

Real Talk #023 – Returning a missed call

Episode description

What should you do when you pick up your phone and notice a missed call? Andrew and Jeremy can help you! In this episode of Real Talk, they share the most natural ways English speakers return a missed call.

Fun fact

Even though companies like Apple and Samsung are leaders in the smartphone industry, they only make about 30% of all the phones sold in the world. Other leading brands are Huawei, Nokia, and Lenovo.

Expressions included in the study guide

- To break [something] in
- Crystal clear
- The States
- To approach a situation
- To tweak
- Ubiquitous



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: 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.

Hello, everybody. My name is Andrew.

Jeremy: And I'm Jeremy.

Andrew: And you're listening to Culips. Hey, Jeremy.

Jeremy: Hey, Andrew.

Andrew: How's it going?

Jeremy: Pretty good, how about yourself?

Andrew: I'm doing good. Jeremy, I don't know if you can see here, but I'm using a brand-new desk today for the first time. I'm **breaking in** a new desk.

Jeremy: Is it a standing desk?

Andrew: It is. It's a standing desk.

Jeremy: Ah. Very good, very nice.

Andrew: Yeah, so, when I do Culips, not so much the recording but the other stuff, the editing and all the other work, I'm sitting for a long time. And it's been starting to hurt my back, so I bought a standing desk where I now have the option to sit or stand, and today I'm standing for the first time. So I don't know if listeners can hear it in my voice, but this is my standing voice.

Jeremy: Oh, it sounds so much better.

Andrew: A big upgrade, that's good to hear.

Jeremy: Oh yeah, it's so clear, **crystal clear**. Wonderful.

- Andrew: Awesome. OK, guys, if you don't know, you're listening to our Real Talk series. And this is the series where we teach you the English expressions that you need to know for real-world, everyday situations. And, Jeremy, what is our topic for today? What real-world situation will we examine today?
- Jeremy: Something that anyone who has a cell phone will encounter, which is a missed call.
- Andrew: A missed call, OK. Missed call, M-I-S-S-E-D, missed call. What is it? What is a missed call?
- Jeremy: A missed call is when someone calls you, but you don't see your phone. So if you couldn't see your phone, or you were in the other room and you come out and you see your phone and, oh, someone called me. Oh, I have a missed call.
- Andrew: Jeremy, do you use Android or iPhone?
- Jeremy: I use Android.
- Andrew: I also use Android, and this isn't a new feature but it's a feature that I've been using a lot recently where I can turn all notifications off from my phone. So I have been doing this because it helps me focus without having my phone buzz every 2 seconds. But it means at the end of the day when I look at my phone, I have some missed calls sometimes. I think it annoys people.
- Jeremy: It could, it could probably annoy people.
- Andrew: But when you have a missed call, often you'll want to phone back that number to see what's up, to see why that person called you, and that's what we will look at today.
- And just before we get into it, I want to remind everybody that the best way to study with this episode is with the study guide. And so in this study guide, you'll get the transcript, detailed vocabulary explanations, very natural real-life examples, a quiz, and more in the study guide, and that's available on our website right now, Culips.com, C-U-L-I-P-S.com.
- OK, Jeremy, let's go over the plan for today. What's on the schedule?
- Jeremy: Well, we'll start by listening to an example conversation. And in this example, a man named Shawn realizes that he has a missed call from a number he has never seen before. So he calls the number back to see what it was about.

Andrew: OK, awesome. And then after listening to this example, we'll take a close look at the expression and vocabulary that you can use when you need to phone a number from a missed call. Sound good?

Jeremy: Sounds good.

Andrew: All right, well, let's listen to the conversation right now.

Shawn: Huh, that's weird. I don't remember my phone ringing. Mmm, I guess I'll just call this number back to see what they want.

Man: Lakeside post office, how can I help you?

Shawn: Hi, I have a missed call from this number on my phone. I just wanted to see what the call's about?

Man: Sure, can I get your name please?

Shawn: Yeah, it's Shawn Cunningham, Shawn spelled S-H-A-W-N.

