

Simplified Speech #015 – Cats

Episode description

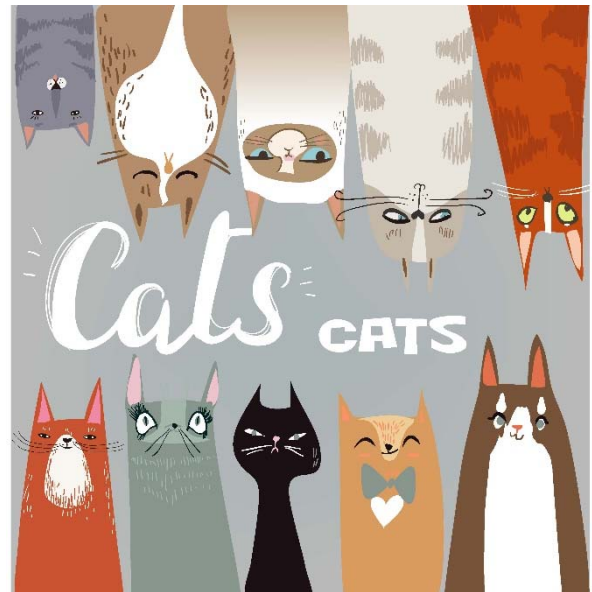
Do you like cats? If you do, this is the perfect episode for you! In this Simplified Speech episode, Andrew and Morag discuss those feisty and adorable creatures: cats!

Fun fact

Maine Coon cats are the largest breed of domestic cat, with the average female weighing between 3.6 and 5.4 kilograms, and the average male weighing between 5.9 and 8.2 kilograms. They can even reach 120 centimetres in length! They're known for being particularly friendly with other household pets and children.

Expressions included in the learning materials

- Back in the saddle
- To scrounge/to scrounge off
- (You can't) teach an old dog new tricks
- To be on the same page
- To go broke



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: Hey, everybody. My name's Andrew.

Morag: And my name is Morag.

Andrew: And we are back with another Culips episode.

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Andrew: Hey, Morag. How are you?

Morag: Hey, Andrew. I'm doing OK. Had a bit of a cold a couple days ago. Not so much fun.

Andrew: That isn't fun. Do you feel a little bit better now?

Morag: I at least have my voice back, and that's very important.

Andrew: That is super important for us because, well, we need to hear you, right?

Morag: I'm glad I'm **back in the saddle**, yeah.

Andrew: Cool. I'm feeling pretty happy. I just got in the door, and I'm happy every time I come home because, right now, there is a huge family of cats living right outside my apartment.

Morag: Wow, that's sounds possibly adorable, possibly annoying.

Andrew: They are nice cats, but it's very strange. I've never seen so many wild cats in one place before. It's kind of like that Japanese island where all the cats are living. Have you seen this island before?

Morag: I've never seen that, but it sounds awesome.

- Andrew: Yeah, this is what the front of my apartment building reminds me of. You know, I'm living in Korea and the situation with cats here is a little bit different than what I'm used to back in Canada. I don't see too many street cats in Canada, but here they definitely exist. And the street cats near my apartment decided to have kittens. So now there's, no joke, probably between 12 and 15 kittens outside of my apartment.
- Morag: Oh my God! I can definitely see how you're happy when you come home.
- Andrew: Yeah, they're so cute. And I took some pictures, so I'll put a picture on the blog so that everybody can see these cute kittens. And, yeah, so I'm in a good mood. And it's funny that we're talking about cats, because the topic of today's episode is cats.
- Morag: That's right, Andrew. Today we're going to do a Simplified Speech episode. It's where we will have a conversation using natural English, but speak slower than we normally do.
- Andrew: And if you want to take full advantage of this episode, we recommend that you visit our website, Culips.com, and sign up to become a member. Culips members get access to our learning materials, which include full transcripts, detailed vocabulary explanations, and quizzes for every episode.
- And using the learning materials is the best way to study with us. So if you're not a member yet, join today.
- Morag: And to all of you who are members, thanks a bunch. Your support is very much appreciated.
- Andrew: Yes, totally.
- OK, let's get to the cats, Morag. Let's get on to the cats.
- Morag: To the important stuff.
- Andrew: Mmhmm. I'm curious, are you a cat person?
- Morag: I would say that I'm more of a general animal person, but I do love cats. I have a cat right now.
- Andrew: You have a cat, a black cat?
- Morag: I do. I have a little black cat named Toast.
- Andrew: Toast.
- Morag: Yeah.

