

Real Talk #015 – Ordering a drink

Episode description

Ordering drinks in a foreign country can sometimes be tricky. Don't worry, because Andrew and Morag are here to help! Join them for this Real Talk episode as they explain some useful questions and phrases related to ordering drinks.

Fun fact

Frederick the Great, King of Prussia from 1740 to 1786, enjoyed alcohol so much that he tried to ban coffee to get more people to drink alcohol!

Expressions included in the learning materials

- What can I get for ya?
- Do you have any specials today?
- I can't complain
- I'll have [something]
- Keep the change



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.

Announcer: This episode is brought to you by our friends at Spoken.io. Spoken is for professionals who want to improve their English to reach their career goals. And Culips is partnering with Spoken to give you a special offer for two free lessons. To get all the details, just visit Culips.com/Spoken.

Andrew: Hey, everybody. My name is Andrew.

Morag: And my name is Morag.

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

Hey there, Morag.

Morag: Oh hi, Andrew.

Andrew: How are you today?

Morag: I'm doin' all right. A little tired this morning, but I have a feeling it's going to be a pretty good day.

Andrew: I hope so. And maybe when your day is done, you could relax with a drink.

Morag: I just might.

Andrew: Well, today we are going to do a Real Talk episode, where we teach all of our listeners the expressions needed to be able to do just that, to order a drink at a bar. And we have a resident expert here with us, because Morag, your other job is actually bartending, isn't it?

Morag: Actually it's ... Currently I'm working as a barback, but I have bartended before. And I'm around bartenders all the time.

Andrew: Oh, a barback. What is that?

Morag: A barback is someone who looks after the bartenders in a bar. I look after four bartenders, three to four bartenders, and I make sure that they have everything that they need. So it's my job to make sure that they're just standing there making cocktails and serving customers, and don't have to do anything else.

- Morag: It's the step before fancy bartending. So if you want to be a cocktail bartender or, you know, make really crazy drinks, that's sort of the hierarchy. You start as a barback and then you learn to become a bartender.
- Andrew: Interesting. I didn't know that.
- Morag: Mmhmm.
- Andrew: So you're the person that supplies them with ice and glasses and keeps things clean, that idea?
- Morag: That idea and also ... You know, if they're like, "Oh no, something happened!" we'll come and fix it. "Give me more of this, where is this thing?" You know, "Can you handle that person right now," that kind of stuff.
- Andrew: Very cool.
- Morag: Yup, yeah. It's fun.
- Andrew: I bet ya it's fun.
- Morag: Yeah.
- Andrew: So excellent. Why don't you outline the plan for today's episode for us, Morag?
- Morag: Oh, absolutely. So in this episode, we will begin by listening to a conversation between a bartender and a customer, and it's taking place, well, at a bar. After we listen to it, we will take a close look at the conversation and examine all the key expressions that you guys need to know.
- Andrew: We'll listen to the conversation right after this message.
- Announcer: Do you like listening to Culips? If so, please show your support by leaving Culips a five-star rating and a review on iTunes or Stitcher. This helps new listeners find the show. So don't delay. Rate and review today.

- Bartender: Hey, how ya doin' today?
- Customer: I'm good, I'm good. How about you?
- Bartender: Oh, **I can't complain. What can I get for ya?**
- Customer: **Do you have any specials today?**

Bartender: Yup, we have a \$5 cocktail special until 9 PM and \$4 domestic pints and highballs all night.

Customer: Oh, OK. That sounds good. **I'll have a pint of Canadian** and I'll get a gin and tonic and a dirty martini for my friends.

Bartender: All right! OK, so that's \$16.

Customer: Here you go, and **keep the change**.

Bartender: Cheers! Thanks.

Morag: We just heard a conversation between a bartender and a customer. The customer ended up ordered three drinks for himself and his friends. Now we'll examine some of the vocabulary and expressions that were used in this conversation in more detail.

Andrew: Yeah. And so the first area that I wanna look at today is about asking about drink specials.

Morag: Mmhmm.

Andrew: Let's listen to that part of the conversation one more time, where the customer inquired about drink specials.

Customer: **Do you have any specials today? Do you have any specials today?**

Andrew: Morag, does the bar that you work at offer drink specials?

