

Real Talk #010 – You’re in my seat!

Episode description

Have you ever gotten on a bus, a train, or an airplane and someone else was sitting in your seat? In today’s episode, Andrew and Morag walk you through the vocabulary and phrases you need to handle this awkward situation in a polite and easy manner.

Fun fact

Did you know that assigned seating has been used as far back as Ancient Rome? In the Colosseum, everyone attending an event had a seat assigned by tier, wedge (section), and seat number.

Expressions included in the learning materials

- I’m sorry, but I’m pretty sure you’re sitting in my seat
- I’ll double-check my boarding pass
- I’m glad we sorted that out
- I’m all settled in here, with my bags in the overhead compartment
- I’d rather just stick to my original seat, if you don’t mind



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 is Andrew.

Morag: And my name is Morag.

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

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Andrew: Welcome back to another Real Talk episode. Real Talk is a series where we take a close look at expressions that are very important for everyday life in an English-speaking country.

Morag: And in this episode, we are going to learn how to deal with a particularly awkward situation, which is telling someone who is sitting in your seat that they are in the wrong place.

Andrew: Exactly. Now I'm sure everyone has encountered this. You know, you buy a ticket; it could be a train or bus ticket, or even a ticket for a concert or event. And then you go to your seat, only to find someone else is sitting in your spot.

Morag: Ugh, I hate that feeling. It's the worst. So today, we're going to learn how to deal with that situation, what to say and how to say it.

Andrew: That's right. And so today's plan is that we will start by listening to a dialogue where someone finds that their seat on an airplane is occupied when it shouldn't be. And then we'll take a very close look at the vocabulary and expressions that were used to fix this situation.

OK, here's the dialogue.

Passenger 1: Excuse me, hi. **I'm sorry, but I'm pretty sure you're sitting in my seat.**

Passenger 2: Um, really? Well, what seat am I in now, 15B? I'm ... No, I actually think I'm in the right place.

Passenger 1: Uh, really? Uh, but here's my ticket. It says 15B.

Passenger 2: OK, OK. Let me ... **I'll double-check my boarding pass.** Oh, it looks like you were right. I'm actually supposed to be in 51B.

Passenger 1: OK. Well, **I'm glad we sorted that out.**

Passenger 2: Well, I mean why don't you just go sit in my seat, the 51B? **I'm all settled in here, with my bags in the overhead compartment** and everything.

Passenger 1: Hmm, yeah. I'd love to help you out, but **I'd rather just stick to my original seat, if you don't mind.**

Passenger 2: Um, yeah. OK, OK.

Andrew: Morag, have you ever had this situation happen to you, where you're travelling and you go to find your seat, only to discover that somebody's already sitting in your spot?

Morag: Yes, this has happened to me a couple of times. And one time, I had a similarly resistant person in my seat.

Andrew: Ooh. Ugh, it's really the worst, isn't it? I hate that situation. Let's take just a moment to summarize the dialogue. Two passengers on an airplane are confused about where they are supposed to sit. The male passenger finds that someone is sitting in his seat, so he asks the lady that's sitting in his seat if she maybe made a mistake and is in the wrong spot.

As it turns out, she did make a mistake and is sitting in the wrong spot. But instead of just quickly apologizing and moving to her original spot, she asks the male passenger to go sit in her seat because she's already stored her bags. The male passenger is a little uncomfortable with this situation, and in the end, the woman agrees to move to her original seat.

So now, we are going to go back slowly through that dialogue and pick out the most important expressions that you really need to know to handle this situation. At the end of today's episode, we'll play the dialogue for you one more time, OK? So you can review it again at the end of this show to confirm your comprehension.

OK, Morag, what is our first key expression for today?