- Andrew: Does he remind you of burnt toast?
- Morag: No. That's funny, that's what my mom said when I first got him. But the idea was that I would, at some point, have three cats and their names were going to be Bacon, Eggs, and Toast. Which is quite amusing because now I can't eat any of those things.
- Andrew: Well, if you can't eat them, at least you can have them in your life as pets.
- Morag: Exactly. So, but, at this point, I just have Toast.
- Andrew: OK. Well, that's a cute name. I like that name.
- Morag: I'm pretty fond of it. But I'm pretty fond of him, so, you know.
- Andrew: Well, I'm like you. I wouldn't say that I'm a cat person because I like all animals. But I definitely do like cats. I don't own a cat but, like I said, there's lots around for me to see and to be friends with.
- Morag: That's lovely. I actually have quite a lot of cats that come around the backyard of my house, but none of them are particularly friendly. They're all that Montreal alley cat sort of thing, where they don't really like humans. They're still very cute, but, you know, not friendly. So I envy your large group of adorable, friendly cats.
- Andrew: I'm kind of lucky because I live right near a university, and all the university students feed these cats all the time.
- Morag: Ah.
- Andrew: Which is why I think the population is so healthy and so friendly.
- Morag: That's great.
- Andrew: They don't have **to scrounge** for food on the street. They are given food by students, so they're nice and they're well fed.
- Morag: That's a good point. I mean, maybe I could make friends with the alley cats by feeding them, but there's so many I might **go broke**.
- Andrew: Yeah, you can't save them all. What about Toast, your cat? Is he an indoor cat or an outdoor cat?
- Morag: He is an indoor cat. He's been an indoor cat his whole life, so I would be very scared to let him out now. He's about 8 years old, so I think, you know, **you can't teach an old dog new tricks**. You definitely can't teach an old cat how to exist with alley cats.

- Andrew: Yeah, those street cats are tough. And indoor cats, they don't know how to live on the street.
- Morag: No.
- Andrew: So I think you're making a good call.
- Morag: I know that outdoor cats can be very happy and have great lives, but I've lived on really busy roads from the time he was a kitten. And I just couldn't bear the thought or the possibility of him getting hit by a car. Oh, it's just too much for me to deal with. So I kept him inside.
- Andrew: Yeah, I think that's a good decision. Good call, on a busy street, yeah, it's not a place for cats.
- Morag: Nuh-uh, although I live on a really busy street now, and they seem fine. I don't know. But he is a black cat so, you know, that many people think black cats bring bad luck—maybe they have bad luck for themselves.
- Andrew: Hmm, interesting perspective. What do you think about black cats? Did you select Toast specifically because he's black?
- Morag: I did, actually. Because I don't know if this is the case in other areas of the world, but at least in Canada, people don't adopt black cats. They usually don't find homes, or at least in a much larger proportion than cats with colour. So I wanted to adopt a black cat because I think they deserve just as much love.
- Andrew: Yeah, there's this weird superstition that black cats bring bad luck. And I don't know if anybody actually believes this, but at the animal adoption centres, black cats are usually the ones that are the last to leave. So, yeah, I thought that if I ever get a cat, I would adopt a black cat, too. So I'm glad to hear that we're **on the same page**.
- Morag: I agree with those decisions, Andrew. Yes, very good.
- Andrew: Right on. Well, Morag, I think that's all we have time for today. This was a fun episode. I love talking about cats.
- Morag: I like that everyone at Culips now gets to hear about my cat. He's a great guy. So thanks, everybody.