Man: All right, it looks like we have a package down here for you. You can pick it up at anytime between 9 and 5, Monday to Friday.

Shawn: I see, sounds good. Thanks a lot.

Man: No problem. Bye.

Andrew: In the conversation we just heard, Shawn makes a phone call to a missed call from an unknown number that appeared on his phone. And it turns out it was the post office calling him to let him know that there is a package waiting for him at the post office. And, actually, I'm curious since you're located in **the States**, how it works down there. But in Canada if the delivery guy comes to your house to deliver a package, maybe something you ordered off Amazon or something like that, and you're not home, they'll actually take the package back to the post office and keep it there, and when you have some free time, you have to go pick it up yourself. Is it like that where you're from, too?

Jeremy: Do they always do that?

Andrew: You know, I have the sense now that things are changing because internet shopping is so, so popular that maybe they just sometimes leave it in front of your house.

Jeremy: Yeah, that's usually what they do here. But there are some packages that, like, if the sender chooses to get delivery confirmation, then in that case they'll keep the package and you have to go get it or call them or set a time to have it dropped off, something like that.

Andrew: Yeah, well, our listeners that are in Canada can email me and let me know 100% if I'm wrong or right. But as far as I know, last time I lived in Canada, which was just 2 years ago, it was like this, where you'd have to go pick it up if you weren't home. Very, very annoying, actually.

Jeremy: Seems annoying, yeah.

Andrew: Yeah. But anyways, that's not what we're gonna talk about for the rest of the episode. We're gonna look closely at that example conversation that we just heard. What I wanna focus on is how Shawn approached the problem of calling an unknown number, because you really don't know who it is, right? It's just a number on your phone, it could be anybody. So let's take another listen to what Shawn said when he made the call.

Shawn: I have a missed call from this number on my phone. I just wanted to see what the call's about?

Andrew: OK, so Shawn said I have a missed call from this number on my phone. I just wanted to see what the call's about? I just wanted to see what the call's about? How does this sound to you Jeremy? Is this a polite way to **approach this situation?**

Jeremy: Yeah, I think this sounds pretty normal, polite. Sometimes I say I got a missed call from this number. Usually, especially these days with smart phones and everything, people are quite used to this. They will usually explain the situation. Oh, yes, we called you because of this blah, blah, blah.

Andrew: Right. And so what you would want to avoid in this situation is being too direct, right? Ring, ring, hi, post office, how can I help you? Why did you call me?

Jeremy: Yeah.

Andrew: You know this is gonna sound rude, actually, if you're too direct with your request. You have to make it a little softer. You have to introduce the situation, oh, hi, I have a missed call, just wanted to see why you called me? This sounds very polite and friendly.

- Jeremy: Yeah, if you speak about yourself, you explain your situation, your personal situation, instead of saying something to or about the other person, for example, ring, ring, did you call me? You don't know who they are, right? That would be very confusing for the other person.
- Andrew: Yeah, it could also be a situation where somebody makes a phone call and they realize after a ring or two that they got the wrong number and they just hang up. And then you have that missed call show up on your phone and when you call them, that other person might get confused. Did you call me? Uh, no. Oh, oh. It can be very confusing, so just being friendly and straightforward at the same time is the best approach, I think.
- Jeremy: Agreed.
- Andrew: Can you brainstorm some other ways we could let the person we're calling know that we're calling in regard to a missed call? How could we say that, and a couple other ways if we tried to **tweak** it.
- Jeremy: Well, you could introduce yourself first, because usually someone who calls you will know your name. So if I said, hello, this is Jeremy, I received a missed call from you earlier, could I ask what you were calling me about? Something like that.
- Andrew: Yeah, that's slightly more formal, right? Could I ask what the call is about? Maybe if you are expecting a call from, I don't know, somebody who may have dropped off a job application at, like, a company, or maybe you are expecting a call from a bank or something. You want to elevate your language, make it slightly more formal. Or if you just want to be very polite, you could say could I ask what the call is about? Very good.
- Jeremy: You could be direct also, kind of like I said before, if you say did you call me? Sometimes that can sound too direct, but if your tone is higher pitch, in English we raise our tone to be a little more polite, so if you said hello, did you call me earlier? I see I have a missed call from this number. Was it you? That doesn't sound so rude.
- Andrew: Exactly. It's all about the delivery, the tone, right? So I think that it's OK to ask a direct question here, but just be gentle with your delivery and it won't be misinterpreted as rude. And another way I could think of approaching this problem is just to say hi, this is Andrew, I'm returning your call. I noticed I have a missed call from you. Something like this. You could be very direct and you don't actually ask why they're calling. The person on the other end of the line can just assume from the context that you're calling in regard to their previous call.
- Jeremy: Yeah, they can probably figure it out.