- Morag: So our first key expression is a whole sentence, and it is, **“Hi. I’m sorry, but I’m pretty sure you’re sitting in my seat.”**
- Andrew: Yes, **“Hi. I’m sorry, but I’m pretty sure you’re sitting in my seat.”** Now, this is a very friendly and polite way to start that awkward conversation that you need to have when you find someone sitting in your seat.
- Morag: Yes. The key here is the, **“I’m sorry, but ...”** Or you could say, “Excuse me but ...”
- Andrew: Yeah, something that makes it known that you are trying to be polite about the situation, right? You could say, “Oh, I’m sorry. I believe you’re in my seat,” or “It looks like you might be in my seat.”
- Morag: Mmhmm.
- Andrew: But if you just say, “Hey, you’re in the wrong spot,” it’s going to be too mean.
- Morag: Technically, you could go up and say to someone, “Hey, that’s my spot.”
- Andrew: Yeah.
- Morag: They would understand what you’re saying, but that is rather rude.
- Andrew: Rather rude. So these two words, seat and spot, in your opinion is there any difference in meaning, or can they be used interchangeably?
- Morag: I think they can definitely be used interchangeably.
- Andrew: Yeah. What about this one? Could you say, **“Hi. I’m sorry, but I’m pretty sure you’re sitting in my chair.”**
- Morag: Yes, you could say that as well.
- Andrew: Mmhmm. So we can use the word seat, spot, chair. These all work for this situation.
- Morag: Mmhmm.
- Andrew: Cool. Let’s look at the second key expression. And it is, **“Let me double-check my boarding pass.”**
- Morag: **“Let me double-check my boarding pass.”**
- Andrew: Yeah.
- Morag: So OK, Andrew, what does double-check mean?

- Andrew: Double-check means to confirm something or to examine something again. So we hear this expression used by the lady who's sitting in the wrong spot, right? When there's a little bit of conflict there, she says, "Oh, **let me double-check my boarding pass**. Let me examine it one more time just to confirm that I'm in the correct spot."
- Morag: And you could use double-check for any situation where you have some kind of ticket because the boarding pass is an airline ticket.
- Andrew: I don't know about you, but when I'm travelling, I check and **double-check my boarding pass** to make sure that I'm in the right place at the right time.
- Morag: I do the same thing. Sometimes I will be in the correct terminal at the correct gate, and so exactly where I need to be and waiting for like half an hour.
- Andrew: Mmhmm.
- Morag: And then all of a sudden, **I'll check my boarding pass again**.
- Andrew: I also have the habit of double-checking that my passport is still in my pocket.
- Morag: Oh my God! Tell me about it. It's like when I'm travelling, it's ... No, no, every 20 minutes. You just ... I just need to touch it again, yeah.
- Andrew: Yes, yeah. Oh, we're exactly the same. OK. I'm not the only travelling weirdo out there.
- Morag: For sure not, yeah.
- Andrew: OK, let's move on to our third key expression. Morag, why don't you introduce this one?
- Morag: Sure. Our third key expression is **glad we sorted that out. Glad we sorted that out**.
- Andrew: When do we hear this being said in the dialogue?
- Morag: The traveller says, "**Glad we sorted that out**" after the woman double-checks her boarding pass and finds out that she is in the wrong spot.
- Andrew: Right. And so **glad we sorted that out**. It's a short sentence, but a little bit complex. What does that phrasal verb, to sort out, mean?
- Morag: It means to solve a problem or arrange something correctly. Just to ... To make everything clear and solved.

Andrew: Right. So the lady confirms that she's sitting in the wrong spot when she double-checks her boarding pass. And then the passenger responds, "Oh, **I'm glad we sorted that out.** I'm glad we fixed the problem. We solved the problem. Now, you can go to your seat, and I can sit here in my seat."

But actually, that's not what happens, is it?

Morag: No, because our next key expression is the woman trying to get out of moving. What she says is, "**I'm all settled in here, with my bags in the overhead compartment.**" "**I'm all settled in here, with my bags in the overhead compartment.**"

Andrew: Yeah. And there's two key parts of this phrase. The first is, "**I'm all settled in here.**" And so to be settled in means to feel comfortable and happy in a new situation. We use this expression often when we're talking about somebody adjusting to a new job, or maybe they've recently moved and are living in a new house. And after a while, once you adjust to this new environment, you feel comfortable. You feel happy. We can say you're settled in.

