

Real Talk #022 – You got the wrong number

Episode description

Have you ever called the wrong number and didn't know what to say? Don't worry! In this Real Talk episode, Suzanne and Andrew discuss the best ways of dealing with these awkward situations on the phone.

Fun fact

Inventors Innocenzo Manzetti, Charles Bourseul, Johann Philipp Reis, and Antonio Meucci all had claims on the invention of the telephone. However, history books generally record Alexander Graham Bell as its inventor.

Expressions included in the study guide

- Filled to the brim
- Backstory
- To nip it in the bud
- My bad
- I'm afraid
- To get in touch
- To pick up, to dial, to hang up



Transcript

Andrew: You're listening to the Culips English podcast. To download the study guide for this episode, which includes the transcript, detailed vocabulary explanations, real-world examples, and a quiz, visit our website, Culips.com, C-U-L-I-P-S.com.

Hey, everybody. My name is Andrew.

Suzanne: And I'm Suzanne.

Andrew: And you're listening to Culips.

Hey, Suzanne, how are you?

Suzanne: I'm pretty good, Andrew. How's it going for you?

Andrew: Things are good over here. Actually, Suzanne, you know, I'm going on a trip right after we finish recording today.

Suzanne: What? That's awesome! Where are you going?

Andrew: I'm going back to Canada for a week to see my folks and my brother and sister, some of my friends. I don't have time to go to Montreal, so I can't see you, Sue. Sorry about that.

Suzanne: Ah, man.

Andrew: Next time, though.

Suzanne: I know, I hope so.

Andrew: Anyway, today we are going to do a Real Talk episode. And Real Talk is the series where we teach you the English expressions you need to know to successfully deal with real-world situations.

Suzanne: Nice.

Andrew: And today we will teach you what to say when you call the wrong number, when you're making a phone call, or even if you answer a call from a wrong number. But, just before we get into that lesson, I wanna let everyone know that the best way to study with this episode is with our study guide. And you'll get a transcript, and a bunch of other awesome practice activities that we designed to help you guys get better at English. And it's available for download on our website, Culips.com. So when you get a free moment, please go check it out.

- Suzanne: That study guide sounds like it's jam-packed with goodness.
- Andrew: **Filled to the brim**, absolutely. Suzanne, what's the plan for today?
- Suzanne: Well, today we're going to start with an example conversation. And we're gonna listen to that conversation and, in it, you're gonna notice that a guy named Jeff tries to call his friend Sarah, but he accidentally, maybe, pushes the wrong number and doesn't realize it and calls the wrong person.
- Andrew: And then after we listen to the example, we'll take a close look at the expressions and vocabulary you can use when you **dial** a wrong number or when you answer a call from someone who **has dialed** the wrong number. And this happens occasionally, maybe not every day, but from time to time. And, Sue, you told me earlier that this actually happened to you today, right?
- Suzanne: Yeah, I had someone call me in French, and most of my friends know that my first language is English. So I kind of knew right away that it wasn't someone I knew, but it was definitely the wrong number. They were asking me if I needed help with something and I didn't.
- Andrew: All right, well, let's listen to the example conversation where Jeff tries to call his friend Sarah, but gets the wrong number right now.

- Jackie: Hello?
- Jeff: Oh, hi. Um, is this Sarah?
- Jackie: No, this is Jackie.
- Jeff: Oh, well, could I talk to Sarah, please?
- Jackie: Oh, I think you got the wrong number. There's no Sarah here.
- Jeff: Really? But this is 354-9582, right?
- Jackie: No, no, this is 354-8582.
- Jeff: Oh, **my bad**. Sorry to bother you. Bye.

- Andrew: OK, Suzanne, so in that conversation we heard Jeff get a wrong number. And so he asked to talk to his friend Sarah, and what did the lady on the other end of the line say to him?
- Suzanne: Well, she said, "I think you've got the wrong number. There's no Sarah here." So she clarified that this is not the number to reach Sarah.

