

## Real Talk #024 – How to cancel a plan

### Episode description

It's not always a fun thing to do, but sometimes we need to cancel plans we have already made. Doing it tactfully is very important. In this episode of Real Talk, Andrew and Suzanne give you the best expressions for cancelling plans.

### Fun fact

Early in this episode, Suzanne mentions she recently switched from drinking coffee to drinking tea. Which of the two drinks do you think is more popular worldwide? If you guessed coffee, you're right! In only a few countries is tea more popular than coffee, notably the United Kingdom and Ireland.

### Expressions included in the study guide

- Cheap
- Something's come up
- Space cadet
- To double-book
- To take a close look
- On one's radar
- To take the blame



## Transcript

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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.

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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.

Hello, Suzanne.

Suzanne: Hello, Andrew. How are you?

Andrew: I'm doing really well. How are you this morning?

Suzanne: I'm doing well, but you know what? I switched from coffee to tea again and, as we know, tea is not coffee. So it's not doing the job I want it to. Still a little sleepy.

Andrew: Still a little sleepy. Well, Suzanne, I'm actually drinking tea as well. I have a pot of Earl Grey in front of me.

Suzanne: Nice.

Andrew: I was shopping last week—this is kind of a funny story, so I'll share it with you. I was shopping last week, and I wanted to buy some tea. And I noticed some Earl Grey tea bags that were on sale for 80% off—80% off!

Suzanne: Wow.

Andrew: I couldn't believe it, I was like, this is the tea for me, I'm gonna buy it. So I bought it, I got it home, and I didn't know why it was so **cheap**. Why was the store selling this tea so **cheap**? Until I tried to open the tea bags and I realized why the tea is so **cheap**. And that is because they made the satchel that holds the tea bag, you know like the envelope?

Suzanne: Yes.

Andrew: It's too small. So every time that you try to open the envelope to get the tea bag out, you rip the tea bag at the same time.

Suzanne: And then it's, like, what's the point of this tea bag? It's ripped.

Andrew: It's ripped. I don't have a tea ball for loose leaf tea, unfortunately, I don't own one right now. So, yeah, I'm drinking tea at the moment, but if you hear me spitting little pieces of tea out of my mouth while we are recording, that's because of this bad tea bag envelope.

Suzanne: Well, I hope the tea tastes good, at least?

Andrew: The taste is good.

Anyway, Suzanne, we're not going to talk about tea today. We're gonna talk about something totally different, and that is cancelling dinner plans, OK? And especially how to cancel dinner plans. So today we're doing a Real Talk episode. And Real Talk is our series where we teach all of our listeners the natural English expressions that you will need for real-world situations. And this is a very important real-world situation, cancelling a dinner plan.

Suzanne: Absolutely. Very useful.

Andrew: So just before we get into it, I would like to remind everyone listening out there that the best way to study with this episode is with the study guide. And it includes lots of awesome things, like a transcript, detailed vocabulary explanations, real-life examples, a comprehension quiz, and even some more bonus study material. So you can download that by visiting our website, Culips.com. OK? C-U-L-I-P-S.com, visit the website and get the study guide.

Suzanne, what is the plan for today?

Suzanne: Well, first we're going to listen to an example conversation. And in this example, a woman named Christy cancels dinner plans with her friend Paul.

Andrew: OK, very good. And then after we listen to it, what will we do?

Suzanne: So we're gonna **take a close look** at the expressions that were used in the conversation and the vocabulary that you can use when you need to cancel plans with a friend or a coworker.

Andrew: Awesome. Well, I am an expert in cancelling plans, so I think I'll have lots to talk about.

Suzanne: Me too, I think we get better as we get older at cancelling plans.

Andrew: Indeed, indeed. OK, Suzanne, let's take a listen to that conversation example right now.

Christy: Hey, Paul.

Paul: Oh, hey, Christy. What's up?

Christy: I'm so glad to see you here—I was hoping I'd run into you. Listen, I'm super sorry but **something's come up** and I won't be able to meet up with you on Saturday for dinner after all.

Paul: Oh really? That's too bad. Is everything OK?

Christy: Yeah, everything is fine. Actually, I was a total **space cadet** and **double-booked** myself. I forgot that I have a staff party to go to on Saturday.

Paul: Ah, really? OK, well, don't worry about it.

Christy: But let's get together soon another time.

Paul: Yeah, OK. Sure, anytime. Just let me know when you're free.

Christy: Cool, sounds good. Have a good one.