And so this lady who's sitting in the chair, this is her excuse. This is the excuse she gives for not moving. "Oh, **I'm all settled in.** I'm comfortable. I don't want to move."

Morag: Not a good enough reason.

Andrew: Not a good enough reason. Especially because we can maybe imagine her boarding the airplane just five minutes ago, right?

Morag: Mmhmm.

Andrew: How did you get settled in so quickly, lady? What about this next part, the overhead compartment? Because she says, "**I'm all settled in here, with my bags in the overhead compartment.**" What is the overhead compartment?

Morag: Well, the overhead compartment is the name for the bins above airline seats, where you store your carry-on luggage. It's just a specific term for those storage bins.

Andrew: Yeah, the storage bins. So this is the second part of the lady's excuse, right? "Oh, my bags are in the overhead compartment. I don't want to take them out."

Morag: To be fair, that usually is moderately annoying to get bags in and out of there. But you know, it's still very silly.

- Andrew: It ... Yeah, it is a little bit annoying. I agree. The whole situation is annoying.
- Morag: Yeah, yes.
- Andrew: All right. So let's move on to our fifth key expression. And after the lady ... After she says, "**I'm all settled in here**," the man responds, "Oh, you know, sorry. **I'd rather just stick to my original seat.**" Meaning he wants to sit in the original seat. He wants her to move so he can sit in the seat that matches his ticket number.
- Morag: Makes sense.
- Andrew: Yeah, it makes sense.
- Morag: So one of the things in this expression is stick to. So that can be a little bit complicated. What does stick to mean?
- Andrew: OK, so stick to ... This is a very nice verb, to stick to. And when we're talking about a rule or a law—in this context a rule or a law—when you stick to it, when you stick to the rule or the law, it means that you obey and you follow the rule.
- So in this situation, the passenger would like to follow the rules of the airline by sitting in the seat that matches his ticket number, right? He just wants **to** stick to his original ticket number.
- Morag: A man after my own heart.
- Andrew: And do you stick to the rules often, Morag?
- Morag: Yeah, yeah, I do.
- Andrew: I'm kind of like that also, you know? I've been in situations in airplanes or trains where people are sitting in my seat, and they say, "Oh, it's OK. Just sit beside me," or "There's a free seat right there. Just sit there."
- Morag: You're like, "No."
- Andrew: And I don't ... No, I don't like to do that. I like to stick to the rules. Because later on, somebody will come, and I'll be sitting in their seat. And it's awkward, and then everybody has to move.
- Morag: I understand. I'm the sort of person when I'm driving ... Say I'm driving in the middle of the night and there's no one around, I still use my turn signals.
- Andrew: I like it.
- Morag: All right! Well, we've got one last key expression.

Andrew: And in my opinion, this is one of the most useful expressions in the dialogue because you can really use this expression to get something you want without coming across as super rude.

Morag: Hmm.

Andrew: So it's kind of a way to be polite but firm at the same time. And this expression is **if you don't mind, if you don't mind**.

Morag: **If you don't mind**, yeah. It's a very useful expression.

Andrew: **If you don't mind**, now, as I just said, it's a way to be polite. But if you speak with anger at someone or you are visibly upset and you can hear that rage in your voice, it will come across as rude. But you can use this expression if you stay calm to really show that you are serious about what you're saying.

So in the dialogue, we hear this expression being used when the traveller says, "Oh, **I'd rather just stick to my original seat, if you don't mind**." So he's really being clear here that there's no room for negotiation, right? He's made up his mind, and he wants to sit in his seat.

Morag: While it might sound like he was leaving it open, the **if you don't mind** at the end makes it that if the other person disagrees, they are in the place of being rude.

Andrew: Right. That's the beautiful thing about this expression, right?

Morag: Mmhmm.