- Andrew: Yeah, and it's bizarre, right? Like she 100% knew that Jeff had the wrong number, but still she said, "I think you got the wrong number." This is just a standard, set expression we say even when we're convinced and we know 100% that the person got the wrong number.
- Suzanne: Absolutely. We totally say "I think" all the time, even if we know for sure. That's what I said today, as well, on the phone when the guy called me asking me if I needed help and I said, "Nope, I think you have the wrong number."
- Andrew: It just makes it softer and more polite when you say, "I think you got the wrong number." If you say, "You got the wrong number," it's maybe very direct and could potentially sound a little rude, but "I think you got the wrong number," it's just softer, more polite, more gentle, and I think that's why we use it.
- Suzanne: I liked that Jeff made sure by repeating the phone number and clarifying, are you sure this is the number I **dialed**? Is it different than the one that is yours?
- Andrew: Yeah, and that's something that you can do, some people do from time to time, just confirming the number, right? Maybe they wrote the number down incorrectly. We don't know the **backstory**, but maybe Jeff just met this girl Sarah recently and Sarah wrote down the number on a piece of paper for him. He might possibly think that he wrote the number down wrong or that Sarah gave him a fake number, who knows, so.
- Suzanne: Yeah, that's true, that happens.
- Andrew: Yeah, so, that's why he's confirming, I think.
- Suzanne: Has that ever happened to you, Andrew? Has anyone ever given you a fake number?
- Andrew: No, because I don't think I make it to the stage where girls give me their phone numbers in the first place.
- Suzanne: I don't think I've ever given a fake number, I think it's not nice, like, I just would say I'm not interested in giving you my phone number, you know?
- Andrew: Right.
- Suzanne: I think that's better.
- Andrew: Yeah, I think it's better **to nip it in the bud**, right? And, just, if you're not interested in somebody, don't give them your phone number from the start.

- Suzanne: Don't bother the little old ladies.
- Andrew: Yeah, 'cause now the old lady on the other line has to deal with this.
- Suzanne: Who knows, maybe she's lonely and she's welcoming the phone calls, who knows. But I was just gonna say I also liked that Jeff apologized to the lady, to Jackie. He said, "Oh, **my bad**" or, you know, my fault, sorry to bother you. And he acknowledged his mistake.
- Andrew: Exactly, **my bad** is a very casual way to apologize for something. Oh, **my bad**, you recognize I made a mistake and you're apologizing for it.
- Suzanne: I just wanna say, maybe an old lady doesn't know necessarily the terminology **my bad**. I'm not sure.
- Andrew: It's possible that this is definitely an expression used by younger kids.
- Suzanne: Maybe.
- Andrew: Or younger people and usually for very small things, right? If you got into a car accident, if you rear-ended somebody, you wouldn't say, "Oh **my bad**." It's only for very trivial, small things you can say **my bad**, like making a mistake when you call somebody on the phone, you enter the wrong phone number.
- Suzanne: Yes.
- Andrew: Sue, before we finish, we'll listen to one more example.
- Suzanne: OK.
- Andrew: And this one is in a business context, OK? 'Cause I think a lot of the times that you may get a wrong number is from a business calling you mistakenly. So, in this example, a bank mistakenly calls someone who is not their client. So let's take a listen and then we'll discuss what we heard.
- Suzanne: OK.

- Gord: Hello?
- Jennifer: Hi, this is Jennifer from First Canada Bank. Is this Carl Smith?
- Gord: No, this is Gord. **I'm afraid** you got the wrong number.
- Jennifer: Oh, I'm sorry about that. Have a great day.
- Gord: OK, bye.