- Andrew: Indeed. Yeah, this is kind of a new problem, because before most people had voicemail and would actually check their voicemail. But I don't have voicemail, do you have voicemail on your phone?
- Jeremy: I do. And, I mean, I do check it sometimes, but I think you're right—in times when smartphones were not **ubiquitous**, when not everyone had a smartphone and instead they had a voicemail at home, before calling back you usually knew what it was about because they left a message. Hello, my name is whatever, I'm calling from the post office, you have a package, blah, blah, blah.
- Andrew: Right.
- Jeremy: And then you don't need to ask, but nowadays we do.
- Andrew: Yup, and when I call my friends and they do have a voicemail, it's always full so I can never leave a message, so they just have to see "missed call from Andrew."
- Jeremy: I usually just send a text.
- Andrew: Me as well. Texting is the way to go.
- Jeremy: It's far easier.
- Andrew: Well, everybody, that about brings us to the end of our Real Talk episode today. We hope you enjoyed it, we hope you learned something, and thank you for listening. Our website is Culips.com and, again, if you wanna get the transcript and practice exercises for this episode, check out the website to download the study guide. And, hey, we're on social media as well, right, Jeremy?
- Jeremy: Yeah, we're also on Facebook at Facebook.com/CulipsPodcast, and you can get in touch with us by emailing us at contact@Culips.com.
- Andrew: Yeah. Hey, guys, we will be back soon with another brand-new episode, stay tuned for that. And we'll talk to you then. Bye.
- Jeremy: Take care.
- Announcer: The best way to study with Culips is by becoming a Culips member. When you become a Culips member, you will get full transcripts, detailed vocabulary explanations, and quizzes for each episode. Visit Culips.com, that's C-U-L-I-P-S.com, to sign up and become a member.

Detailed Explanations

To break [something] in Idiom

In this episode, Andrew says he is **breaking in** his new desk. That means he is using and testing it out for the first time. This expression most often relates to shoes and clothing. Shoes might be uncomfortable at first, but after **breaking them in**, they will be more supple and pleasant to wear. You can also **break someone in**. If you are training someone new at your work, you can say you are **breaking in** the new employee.

Here are a couple more examples with **to break [something] in**:

Brianna:	There's something different about you.
Georgia:	I'm wearing new ice skates.
Brianna:	Oh yeah, they look good. How do they feel?
Georgia:	They hurt! I just need some time to break them in . After that, I'll be fine.
Brianna:	That's right. It always takes a while to get comfortable.

Rafael:	How was your day today?
Frances:	Long.
Rafael:	How come?
Frances:	We have a new cashier and he's not getting the hang of the job just yet.
Rafael:	Breaking in the new guy, huh? How about I cook dinner tonight?

Crystal clear

Idiom

When something is **crystal clear**, it is either well heard or well understood. Since crystal is pure and transparent, the expression is often used to describe clear sound. You can also use **crystal clear** when someone asks if you understand the meaning of what they just said.

Here are a couple more examples with **crystal clear**:

Caller 1:	Hey, can you hear me?
Caller 2:	What?
Caller 1:	I said, can you hear me?
Caller 2:	Not well.
Caller 1:	Give me a second. I'll change location. OK, can you hear me now?
Caller 2:	Crystal clear.
Caller 1:	Great. How's it going?

Boss:	I need you to send off emails to the supplier and to the shipping company immediately.
Employee:	Yes, ma'am.
Boss:	And don't tell the finance department anything about this. Do I make myself clear?
Employee:	Yes, ma'am. Crystal clear.