Andrew: Because if you say, "Yeah, I do mind. I'm not going to move," well then you look like the jerk. It's a way to politely scold somebody for breaking a little rule of society.

Morag: Mmhmm.

Andrew: So **if you don't mind**, in summary, it's just a very useful expression for politely scolding someone when they commit a small social faux pas, or they break a small rule of society.

And Morag, it's time for my favourite part of a Real Talk episode, quiz time.

Morag: Yeah!

Andrew: Quiz time! So I think what we should do for today's quiz time, let's try using the expression **if you don't mind** in a new context. So we can use this in a new context when we want to be polite but firm at the same time. So everybody that's listening out there, we're going to give you about 30 seconds. Try to think of a different context that you could use this expression in, **if you don't mind**.

And after 30 seconds, Morag and I will share some of the ideas that we came up with. So here you go. Here's 30 seconds to put on your brainstorming hat and think of some answers.

Time's up, Morag. Time's up. That's been 30 seconds.

Morag: Mmhmm, all right. I think I've got something.

Andrew: What did you think of?

Morag: So I was thinking if somebody is smoking around you outside. Like, a lot of people don't really like that, and it's not super polite to smoke right near someone.

Andrew: Mmhmm.

Morag: So if you had that problem and you wanted to tell someone to move, you could say, "Um, could you go smoke somewhere else, **if you don't mind**?"

Andrew: Yeah.

Morag: Yeah.

Andrew: I like that one. That's a good example. "Go smoke somewhere else, **if you don't mind**."

Morag: Yeah.

Andrew: It's a strong statement, right? It's very firm.

Morag: Yeah.

Andrew: But it's not super rude.

Morag: No, not at all.

Andrew: Yeah. All of the words are polite, and yet you're very strongly telling someone to please go somewhere else with that cigarette.

- Morag: Yeah. You could also say, “Could you please smoke somewhere else, **if you don’t mind?**” And that’s a sentence that, you know, said, like, “Could you please go smoke somewhere else, **if you don’t mind?**” Super non-confrontational. But you could also be like, “Please go smoke somewhere else, **if you don’t mind.**”
- Andrew: Right, it’s stronger.
- Morag: Much stronger.
- Andrew: My idea was that if someone is being too loud, OK? So maybe you have a roommate or a noisy neighbour, and they’re just driving you crazy, right? You’re trying to study English with Culips, and you can’t because your neighbour is being too noisy.
- Well, you could knock on your neighbour’s door and say, “Hey, **if you don’t mind**, could you keep it down?”
- Morag: That’s a good one.
- Andrew: That might be a little too confrontational, right, banging on somebody’s door. But it works for this context.
- Morag: It does. And it’s a lot more reasonable and polite than just telling someone to shut up.
- Andrew: Yeah, it’s much more polite than just saying, “Shut up.” I agree.
- Morag: Well yes, yes. Yeah, but has essentially the same meaning.
- Andrew: Yes, exactly.
- Morag: Mmhmm.
- Andrew: Did you think of any other examples?
- Morag: So when somebody jumps in front of you, or if they butt in line or cut in line, you could say to that person, “Hey, **if you don’t mind**, I was here first.”
- Andrew: Or even, let’s say, maybe you’re at a grocery store, right? People are lining up to go through the checkout, and the cashier notices somebody cut into the line. That cashier could even say, “Oh, **if you don’t mind**, you should wait your turn, right? You should go to the back of the line.”
- So this is another great example of when you can use this expression, just to tell somebody to do something.
- Morag: Yeah, to tell someone that they have done something not cool.

- Andrew: Awesome. Well, Morag, that brings us to the end of our quiz and also to the end of our episode today.
- Morag: Ah, but don't forget that we will be replaying the whole dialogue one more time right at the end of this episode.
- Andrew: If you enjoyed today's episode, please support us. You can do that by leaving us a five-star ranking and a nice review on iTunes, or just tell your friends about Culips. That would help us out a ton.
- Morag: Yeah, it'd be great. Also if you have any questions or comments for us, please send us a message through our Facebook page at facebook.com/culipspodcast, or you can contact us through our website, Culips.com.
- Andrew: That's it for now, folks. We'll be back soon with another episode.
- Morag: Bye everybody.
- Andrew: Bye.

