne: Yeah, I think we used that in the US as kids. Like I called my sister, whose name is Stephanie, I called her Stephe.
- Andrew: There you go, yeah.
- Suzanne: Yeah, yeah. And, um, even my boyfriend's name is Olivier. I call him Ollie.
- Andrew: There you go, yeah. So ...
- Suzanne: So, yeah. But in the US, a common way of making **a nickname**, but more current—it's kind of maybe in the last, like, 10 years—is to say the person's first initial. So to call you A. "What's up, A?"
- Andrew: Right.
- Suzanne: "What's up, S?" "What's up, J?" You know? To say someone's first letter, it's more within the high school or, you know, the kind of twentysomething crowd?
- Andrew: You hear younger people using it.
- Suzanne: Yeah, it's very common. So maybe in the comments section of this post, you guys can put your Canadian **nickname** and your American **nickname**.
- Andrew: Oh, yeah.

Suzanne: So take half your name and put a y, and make your hockey Canadian **nickname**.

Andrew: Yeah.

Suzanne: And then you can take your first letter and be a cool high schooler in the US.

Andrew: Yeah. Or if you want me to give you **a nickname**, just let me know and—

Suzanne: Yeah.

Andrew: I'll think of something funny for you.

Suzanne: We could definitely come up with some fun ... Fun **nicknames**.

Andrew: Well, Suzanne, I think that's all the time we have for today.

Suzanne: Great.

Andrew: I just want to remind everybody that's listening that if your goal is to improve your English to become a better listener and a better speaker, we would love to help you. And we think that the best way to study with us is to become a Culips member. Membership gets you access to our learning materials, which include transcripts, detailed vocabulary explanations, and quizzes for all of our episodes.

And you can visit our website, [Culips.com](http://Culips.com), to learn how to become a member.

Suzanne: And remember, if you have any questions or comments for us, please don't be shy. Send us a message. We love to hear from you. A great way to do that is through our Facebook page, at [Facebook.com/CulipsPodcast](https://Facebook.com/CulipsPodcast). Or you can email us directly at [contact@Culips.com](mailto:contact@Culips.com).

Andrew: Thanks for listening, everyone. We will be back soon with another fresh and exciting Culips episode for you. Talk to you then. Bye.

Suzanne: Bye!

## Detailed Explanations

### A nickname

A **nickname** means a name added to or given in place of the original name of a person, place, or thing. In other words, a **nickname** means a name that is used as a substitute for the real name. For instance, the iconic Elvis Presley was often referred to as the King of Rock and Roll, so King of Rock and Roll would be his **nickname**.

There are many different types of **nicknames**. **Nicknames** can be descriptive, non-descriptive, short or long versions of your birth name, funny, intimate, positive, or negative. For a name to be a **nickname**, it must differ from the original or real name and be used repeatedly.

So a **nickname** means any name that someone, some place, or something is called in place of their real name.

Here's one more example with a **nickname**:

Patty:	I'm so upset! I sat on a chocolate bar at lunch, and ended up with a big brown stain on my pants. Now everyone at work is calling me "Poopy Pants Patty."
Kelly:	What a <b>horrible nickname</b> ! I am so sorry that happened to you.

### A dumbo

**Dumbo** comes from the word dumb, meaning dull-witted or stupid. So a **dumbo** means a dense, slow-witted, or unintelligent person or animal.

In North America, although the nickname **Dumbo** can be used to refer to someone who is stupid, it is also often used in a mean-spirited way to tease someone about having big ears. As Andrew mentions in this episode, **Dumbo** is a famous elephant from the animated Disney classic of the same name. In the movie, this elephant is ridiculed and given the nickname **Dumbo** because of his abnormally big ears.

So a **dumbo** is a negative expression that means an unintelligent individual or animal.

Here's one more example with a **dumbo**:

Bailey:	So I have some really bad news. I wasn't paying attention, and I crashed our car into the tree in our front yard.
Sarah:	Bailey! You are such a <b>dumbo</b> !

## A vibe/to vibe

**A vibe** is the mood, atmosphere, or emotional state of a person or place as felt or perceived by others. In other words, **a vibe** means a feeling or sensation that someone gets from someone or something.

**A vibe** can be positive or negative. So if someone is being mean or rude, then they are giving off **a bad vibe**. Conversely, if someone is being nice and polite, then they are giving off **a good vibe**.

**To vibe** is a verb that means to feel in a positive way. The expression is often used to describe how well someone or something gets along with someone or something else. In this episode, Suzanne says that she doesn't **vibe** on juice. That is, Suzanne does not get a good feeling from juice. She is not fond of juice.

So **a vibe** (the noun) means a sensation or feeling, whereas **to vibe** (the verb) means to feel in a positive way.