Morag: No. It's a slightly strange thing. Really, like, high-end places will often have a drink special that's something that a bartender came up with that night or that week, kind of like how chefs have set menus sort of thing.

Andrew: Mmhmm.

Morag: And then sort of more ... I don't want to say cheap, but populist places will also have that. And then in the middle range, you tend to just have a set menu.

Andrew: Mmhmm.

Morag: So I work at a cocktail bar/nightclub, so the cocktail bar does not have any drink specials. And nightclubs, well, they want all of your money so they don't ... They sometimes will and sometimes won't have drink specials, but it's always good to ask because hey, you never know.

Andrew: Yeah, and I think a lot of places offer drink specials.

- Morag: Mmhmm.
- Andrew: Maybe not everywhere.
- Morag: There's a lot where they'll have something on a specific night, too. So if you learn that the bar around the corner always has cheap beer on Thursday, that kind of thing.
- Andrew: Yeah. I would say that most bars or pubs, or even clubs, that offer some kind of drink special will change the special very, very often.
- Morag: Mmhmm.
- Andrew: So maybe Tuesday it's like you said, cheap beer. And then Wednesday it might be a cheaper cocktail or something like this. There's a lot of variation.
- Morag: Yeah, Thursdays are often cheap beer nights because it's when students go out, that kind of thing.
- Andrew: Yup, exactly.
- Morag: It's always a good idea to ask and see.
- Andrew: So some other useful vocabulary to know is the expression happy hour.
- Morag: Mmhmm, happy hour. That's the time between usually 5:00 and 7:00.
- Andrew: It usually starts in the late afternoon and ends in the early evening. Couple of hours right around when people get off work.
- Morag: Exactly. And happy hours, they usually have specific drink specials for that time. Things are a little cheaper to try and get people in. And if you're in Montreal specifically, it's called *cinq à sept*.
- Andrew: Mmhmm, from 5 to 7.
- Morag: Mmhmm, but that's only if you want to come and visit Montreal.
- Andrew: Which everybody should do.
- Morag: Yeah.
- Andrew: Another expression that ... You definitely won't find this at every bar but some bars, feel ... Especially American bars, will offer two for one drinks during a happy hour. What does this mean, two for one?
- Morag: It means you get two drinks for the price of one drink. So you just get the same thing free; you get double.

- Andrew: Yeah. Buy one, get one free. Can't go wrong with that.
- Morag: Well, ha, you can definitely go wrong. You can have too much, quickly. But you know, everybody drink responsibly.
- Andrew: Mmhmm, mmhmm. Good, all right, Morag, let's continue with our examination of this conversation. The second area we'll look at today is some specialized vocabulary about drinks and about drinking.
- Morag: Mmhmm.
- Andrew: So let's talk a little about drinks. There are so many different kinds of alcoholic beverages and so many specialized words that we use to talk about them.
- Morag: It's true. Well, in this conversation we heard about a cocktail and we heard about pint, and that would be a draft pint. Draft pint means on tap, and in this one they asked for a domestic pint, which means that it is something that was made in the country that you're in.
- Andrew: Mmhmm.
- Morag: Interesting, right? And then you have a highball, which is a very simple mixed drink, and a dirty martini, another sort of cocktail. Do you want to talk about those in a little bit more depth?
- Andrew: Yeah, yeah, let's take a look at that. So the first drink you mentioned there, Morag, is a cocktail. And strictly defined, a cocktail is a mixed drink that contains four elements: sugar, water, spirits and bitters. Now since you work in a bar Morag, maybe you can enlighten everybody, including myself. What exactly are bitters?
- Morag: It's basically just very intensely flavoured liquid. It's kind of like hot sauce for a drink.
- Andrew: Mmhmm?
- Morag: It's a lot of herbs and spices, and they're usually mystery blends. But you will get things like orange bitters, which have the flavour of orange mostly. Or Angostura bitters are the most common. So if you just taste bitters, most often that's actually Angostura bitters.
- Andrew: OK, very cool. So it's concentrated flavour.
- Morag: Very concentrated bitter flavour, no sweetness.