- Passenger 1: Excuse me, hi. **I'm sorry, but I'm pretty sure you're sitting in my seat.**
- Passenger 2: Um, really? Well, what seat am I in now, 15B? I'm ... No, I actually think I'm in the right place.
- Passenger 1: Uh, really? Uh, but here's my ticket. It says 15B.
- Passenger 2: OK, OK. Let me ... **I'll double-check my boarding pass.** Oh, it looks like you were right. I'm actually supposed to be in 51B.
- Passenger 1: OK. Well, **I'm glad we sorted that out.**
- Passenger 2: Well, I mean why don't you just go sit in my seat, the 51B? **I'm all settled in here, with my bags in the overhead compartment** and everything.
- Passenger 1: Hmm, yeah. I'd love to help you out, but **I'd rather just stick to my original seat, if you don't mind.**
- Passenger 2: Um, yeah. OK, OK.

Detailed Explanations

I'm sorry, but I'm pretty sure you're sitting in my seat

The first key expression in this episode is **I'm sorry, but I'm pretty sure you're sitting in my seat**. This is not a set expression, but an example of a polite way to present a problem to a stranger. There are three key parts to this phrase:

1. **I'm sorry:** This is a polite way to introduce a request or an issue that involves another person. Here are some alternate phrasings:
 - "Excuse me"
 - "Pardon me"
 - "Super sorry"
 - "Sorry to bother you"
2. **I'm pretty sure:** This is a phrase to lessen the intensity of whatever you are about to say. This phrase does not mean that you're unsure. It's simply used to be polite. Here are some similar phrases:
 - "I think that [something]."
 - "You might be [something]."
 - "Is it possible that [something]?"
3. **You're sitting in my seat:** This is the problem. The phrase that comes at the end is the problem being stated. This phrase will change according to what the problem is.

When approaching a stranger to try and resolve a problem, it's good to have all three of these elements in your introduction.

Here's one more example with **I'm sorry, but I'm pretty sure you're sitting in my seat**:

Jamie is waiting in line for the bank. When she's next in line, someone goes to the teller before her.

Jamie: Hey! **I'm sorry, but I'm pretty sure I was next.**

I'll double-check my boarding pass

The second key expression in this episode is **I'll double-check my boarding pass**. This expression can be used if someone asks if you are sitting in the wrong seat. By saying, "**I'll double-check my boarding pass**," you're letting the other person know that you will look again and confirm whether or not you're sitting in the correct seat.

As mentioned in this episode, the key part of **I'll double-check my boarding pass** is the verb to double-check. To double-check means to verify or carefully check on something that has been checked before. If you're in a situation where you and another person believe two different things, such as in the dialogue example in this episode, you can always ask them to double-check their information.

Here are some other ways you can say that you are going to verify the information on your boarding pass again:

- "Let me take another look at my boarding pass."
- "Why don't we compare our boarding passes?"
- "I can check the seat on my boarding pass."

Here are a couple more examples with **I'll double-check my boarding pass**:

Denise is at a concert with assigned seating. When she gets to her seat, she finds someone is already sitting in it.

Denise: Pardon me, but I think you're in my seat.

Stranger: Oh, really? Give me a second. **I'll double-check the seat number on my ticket.**

Gustavo is taking a train. When he gets to his seat, there is someone sitting in it.

Gustavo: Hi. **I'm sorry, but I'm pretty sure you're sitting in my seat.**

Stranger: **I'll double-check my ticket.**

Gustavo: Thanks.

I'm glad we sorted that out

I'm glad we sorted that out is a set phrase used to show appreciation after a problem has been resolved. The key part of this expression is the phrasal verb to sort out. To sort out means to solve a problem or to come to a resolution.