Andrew: Well, everybody, I want to thank you for listening. And, again, make sure to visit our website, Culips.com. And we want to know, what do you think about cats? Are you a cat person? Are you a dog person? Do you like pets? Do you hate pets? I don't know, what do you think? Tell us about you.

Visit our Facebook page, Facebook.com/CulipsPodcast. Leave us a comment and let us know. OK, we'll talk to you next time. Bye, everybody.

Morag: Bye.

Detailed Explanations

Back in the saddle

Back in the saddle is an expression that means that someone is doing something after stopping it for a period of time.

For example, in this episode Morag says that she's glad to be **back in the saddle** recording Culips episodes after having lost her voice for a while. She can say that she's **back in the saddle** because she's recording again after being unable to speak for a couple of days.

So, if you pick up an old hobby or start doing any activity that you had stopped for a while, you can say you're **back in the saddle**.

Here are a couple more examples with **back in the saddle**:

Henry:	Hey, Shelia, how are you? I haven't seen you around the office for a while.
Shelia:	I'm doing fine, thanks. I haven't been around because I was sick with pneumonia for a month or so.
Henry:	I'm sorry you went through that! You're all better now?
Shelia:	Yeah, I'm feeling great! It's good to be at work again. I'm back in the saddle !

James:	Hi Anne! I was hoping to run into you today.
Anne:	Well, here I am! What's up?
James:	I just wanted to invite you to the open mic night I'm hosting in a couple of weeks. I've always liked your music. You should come and play something!
Anne:	Thanks for inviting me, but I don't think I'll make it.
James:	Oh no?
Anne:	I'm taking a break from music right now. I'm so busy at work, I haven't had any time to practise lately, let alone work on new music!
James:	That's a shame. I hope you'll get back in the saddle some time soon.

To scrounge/to scrounge off

To scrounge and **to scrounge off** are verb forms that mean to acquire objects or money in ways other than working or paying for them.

By itself, **to scrounge** is to get objects or money by hunting and searching in various places. This is the sense of **to scrounge** that Andrew uses in this episode when he talks about the stray cats that live near his home. He says that they don't have **to scrounge** for food because so many university students feed them. In other words, the cats don't have to search and hunt for food.

You can also use **to scrounge** in the form **to scrounge off**. This form of the verb means to acquire money or objects by asking or begging someone for them. The person who is being asked is identified after the *off*. To go back to Andrew's example from this episode, you could say that the cats **scrounge off** the students. Because they beg for food from the students and do not pay or work for the food, they are **scrounging off** the students.

Here are a couple more examples with **to scrounge/to scrounge off**.

Hannah:	You're late!
Jesse:	Only by 5 minutes! I'm amazed I'm not much later.
Hannah:	Oh yeah? Why's that?
Jesse:	I realized right when I was leaving that I didn't have enough change for the bus. I had to scrounge my whole apartment looking for loose change! I finally found the last quarter I needed in the stairwell of my building.
Hannah:	Lucky!

Samantha:	Ugh, I just found out my brother is coming to town next week.
Luke:	That's not good news?
Samantha:	Don't get me wrong; it's always nice to see him! He's just a pain sometimes.
Luke:	Oh yeah, why?
Samantha:	He's terrible with his finances. Every time he comes here, he doesn't pay for a thing and bothers me to give him money.
Luke:	He just scrounges off you? Yeah, I can see why you're not so happy he's coming to town.

(You can't) teach an old dog new tricks

(You can't) teach an old dog new tricks is a common saying that means that it's difficult to get someone to change if they are old or used to doing things a certain way. You can include *you can't* or not; the meaning stays the same either way.

This saying is easy to understand if you think about it literally. We all know that if you want to teach dogs how to roll over or lie down, you teach them when they are puppies. It is true that it's very hard to teach an old dog how to do something new!

The idea behind this saying is that it's just as difficult to get people to change their habits and ways of doing things as it is to teach an old dog to shake a paw. Once people have made decisions about themselves, or have their preferred ways of doing things, it can be very difficult for them to learn new ways of behaving. So, this saying is often used to advise someone that it is unwise to try and change another person's habits, ideas, or ways of doing things.