The States

Proper noun

In this episode, Andrew mentions that Jeremy lives in **the States**. That is a very common way for Canadians to refer to the United States of America.

Here are a couple more examples with **the States**:

Larry:	Where are you thinking of going this summer?
Beth:	On holiday? I was thinking about the States .
Larry:	Again? You always go down there.
Beth:	But I always go to the East Coast. This time I'm thinking of going to the West Coast.
Larry:	Could be fun. There are a lot of interesting places down the West Coast.

Nathan:	These strawberries are amazing. Where did you buy them?
Kaley:	Just at the corner market.
Nathan:	Are they locally grown?
Kaley:	Actually, they're imported from the States .
Nathan:	We should go on a road trip and get some of these at the source!

To approach a situation

Idiom

To approach a situation is to deal with a problem or an issue. It's your strategy or your plan for figuring out solutions.

Here are a couple more examples with **to approach a situation**:

Omar:	I read the report the two of you sent me. It was very insightful.
Ian:	It was mostly Kim who wrote it.
Omar:	Good stuff. I really like how she approaches a situation and finds the best analysis.
Ian:	That's why I gave it to her to write. She's a marvel.

Boss:	If an angry customer comes in with a problem regarding their bill, how would you approach this situation ?
Trainee:	I would first look the bill over with the customer.
Boss:	And if they want a refund?
Trainee:	I would check the company's policy to see if they can receive a refund.

To tweak

Verb

To tweak something is to change it slightly, preferably for the better. You can **tweak** a presentation, a computer's hardware, a car engine, or even your relationship! **To tweak** also has another meaning. It can mean to pull or twist something, like pulling a muscle in your back.

Here are a couple more examples with **to tweak**:

Jarvis:	How did the morning presentation go?
Marta:	Not bad. There were a few glitches with the video, though.
Jarvis:	Can you tweak it before this afternoon's presentation?
Marta:	I'll give it a try.

Carlo:	You look terrible! What's wrong?
John:	I haven't been sleeping well since I tweaked my back last week.
Carlo:	How did that happen?
John:	Getting out of bed. I bent over too quickly and felt something pull in my back.
Carlo:	Have you seen a specialist yet?

Ubiquitous

Adjective

To be **ubiquitous** means to be found or present everywhere. If a movie is really popular and you see the posters for it everywhere, you can say the posters and the movie are **ubiquitous**.

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

Gita:	For the meeting, how about we meet at the Starbucks at 5 p.m.?
Rose:	Which Starbucks?
Gita:	The one on 4th Street.
Rose:	There are two of them on 4th.
Gita:	Wow, they really are ubiquitous . How about a non-chain coffee shop, then?

Yann:	Did you see the posters for the new Green Party candidate?
Fiona:	How can I not? They're everywhere.
Yann:	And he's been doing a lot of television appearances, too.
Fiona:	That's important, too. You have to be ubiquitous in a political campaign, especially if you come from a smaller party.
Yann:	For sure.

Quiz

1. If you are approaching a situation, you are _____.

- a) walking slowly
- b) sneaking up on someone
- c) planning your future moves
- d) trying to locate yourself

2. True or false: To tweak something is always a good thing.

- a) true
- b) false

3. Which of the following is NOT synonymous with ubiquitous?

- a) everywhere
- b) found in every country
- c) very well known
- d) fairly famous

4. If something is crystal clear, it is _____.

- a) well understood
- b) made of crystal
- c) as clear as water
- d) precious

5. True or false: To break something in is a good thing.

- a) true
- b) false

Writing or Discussions Questions

1. What do you do when you realize you have a missed call?
2. What is your first reaction when you see you have 10 missed calls from the same person?
3. Do you ever turn off your notifications on your phone? In what situation would you do that?
4. In English, intonation is very important for the perception of rudeness and politeness. How about in your native language?
5. If money were not an issue, which phone operating system would you prefer, Android or iPhone, and why?

Quiz Answers

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

Episode credits

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