In the dialogue example from this episode, the first passenger says, "**I'm glad we sorted that out**," after both people recognize that the second passenger was sitting in the wrong seat after all. So in this scenario, **I'm glad we sorted that out** is used to show relief and appreciation that the misunderstanding has been cleared up.

If you have a problem with a stranger, like them sitting in your assigned seat, saying "**I'm glad we sorted that out**" can be a polite way to end the conversation. Here are a few similar phrases that you could use to politely end a conversation with a stranger:

- "I'm glad we cleared that up."
- "Good thing we got that sorted out."
- "Thanks for helping me figure this out."

You can use **I'm glad we sorted that out** in any situation where you want to say that you're happy some information has been made clear or a problem has been fixed.

Here are a couple more examples with **I'm glad we sorted that out**:

Nina:	Bye! I'll see you on Saturday at 9:00 a.m. for the staff brunch.
Harold:	Wait, tomorrow? Isn't the brunch next Saturday?
Nina:	Really? Let me double-check my email. Oh, you're right! The staff meeting is a week from Saturday. I'm glad we sorted that out!
Harold:	No kidding. It would have been terrible if you missed the brunch.

Josephine:	I think we're at the wrong bus stop. The 165 was supposed to be here already.
Dexter:	Wait! Aren't we supposed to take the 165? It only stops on Victoria, not on this street.
Josephine:	Thanks for catching that. I'm glad we sorted that out. Catching the wrong bus is the worst!

I'm all settled in here, with my bags in the overhead compartment

I'm all settled in here, with my bags in the overhead compartment is a sentence that is specific to today's dialogue.

In this sentence, the passenger is saying that they don't want to change seats. This is clear when they say, "**I'm all settled in here**" because to settle in means to become comfortable in a physical location. So by saying, "**I'm all settled in here**," the speaker is saying that they have become cozy where they are, and they do not wish to change seats.

Here's one more example with **I'm all settled in here, with my bags in the overhead compartment**:

Antonio:	OK. We made it on the plane. Now, we just have to wait for takeoff! Are you comfortable in your seat? Did you put your bags away?
Kim:	Yeah, I'm all settled in here, with my bags in the overhead compartment .

I'd rather just stick to my original seat, if you don't mind

The final expression in this episode, **I'd rather just stick to my original seat, if you don't mind**, is another sentence specific to this dialogue. There are two key parts to this expression: **to stick to [something]** and **if you don't mind**.

To stick means to continue or to be uninterested in changing. When you want to keep something as it is, or when you don't want to change something, you use **to stick to [something]**. So when the first passenger says, "**I'd rather just stick to my original seat**," they're saying that they don't want to change the seating arrangement.

If you don't mind is a very useful phrase to use when making a request. When you add **if you don't mind** to the beginning or end of a request, it makes the request more polite and courteous.

Here's one more example with **I'd rather just stick to my original seat, if you don't mind**:

Jeanette:	So I know that we were supposed to sit in alphabetical order, but I was thinking we should change seats and confuse the teacher. What do you think? It could be fun.
Denis:	I'd rather just stick to my original seat, if you don't mind .

Quiz

1. When you make a request of someone, what phrase can you use to be more polite?

- a) "if you care"
- b) "if you'd even bother"
- c) "if you don't mind"
- d) "if you'll give it a go"

2. If you're approaching a stranger who's sitting in your seat, which of the following phrases should you avoid saying because it is impolite?

- a) "I'm sorry, but I'm pretty sure you're sitting in my seat."
- b) "Get out of my seat."
- c) "Excuse me, but I think that you're in my seat."
- d) "Sorry to bother you, but you might be in my seat."

3. Which of the following means to become comfortable somewhere?

- a) to double-check
- b) to settle in
- c) to sort out
- d) to hunker down

4. _____ is a synonym for double-check.

- a) verify
- b) learn
- c) observe
- d) center

5. True or false: You can say, "I'm glad we sorted that out" to start a conversation with a stranger.

- a) true
- b) false

Quiz Answers

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

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