Here are a couple more examples with **a vibe/to vibe**:

Mindy:	This restaurant is outstanding. The colour scheme and lighting are extremely inviting.
Paolo:	Agreed! It has such a positive and warm <b>vibe</b> .
Mindy:	I would definitely come back.
Paolo:	Me to!

Sean:	How was your date last night?
Dean:	It was not good. We didn't <b>vibe</b> at all. She kept talking about her cats and their personalities. When I told her that I was allergic to cats, she just looked at me strangely and kept talking about how they prefer canned food over dried food.
Sean:	Dude, that's a pretty bad date.
Dean:	Hopefully I'll click with the next girl.

## To switch it up

Sometimes we all need a change, whether it be our hairstyle, job, situation, or routine. If you decide to try something new instead of doing what you normally do, then you are **switching it up**! So **to switch it up** means to change something or to try something new.

In this episode, Suzanne mentions that she decided **to switch it up** and drink tea instead of coffee. In other words, Suzanne decided to change her routine and drink tea as opposed to coffee. By drinking tea, and not sticking to her routine, she **switched it up**!

The expression **to switch it up** is informal, and best used when referring to non-life-changing events. For instance, it would appropriate to say you **switched it up** if you were talking about changing from cow milk to soy milk, but not if you were talking about getting divorced.

So **to switch it up** is an informal expression that means to change something or to try something new.

Here are a couple more examples with **to switch it up**:

Marco:	Toast for breakfast! You always eat cereal. Why the sudden change?
Juliette:	I decided <b>to switch it up</b> ! I saw the raisin bread sitting on the counter and decided to try something new.
Marco:	Maybe I'll have toast too. It looks tasty.

Sasha:	Wow! Nice haircut!
Molly:	Thanks, I just got it done yesterday.
Sasha:	What made you decide to get rid of the long hair and go for a shorter hairstyle? Haven't you had long hair for years?
Molly:	I saw Kristen Bell's hair on TV and was inspired <b>to switch it up</b> .
Sasha:	Well, it looks fabulous!
Molly:	Thanks, Sasha.

## To push [someone's] buttons

**To push [someone's] buttons** means to deliberately annoy or anger someone. So if someone specifically says or does something to provoke a strong reaction in someone else, then the first person is **pushing the other person's buttons**.

To understand this expression, imagine that every item, value, or quality (eg, strong likes or dislikes) that is important to someone is a button. If you press one of those buttons, it sets off a strong reaction in that person. So **to push [someone's] buttons** means to intentionally do something related to what the other person values to elicit a strong reaction.

The expression **to push [someone's] buttons** is often used playfully between family and friends. For example, in this episode, Andrew explains how his close friends tease him a bit by calling him Blandy, a mix of bland (boring) and Andy, because they know that it is important to Andrew that he is funny or entertaining.

So **to push [someone's] buttons** means to deliberately elicit a strong reaction or to playfully tease someone about something the other person values.

Here are a couple more examples with **to push [someone's] buttons**:

Bill:	Hey, those are nice shoes. When did you become a farmer?
Ted:	The sales lady said that these are popular shoes.
Bill:	Popular shoes for farmers, right? They look like farming boots.
Ted:	<b>Stop pushing my buttons</b> , Bill. You know how sensitive I am about how I look and what I wear.

Murphy:	You're really fast at folding laundry. In fact, you're so good that I think that I will let you fold my laundry from now on.
Cassie:	You can fold your own laundry, thank you very much. I hate folding laundry almost as much as I hate watching scary movies.
Murphy:	Oh Cassie! I'm just <b>pushing your buttons</b> . I know how irritated you get when you have to do laundry. I was just trying to make you laugh.
Cassie:	Not funny.

## Quiz

1. **True or false: A dumbo means an intelligent mammal, like an elephant.**
  - a) true
  - b) false
  
2. **Joe usually dresses in jeans and a t-shirt. Today, Joe decides that he will wear a suit and tie. Which of the following expressions best describes Joe's actions?**
  - a) Joe pushed someone's buttons.
  - b) Joe was vibing his jeans.
  - c) Joe decided to switch it up.
  - d) Joe decided to fit in.
  
3. **Mary has a bad vibe. In other words, Mary has a bad \_\_\_\_\_.**
  - a) feeling
  - b) juice
  - c) date
  - d) tremor
  
4. **Which of the following is the best example of a nickname?**
  - a) Tom the Cool Cat
  - b) Burger Boy
  - c) Lovers' Point
  - d) all of the above
  
5. **Which of the following would be a good example of pushing [someone's] buttons?**
  - a) John is folding laundry.
  - b) John is baking a cake.
  - c) John is wearing boots.
  - d) John is teasing Amelia.

## Quiz Answers

1.b    2.c    3.a    4.d    5.d

### Episode credits

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