- Andrew: And so a famous kind of cocktail is the iconic Manhattan. The next drink we heard mentioned in the conversation was a domestic pint. And yeah, you explained this a little bit but OK, a pint and a domestic pint, what's going on there?
- Morag: A pint is just the name for the glass. So you can have a pint of anything that's on draft, anything that's on tap. So you can have a pint of cider; it's sold in some places, or a pint of beer. The glass is in Canada 473 millilitres large. But pint sizes will actually change from English-speaking country to English-speaking country, and sometimes from bar to bar, which is a bit odd.
- Andrew: Mmhmm.
- Morag: You'll have true pints and also just pints. Anyway. And then like I said, domestic beer is a beer that was brewed in Canada. So in other words, it's not an import from somewhere else, like say ... I don't think anyone would have this on tap, but you know, like Budweiser. That's an American beer so it's an import beer, not a domestic.
- Andrew: Yes.
- Morag: Mmhmm, so all in all, a domestic pint is a glass of Canadian beer.
- Andrew: Mmhmm. And often it's cheaper than import beer, right? Domestic beer is usually cheaper than important beer.
- Morag: Yes, most often. Because there's ... Well, there's no taxes or extra taxes on top.
- Andrew: Hmm. The next drink we heard mentioned was a highball. And like you said, Morag, this is a very simple mixed drink, but actually a highball is quite a bit simpler than a cocktail because it's just alcohol and a mixer, OK? So like soda or juice and alcohol, maybe some ice too, I would assume.
- Morag: Yeah. Yes, definitely. This is probably the most common thing to order at ... Like going dancing or at the club, that sort of thing. It's just ... People will ask for a gin and soda, gin and tonic, rye and ginger ... Very Canadian. Or you know, a vodka soda, that sort of thing. Any simple drink like that is a highball.
- Andrew: Now you wouldn't go to the bar and say, "I'd like a highball, please," would you?

- Morag: No. No, no, no, no, no. You specify 'cause it's only two things, so they're always two words like that. It's vodka soda, you know? So you just say the alcohol you want and the word *and*, and then the mix you like. So Coke, Sprite, 7 Up.
- Andrew: Exactly, exactly. Good, and so the last drink we heard about was a dirty martini.
- Morag: Mmm.
- Andrew: Most people will know about martinis, but what is the difference between a martini and a dirty martini?
- Morag: A dirty martini has olive juice in it, actually. Because a martini is gin and vermouth, very little vermouth. So a dirty martini, they put just a little bit of olive brine, the juice that olives float in when you buy them in a jar.
- Andrew: Mmhmm.
- Morag: And they put that into the shaker and shake it up awhile. And then there's another popular type of martini, which is a dry martini. And that's made with less vermouth. Usually there's rather little vermouth to begin with, so sometimes making a dry martini, they actually just take the glass, kind of coat the inside in vermouth and dump it out.
- Andrew: Oh really?
- Morag: Yeah, so that's like ... You just have a tiny bit of leftover vermouth in the glass and then you're just drinking gin.
- Andrew: Interesting.
- Morag: It's just delicious. If you get good gin.
- Andrew: Yes, yes, yes. OK, let's move on to the final part of the conversation that we'll take a closer look at today. And this is a cultural aspect. If you travel to North America, Canada or the US, you're going to have to tip when you visit a bar. And for everyone that doesn't know, what is tipping?
- Morag: Tipping is leaving a small amount of money for the person who served you. So for example, a lot of service positions earn tips. In North America, we tip hairdressers. I think it's 15%, something like that ...
- Andrew: Yeah.
- Morag: Of the cost of the haircut, we leave for the hairdresser as a tip.
- Andrew: Mmhmm.

- Morag: Same thing with servers in restaurants. You leave them usually 10 to 20% of your bill. And then bartenders it's per drink.
- Andrew: Exactly. So if you were to buy two drinks, let's say one for you and one for a friend, in Canada what would the expected tip be for buying two drinks?
- Morag: The expected tip is \$1 per drink. So we expect to see, you know, a loonie.
- Andrew: Yeah, a loonie being the Canadian \$1 coin, right?
- Morag: Yeah, and so you expect to see one of those per drink. If you're getting a fancy cocktail though, it's quite nice to leave, or very much appreciated, to leave like \$1.25, \$1.50, even \$2, because someone has put a lot more work into it.
- Andrew: That makes a lot of sense, right?
- Morag: Mmhmm.
- Andrew: If you are simply pouring beer, it's not that difficult, but some cocktails can get quite intricate, quite complicated. So yeah, you would want to show your appreciation by perhaps leaving a little higher tip in that situation.
- Morag: I often ... For cocktails I'll leave \$1.50 to \$2, but a regular drink is just \$1.
- Andrew: Now the customer in our conversation used an interesting expression to indicate that he was leaving a tip. Let's listen to that one more time.