- Andrew: OK, Sue, what was the expression that Gord used in this conversation to communicate to the bank that they called the wrong person?
- Suzanne: Well, in this scenario, he said, “**I’m afraid** you got the wrong number.” So he used the terminology that’s a little more formal, and a little more elevated language: **I’m afraid** you’ve blah blah blah. Or, you know, you can also say it about yourself, “**I’m afraid** I’ve called the wrong number.” And this is something you would use in a situation that is a little more elevated, where there’s a little bit more formality to the conversation.
- Andrew: Yeah, it sounds very polite, very formal. But I know when my dad answers a call from a wrong number, he always says, “**I’m afraid** you have the wrong number.” Again, it’s just one of those set, fixed expressions that you hear quite often. And afraid, here, we’re not meaning scared, right? It’s just **I’m afraid** in this context means sorry, I’m sorry you’ve got the wrong number. **I’m afraid** you’ve got the wrong number.
- Suzanne: I feel like I could hear it in a British TV drama, like in The Crown or something: **I’m afraid** you’ve.
- Andrew: Yes, this definitely sounds more like UK English than American English to me. I think that’s one of the beautiful things about Canadian English, is we have this mixture of both American English and British English at play at the same time.
- Suzanne: I agree, yes.
- Andrew: All right Suzanne, well, I think that about wraps it up for us today. There’s not too many expressions you can use to talk about a wrong number, so actually this is a good thing, right? Less to learn.
- Suzanne: Yeah, it’s really concise and very formulaic, honestly.
- Andrew: Absolutely.
- OK, guys, well, thanks for listening. Again, the study guide for this episode is available on Culips.com. And if you would like **to get in touch** with us, give us some ideas for an upcoming episode, or if you have any questions you’d like an answer to, shoot us an email at contact@Culips.com.
- Suzanne: And we are always on Facebook at [Facebook.com/CulipsPodcast](https://www.facebook.com/CulipsPodcast), and you can find us there, message us, or share a comment.
- Andrew: We will be back very soon with another new episode. So we’ll talk to you then, everyone. Bye.
- Suzanne: Bye.

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Detailed Explanations

Filled to the brim

Idiom

Filled to the brim means something that is full. In this episode, Suzanne talks about how the study guide is jam-packed with goodness. Andrew agrees, saying it is **filled to the brim**. In this idiom, brim means the edge of a cup or a glass. If you fill a cup to the brim, it cannot get any more full!

Here are a couple more examples with **filled to the brim**:

Art:	Whoa, you poured way too much coffee in my mug.
Ben:	I thought you liked coffee.
Art:	Yeah, but it's filled to the brim . I can't walk it back to my table.
Ben:	Just take a quick sip.
Art:	It's too hot.
Ben:	You're so difficult!

Martha:	Jack loves playing Santa Claus for the kids.
Vicky:	I can imagine seeing that.
Martha:	Every Christmas morning, he comes through the back door with a goodie bag filled to the brim .
Vicky:	How do the kids react?
Martha:	They go absolutely bonkers!

Backstory

Noun

In this episode, Andrew mentions how we do not know the **backstory** to a dialogue. A **backstory** is the story that happens before the present. **Backstories** are made to help the plot of a story or to develop a character.

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

Rashid:	Have you seen the new Superman movie?
Greg:	No. I'm not a big fan, actually.
Rashid:	Really? Why not?
Greg:	I never really fell for his backstory . He's from a different planet, so he feels alienated. But he's virtually invincible. Not very compelling.
Rashid:	I see what you mean.

Patty:	I'm having difficulty writing my new script.
Vera:	What's the problem?
Patty:	I feel like my main character does not have a full enough backstory .
Vera:	I really liked the flashbacks you used in your previous work. Maybe you can try that again.
Patty:	Hey, thanks. I'll try that.

To nip it in the bud

Idiom

To nip it in the bud is to end a situation before it gets too advanced. A bud is a burgeoning flower, and to nip it is to cut it off before it can become a full flower. Even though flowers are generally a good thing, this expression is used when wanting to stop a bad situation from developing further.

Here are a couple more examples with **to nip it in the bud**:

Teacher 1: A few students in my morning class have been acting up since coming back from the break.

Teacher 2: You really need **to nip that in the bud**.

Teacher 1: I know. What do you suggest?

Teacher 2: Be super strict for the next few days. Once they're in line, you can ease up.

Jessie: See that woman? She used to work in the marketing department.

Dev: She looks stern.

Jessie: She is. And she's amazing. Anytime there was a problem on the horizon, she would **nip it in the bud**.

Dev: We could use her in marketing again!

My bad

Idiom, informal

As explained in this episode, **my bad** is an informal expression used when you acknowledge you are at fault for something. However, this expression is used when it's something trivial, and not a major offence.

Here are a couple more examples with **my bad**:

Brad: Sorry I'm late.

Simon: It would have been nice for you to call in advance.

Brad: I know. **My bad**. I was driving and couldn't call.

Simon: That's all right. Let's get started with the game.