Here's a couple more examples with **(you can't) teach an old dog new tricks**:

Katie:	Oh man, I just had the most annoying phone call with my aunt.
Allen:	Oh yeah? Why was it annoying?
Katie:	She was calling to get my help with her computer again. She doesn't understand how to use it at all! This time I had to teach her how to open a new page in her web browser.
Allen:	Well, you know what they say: you can't teach an old dog new tricks!
Katie:	I guess you're right; she didn't grow up with computers like we did.

Nevena:	You said you wanted to have more exercise in your life, right?
Jeremy:	Well, yes, I did say that.
Nevena:	Then you should come to my running club with me! I fell in love with running about a year ago and I think you could too.
Jeremy:	No way! That would be like trying to teach an old dog new tricks . Running is way too intense for me. I just meant taking a walk on my lunch break or something!

To be on the same page

To be on the same page is an informal expression that means to agree on something with another person or with a group of people.

In this episode, we discover that Morag and Andrew share the same opinion about black cats. While some people think they are bad luck, Morag adopted a black cat on purpose. Andrew mentions that he would do the same thing if he ever got a cat. So, Andrew and Morag are **on the same page** when it comes to their opinions of black cats.

Being **on the same page** as someone doesn't mean you have to agree about everything! But if you share an opinion or generally agree with someone on a certain issue, whatever it might be, you can say that you are **on the same page** when it comes to that topic.

Here are a couple more examples with **to be on the same page**:

George:	What time are people coming over for drinks this evening?
Faith:	The gang said they would be here a little after 9:00.
George:	OK. It's 6:00 now, so we only have 3 hours to get everything ready.
Faith:	True. We should probably get started cleaning the place, right?
George:	Nah, we have tons of time. Let's watch another TV show and then get to it.
Faith:	That sounds perfect. I'm glad we're on the same page —I don't feel like cleaning right now either!

Keith:	OK, we have half an hour to get lunch. Where's a good place to eat around here?
Rachel:	There's an awesome Lebanese place just around the corner.
Keith:	Oh no, I hate Lebanese food!
Rachel:	All right, how about sushi?
Keith:	Ew!
Rachel:	We don't seem to be on the same page at all! Those are my favourite types of food!

To go broke

When you are completely out of money, you have gone **broke**. So, **to go broke** is the process of losing all your money.

However, you will often hear people talk about going or being **broke** when they are not completely without money. In conversation, people often use **to go broke** to express that they don't have any extra money to spend, and not that they don't have any money at all.

For example, in this episode Morag mentions that she couldn't feed all the stray cats that live near her house, because if she did she'd **go broke**. By saying she'd **go broke**, she isn't saying that she would have no money at all, but that she doesn't have enough extra money to feed all the stray cats.

Here's one more example with **to go broke**:

Stephen: Oh man, I should really quit smoking.

Melissa: Well, that's obvious. Everyone knows how bad it is for your health!

Stephen: Yeah, I know. But that's not why I want to quit.

Melissa: Why do you want to quit, then?

Stephen: Cigarettes are way too expensive! I'm going **to go broke** smoking these things.

Quiz

1. To go broke is to lose all your:

- a) friends
- b) money
- c) possessions
- d) fame

2. When you're on the same page as someone, you _____ a certain issue.

- a) agree on
- b) disagree on
- c) fight about
- d) try to solve

3. True or false: To scrounge off someone means to search their home for lost or hidden objects.

- a) true
- b) false

4. When someone says that you can't teach an old dog new tricks, they mean that it is hard to get:

- a) an older dog to stop chasing cats
- b) a dog to pay attention in obedience school
- c) someone to change their habits
- d) an older person to pay attention when you are speaking

5. If you're back in the saddle, you're starting to do an activity:

- a) for the first time
- b) well
- c) again, after stopping for a while
- d) that you enjoy

Quiz Answers

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

Episode credits

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