Customer:	And keep the change. And keep the change.
-----------	--

- Andrew: So he said, "**Keep the change, keep the change.**" What does this mean, Morag, **keep the change**?
- Morag: It means that the server or bartender should keep for themselves whatever they would usually give back as change. So I think in this example, the customer owed \$16 and gave the bartender a \$20 bill. By saying, "**Keep the change**" they were saying, "Keep all \$4 that is extra for yourself."
- Andrew: Mmhmm. And this is a very common expression that you can use whenever you want to give a tip. It could be to a taxi driver or a hairdresser, bartender, any time somebody is giving you some change but you need to tip, you can just tell them, "**Keep the change**" and that will suffice as the tip.
- Morag: Mmhmm, as long as it's generally in the right area.
- Andrew: If you're expecting to get back 25 cents and you say, "**Keep the change,**" this will just be taken as an insult, maybe?

- Morag: Yeah, you might actually have someone say something to you.
- Andrew: Right.
- Morag: Yeah, so ew.
- Andrew: Yeah.
- Morag: So remember to tip, everybody.
- Andrew: I mean this is something that we should actually focus on a little bit because I know in most parts of the world, tipping isn't a big thing and so people are accustomed to doing it when they're travelling in North America. But it is really expected of you to tip, so if you're going to a bar, a restaurant, or any sort of service establishment, you have to tip, guys. It's really expected.
- Morag: It's very, very important. Because in both Canada and the United States, the people who are serving you, they are paid far lower wages than any other job and they make enough money to live based on tips. So you have to tip them.
- Andrew: Mmhmm, you have to do it. Morag probably likes tipping because she has tips from her job. I don't get tips from my job so I understand that it can be a little annoying. And you feel like maybe it's more expensive than it should be, but all in all it's just the price that you have to pay, so.
- Morag: I've worked enough customer service jobs that I know how taxing, like emotionally, it can be to deal with people.
- Andrew: Mmhmm?
- Morag: So I feel like, huh, gettin' a little extra money sometimes, this might be OK. But it depends on where you're working, because some jobs that make tips get more money than you would think, and then some jobs get way less and they're the ones that really, really need those tips. Like you're local coffee shop person.
- Andrew: Yeah.
- Morag: Those guys work all day, and people ... You don't usually tip them so it's a good way to say, "I appreciate the work that you're doing."
- Andrew: Keep up the good work. Yeah, exactly.
- Morag: Yeah, yeah. All right, well that brings us to the end of today's episode.
- Andrew: And don't forget that we will be replaying the conversation one more time at the end of the show, so stay tuned for that so you can review

- Morag: That's right. And if you enjoyed today's episode, please support us. If you could rate and review us wherever you listen to your podcasts, that would be awesome!
- Andrew: It sure would. And if you have any questions or comments for us, you can send us a message through our Facebook page, which is located on the internet at Facebook.com/CulipsPodcast. Of course, we have our own website as well, Culips.com.
- Morag: That's all for now, everybody. We will be back soon with another new episode.
- Andrew: Bye.
- Morag: Bye.

- Bartender: Hey, how ya doin' today?
- Customer: I'm good, I'm good. How about you?
- Bartender: Oh, **I can't complain. What can I get for ya?**
- Customer: **Do you have any specials today?**
- Bartender: Yup, we have a \$5 cocktail special until 9 PM and \$4 domestic pints and highballs all night.
- Customer: Oh, OK. That sounds good. **I'll have a pint of Canadian** and I'll get a gin and tonic and a dirty martini for my friends.
- Bartender: All right! OK, so that's \$16.
- Customer: Here you go, and **keep the change.**
- Bartender: Cheers! Thanks.