Andrew: All right, we just listened to a conversation where a woman named Christy runs into her friend Paul at a coffee shop. And she cancels dinner plans that they had for Saturday night. Christy said that she forgot that she had a previous engagement and so, because of this, she was forced to cancel her plan with Paul. But they did agree to meet up again later for dinner at some point in the future when Christy has some free time.

All right, Suzanne, so let's go through that conversation one more time. And this time, let's take a look at some of the key expressions that Christy and Paul used to deal with the situation of cancelling plans.

Suzanne: OK, so the first key expression is when Christy says listen, I'm super sorry but **something's come up** and I won't be able to meet up with you on Saturday for dinner after all. So she is apologizing and explaining that something else is more important. **Something else has come up**, right? There's that phrasal verb, **it's come up**, and she needs to give that other thing more attention. So let's listen to that section again.

Listen, I'm super sorry but **something's come up** and I won't be able to meet up with you on Saturday for dinner after all.

Listen, I'm super sorry but **something's come up** and I won't be able to meet up with you on Saturday for dinner after all.

- Andrew: Yeah, so, Suzanne, I think the key part here is, like you mentioned, **something's come up**, right? **Something's come up**. This is the way that Christy cancels the plan. She says I'm super sorry but **something's come up**. Now what does this mean, if **something's comes up**? Like you mentioned, it's a phrasal verb and it's very, very frequently used. We use this all the time when cancelling a plan, oh **something's come up**, I'm sorry.
- Suzanne: Yeah, so it usually means that something has come to your attention or there's kind of a kink in the plan, which means, like, you know, you might have overlooked something in your schedule, or maybe you had a last-minute change that really needs your attention.
- Andrew: When we say **something's come up**, it just means another event is **on your radar** now that is more important than your original plan. Maybe somebody is sick and you have to visit them in the hospital, or maybe your boss said oh you have to go on a business trip and you'll be out of town. Something more important has taken precedence over your original plan. This is when we use this expression **something's come up**.
- Suzanne: Yeah, and I just want to point out that apostrophe s, right? **Something's come up**, because I think that's an important grammar feature that it's short for **something has come up**, right?
- Andrew: Yes.
- Suzanne: So instead of saying **something has come up**, you just make that a contraction and it's **something's come up**. It's not a possessive, in other words.
- Andrew: Exactly, yeah, good point. This is a nice expression for gently cancelling a plan, because it's very vague. You don't have to give details. I'm sorry **something's come up**, I can't meet you.
- Suzanne: Yeah, I think when it's an acquaintance or maybe a coworker or a colleague, saying **something's come up** works well. I think if you have plans with a very close friend, someone who's extremely close to you personally, **something's come up** might be a little too vague.
- Andrew: Good point. I think with your really close friends, you can be completely honest and open with them, right?
- Suzanne: Yes.

Andrew: And that's why they're your good friends! So definitely I would use this expression for somebody I'm not as close to. Maybe somebody I have a professional relationship with or an acquaintance, somebody that is not a really super, super close friend.

Suzanne: Yeah.

Andrew: Good. So let's move on to our second key expression for today. We'll listen to that part of the conversation right now.

Actually, I was a total **space cadet** and **double-booked** myself.

Actually, I was a total **space cadet** and **double-booked** myself.

Andrew: OK, so we just heard Christy say that she was a total **space cadet** and **double-booked** herself. OK, so two interesting expressions in one sentence here. The first one, I was a total **space cadet**. A cadet is like a junior soldier almost, right? Maybe a teenager that is affiliated with the army somehow, a cadet.

Suzanne: Yeah, your entry-level soldier. So someone who is very new, right?

Andrew: Yeah. In Canada we have a high school program called the cadets, and it's like wilderness training, survival training, but it's run by the Canadian military and so it's called the cadets. So that's exactly what it is, it's like a very low-level soldier. And when we say total **space cadet**, what does it mean? If someone is a total **space cadet**?

Suzanne: It's like you completely, your head is in the clouds, it's like you just have nothing between your ears, you totally spaced out. You forgot everything, you ... Suddenly it's like you're doing everything for the first time because you have no clue about any previous plans or experiences. And, yeah, prone to making mistakes.

Andrew: So a total **space cadet**, you can imagine, like, a junior level astronaut out in space, just not paying attention to something and just floating away, right? You're very forgetful, you can't concentrate. And so Christy says I was a total **space cadet**, why? Because she **double-booked** herself. And when you **double-book** yourself, this means you make two plans at the same time, which is a problem because they conflict with one another, those two plans.

Suzanne: Yes, exactly, you have two things in your book, a planner? I don't know.

Andrew: Planner, calendar.

Suzanne: Yes.