Pete: Did you take the chicken breast out of the freezer?

Cory: Darn, I forgot.

Pete: Now it won't thaw in time for supper.

Cory: Yeah, **my bad**. Look, I'll swing by the butcher shop and get some fresh chicken.

I'm afraid

Idiom

A person in the sample dialogue says, “**I’m afraid** you got the wrong number.” He means to say, “I’m sorry, but you have the wrong number.” Our hosts then explain how the expression **I’m afraid** is used to inform someone of something in a polite manner. You can use the expression followed by any pronoun, for example, **I’m afraid I** or **I’m afraid we**.

Here are a couple more examples with **I’m afraid**:

Kit:	Thank you for lending me that book the other day.
Beth:	Oh, no problem.
Kit:	But I’m afraid I had a bit of an accident.
Beth:	Oh dear, what happened?
Kit:	I put the book in my backpack to go to school the other day. There was a flash rainstorm and I didn’t have an umbrella, so everything in my backpack got soaked. I’m sorry. I’ll buy you a new copy.

Jill:	How’s the programming coming along?
Gail:	I’m afraid we have a small problem with the program.
Jill:	How so?
Gail:	The new team leader has been out sick for a few days, so we’re running behind.

To get in touch

Idiom

Near the end of this episode, Andrew offers different ways **to get in touch** with the Culips team. **To get in touch** with someone is to contact them. This is a great expression to use with business associates and friends. You can also suggest that they keep in touch.

Here are a couple more examples with **to get in touch**:

Harry: Mr. Kilkenny?

Mr. Kilkenny: Yes?

Harry: I just wanted to say that I enjoyed your lecture on the environment tremendously.

Mr. Kilkenny: Oh, thank you!

Harry: Is there a way I can **get in touch** with you for more information?

Mr. Kilkenny: Here's my card.

Harry: Thank you very much.

Mary: I didn't know you got a new dog.

Gisele: It's not really my dog. It's the dog of this house's previous owner. The dog found its way back to the house!

Mary: Have you called the former owners?

Gisele: I don't have their information. I can't **get in touch** with them.

Mary: Then it might very well end up being your new dog!

To pick up, to dial, to hang up

Idioms

To pick up a phone, **to dial** a number, and **to hang up** a phone are telephone expressions that are still used even though we no longer use phones in that way. **Picking up** and **hanging up** a phone come from the physical action of picking up and hanging up the receiver. **Dialing** a number comes from when telephones had a rotary dialer that you had to turn clockwise with your finger. You can still use these expressions even if you're on your smartphone.

Here's an example with **to pick up**, **to dial**, and **to hang up**:

Mitch:	Why won't she pick up ?
Vick:	Who are you calling?
Mitch:	My sister.
Vick:	Are you sure you dialed the correct number?
Mitch:	I didn't at first. The last time, I got some old man.
Vick:	Did you confirm it was the wrong number?
Mitch:	No, I just hung up .
Vick:	That's a bit rude.

Quiz

1. Which of the following situations does NOT apply to the expression filled to the brim?
 - a) having too many good ideas
 - b) filling your bathtub halfway
 - c) eating until you are full
 - d) filling your cup to the top

2. In the sentence “I’m afraid I have something to tell you,” which emotion best expresses the speaker’s feelings?
 - a) concern
 - b) fear
 - c) annoyance
 - d) surprise

3. In the sense used in this episode, to nip something in the bud is to _____.
 - a) do some gardening
 - b) stop a problem before it becomes worse

4. If you tell someone my bad, that means _____.
 - a) you have bad breath
 - b) you have bad cellphone reception
 - c) you made a small mistake

5. Which of the following is NOT a common telephone expression?
 - a) to dial a number
 - b) to reach someone
 - c) to wrong number someone
 - d) to get in touch

Writing or Discussions Questions

1. Have you ever had a pleasant conversation with someone when calling the wrong number?
2. Have you ever given someone the wrong number on purpose just so they couldn't contact you?
3. Do you answer your phone even when you know it's someone trying to sell you something?
4. When do you not answer your phone?
5. What's your favourite way to keep in touch with people? Phone? Text? Email? Social media?

Quiz Answers

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

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