Detailed Explanations

What can I get for ya?

What can I get for ya? is a common question that you're likely to hear when ordering a drink in a bar. There are a number of ways that a bartender or server might ask this question, such as:

- "What can I bring you?"
- "What would you like?"
- "What's your poison?"
- "What do you want to drink?"

All of the questions listed above mean the same thing: "What drink would you like to have?" If you know what you would like to order, then you can simply answer any of these questions by saying your drink of choice. For instance, if you would like a Labatt Blue, the best-selling Canadian beer, then you could simply respond by saying, "A Labatt Blue."

So what can I get for ya? means "What drink would you like to order?" and is a way for the bartender to ask for your drink order.

Here are a couple more examples with **what can I get for ya?**:

Jen: Excuse me, would it be possible to get a drink?

Bartender: Sure thing—**what can I get for ya?**

Jen: A Sea Breeze, please.

Bartender: Coming right up!

Bartender: Nice to see you again, Benny. **What can I get for ya?**

Benny: You too, buddy! I'll just take a pint of Molson Canadian.

Bartender: Here you go. Enjoy!

Do you have any specials today?

When ordering drinks, it is sometimes difficult to decide what to order, especially if you are visiting a bar or pub for the first time and are unfamiliar with their drink menu. If you're not sure what to order, your best bet is to ask the bartender or server about their drink specials, or drinks that are being offered at a reduced price. You can do this by asking, **"Do you have any specials today?"** In other words, use the question, **do you have any specials today?** when you would like to know which drinks are on sale.

Although **do you have any specials today?** typically means "What drinks are being offered at a lower price?" it can also mean, "Do you have a special or unique drink today?" As Morag mentions in this episode, high-end places will often have a drink special. For instance, if a microbrewery created a sweet potato ale for October, this potato ale would be considered a special. So **do you have any specials today?** can mean, "What drinks are on sale?" or "Do you have any special drinks?"

The next time that you are unsure what to order, use the question **do you have any specials today?** to hear the cheaper drink options or the bar's specialty drinks.

Here are a couple more examples with **do you have any specials today?**:

Bartender:	What can I bring you?
Jean-Luc:	I'm not sure. Do you have any specials today?
Bartender:	Between 5 PM and 7 PM, we're offering pints of domestic beer at half price.
Jean-Luc:	I'll take a pint of Alexander Keith's, then. Thanks!

Veronica:	Excuse me, do you have any specials today?
Bartender:	This evening, the bartender has created a wonderful cocktail with vodka, grenadine, Sprite, lime juice, and fresh raspberries.
Veronica:	That sounds delightful. Could you bring me one, please?
Bartender:	I'll be right back with your order.

I can't complain

The phrase **I can't complain** is often used in North America as a response when someone inquires about your well-being. To complain means to whine, to express disapproval, or to grumble. Therefore, the phrase **I can't complain** means I'm mostly doing all right. That is, **I can't complain** can be used in place of I'm OK. What's important to note is that **I can't complain** is a way of saying that you are somewhere in between bad and great. You are neither horrible nor fantastic, simply OK.

Here are some questions to which the response **I can't complain** would be appropriate:

- "How are you?"
- "How are things?"
- "What's new with you?"
- "How's life treating you?"

So **I can't complain** is an appropriate response when someone asks about your health, fortune, or general welfare, as long as everything is going fairly well and you have nothing big to grumble about.

Here are a couple more examples with **I can't complain**:

Saul:	Hey, Kimmy! It's been a long time. How are you?
Kimmy:	I can't complain. I'm still working for my brother's law firm, and it's the same old, same old over there. What about you? How are things on your end?
Saul:	I'm doing really well. My wife and I just had a baby, and even though this little person has flipped our lives upside down, we couldn't be happier.
Kimmy:	Wow, congratulations! I'm so happy for you.

Malwina:	How did your doctor's appointment go?
Judy:	I can't complain. My doctor said that my blood tests were normal, but I need to try to exercise more and eat a little better.
Malwina:	So no bad news, but no fantastic news.
Judy:	Yup!

I'll have [something]

Whether you are ordering a drink or food item, the phrase **I'll have [something]** is extremely useful. Just replace the term something with the specific item that you would like to order. For instance, if you are at a bar and would like a dirty martini, just say, "**I'll have a dirty martini.**"

There are a number of expressions that you can use to order a drink or food item, such as:

- "I'll take [something]."
- "Let me have [something]."
- "Can I have [something]?"
- "I would like [something]."

Remember that it is always more courteous and polite to include "excuse me" before a phrase (eg, "Excuse me, **I'll have [something]**") or "please" after a phrase (eg, "**I'll have [something]**, please").

Here are a couple more examples with **I'll have [something]**:

Kevin: Hey, man! How's your night?

Bartender: Not too bad. What about you?

Kevin: I'm good, thanks.

Bartender: What would you like tonight?

Kevin: **I'll have a highball**, please.

Bartender: Sure thing!

Peter: What's your night like so far?

Bartender: A little slow, but it should pick up around 10 PM. What can I get for you?

Peter: What do you have on draft?

Bartender: Labatt Blue, Molson Canadian, and Rickard's Red.

Peter: **I'll have a half pint of Labatt Blue.**

Keep the change

In Canada, it is common practice to tip, or to give a small amount of money in addition to the cost of the bill, to individuals in the service industry (eg, bartenders, servers, hairdressers, taxi drivers, etc). For instance, if the bill comes to \$15 and you hand the bartender \$20, the tip would be \$5 (ie, $\$20 - \$15 = \$5$).

The expression **keep the change** means keep the full amount of money, or don't give any money back. In this episode's dialogue example, the customer tells the bartender **to keep the change**. The customer does this because, as Morag and Andrew discuss, in bars it is customary to tip bartenders per drink.

So the expression **keep the change** is another way of telling someone to keep whatever extra money they were given.

Here are a couple more examples with **keep the change**:

Jordan:	How much do I owe you?
Bartender:	You owe me a grand total of \$6.
Jordan:	Here's \$10. Keep the change.

Sherman:	Excuse me, could I have a Bloody Mary?
Bartender:	Yup, here you go. That will be \$8.
Sherman:	I had no idea a Bloody Mary was so expensive. Oh well, here's \$10. Keep the change.
Bartender:	Thanks!

Bartender:	What can I get for ya?
Barb:	I'll take a Gin Rickey.
Bartender:	Here you go. I haven't served one of these in a while. I don't remember the price. How about we just make it \$4?
Barb:	Sounds good to me! Here's \$8. Keep the change.

Quiz

- 1. Thomas is visiting a bar in Ottawa for the first time. Which of the following questions could he use to find out more about the bar's drink menu?**
 - a) "Do you have any specials today?"
 - b) "Is the drink menu on special?"
 - c) "Can I drink the menu?"
 - d) "Can I get something for ya?"

- 2. Which of the following is an appropriate answer if someone asks, "How are things?"**
 - a) "I can complain."
 - b) "I can complain about you."
 - c) "I can't complain about you."
 - d) "I can't complain."

- 3. Kenny is from another country and is visiting a bar with his friends. He decides to order a drink from the bartender. How much should Kenny tip the bartender?**
 - a) 1% to 9% at the end of the night
 - b) 10% to 20% at the end of the night
 - c) \$0.25 to \$0.50 for each drink
 - d) \$1 to \$2 for each drink

- 4. Which of the following is another way of asking, "What can I get for ya?"**
 - a) "Do you like poison?"
 - b) "Do you want poison?"
 - c) "What's your poison?"
 - d) "Can I get you poison?"

- 5. Which of the following is the most courteous way to ask for a drink?**
 - a) "Give me a beer."
 - b) "I'll have a beer."
 - c) "I want a beer."
 - d) "I'll have a beer, please."

Quiz Answers

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

Episode credits

Hosts: Andrew Bates and Morag St. Clair

Music: *Something Elated* by Broke For Free

Episode preparation/research: Andrew Bates

Audio editor: Andrew Bates

Transcription: Transcript Heroes Transcription Services

Learning materials writer: Stephanie Minelga

English editor: Stephanie MacLean

Business manager: Tsuyoshi Kaneshima

Project manager: Jessica Cox

Sponsor: [Spoken](#)