Andrew: Something like this, yeah, your application on your phone. Right, so what I like about this part of the conversation is Christy is very humble, she sort of makes an excuse, right? She lightens the mood by **taking the blame** for cancelling the plans. Ah, I'm so sorry, I was a **space cadet**, I made a mistake. And I think this is a good way to go about cancelling plans. Do you do things like this when you cancel plans, Suzanne, ever?

Suzanne: Absolutely, because I definitely have a tendency to **double-book** myself or be a total **space cadet**. I have a book, a planner that I write everything down in, and it helps my brain to relax. So if it's not in my book, I will completely forget it. So yes, it's good to take responsibility for your mistakes, and I think it also makes the other person feel better as well.

Andrew: Absolutely. OK, we'll move on to the final key expression, final key part of today's episode, and let's take a listen to it right now.

Suzanne: Yeah.

But let's get together soon another time.

But let's get together soon another time.

Andrew: OK, so in this part of the conversation, we just heard Christy make a vague rescheduling offer with Paul. OK, she says, let's get together some time soon. So I'm curious, Suzanne, when you cancel a plan with somebody, do you usually make a second, do you usually say something like this and just say oh we'll get together another time. Or are you more specific and try to reschedule right away? What's your cancelling style?

Suzanne: I think it depends on the event or the people that I'm scheduling with. So, for example, if we are, maybe, my boyfriend and I were going out for a movie and dinner with another couple, but they cancelled or someone cancelled, maybe we would just make a vague, a vague rescheduling, oh maybe in the next couple weeks, we can hang out. But if it's a more of an appointment, maybe a coffee or a lunch with someone to discuss plans or business or maybe some research, we might make an actual rescheduled event in the calendar. What about you?

Andrew: I think I'm the same way. I can go either way, depending on the situation. I think it really depends on the situation, right? If you like the person, we don't really know, maybe Christy actually doesn't like Paul too much and doesn't want to hang out with him. I think if she really, really liked Paul, maybe she'd be, like, how about next Tuesday? Maybe she'd be very specific, right?

Suzanne: Right.

Andrew: But that's a good point. If you do wanna make a specific rescheduling plan, I think that question is very appropriate, right? Oh, I'm sorry, I have to cancel the plan for Saturday, I **double-booked** myself, but how about rescheduling for next week? How about rescheduling for next Monday? How about rescheduling for 2 weeks from now? A question like this is really appropriate in this situation.

Suzanne: Yes, and I think some people really prefer to have a clear date to change it to. So it can be helpful.

Andrew: Exactly. Especially if you are very, very busy like many people are these days.

Suzanne: Yeah.

Andrew: I think that about wraps it up for this episode.

Suzanne: All right.

Andrew: So I wanna thank everybody for listening. Our website is Culips.com, C-U-L-I-P-S.com. The study guide for this episode is on the website right now, so head on over to give it a download.

Suzanne: Yeah, and don't forget, we are also on Facebook at Facebook.com/CulipsPodcast. And please get in touch with us by emailing us at [contact@Culips.com](mailto:contact@Culips.com).

Andrew: We will be back soon with another episode, and we will talk to you then. Goodbye.

Suzanne: Bye.

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## Detailed Explanations

### Cheap Adjective

Early in the episode, Andrew talks about the **cheap** tea he bought. **Cheap** can have two meanings. It can mean something is inexpensive, but it can also mean something is of low quality. In the case of Andrew's tea, it looks like both meanings apply!

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

Ian:	Are you ready for next week's trip?
Carl:	For sure. I downloaded this new app for <b>cheap</b> hotels.
Ian:	I hate staying in <b>cheap</b> hotels!
Carl:	Don't worry. I'll read the reviews and make sure the rooms are fine.
Ian:	OK, I'll trust you. But if the first place isn't good, I'm choosing the next one.
Carl:	Deal.

Erika:	These darn pencils are terrible.
Reggie:	The ones I bought?
Erika:	Yes. The tips break so easily. Stop buying <b>cheap</b> pencils!
Reggie:	Then stop using them and buy your own!

## Something's come up

Idiom

Telling someone that **something's come up** is a vague way of breaking plans. It sounds like some other emergency suddenly occurred and you can't make your appointment, but you aren't telling them what that is. What happens next depends on your relationship with that person!

Here's one more example with **something's come up**:

Keira:	Are you still coming tonight?
Georgina:	I would love to, but <b>something's come up</b> .
Keira:	Oh, really?
Georgina:	I just can't make it to your party. But please call me for the next one—I'll be there for sure.
Keira:	OK, no problem. I hope it's nothing serious.
Georgina:	No, nothing serious. I'll tell you later, OK?
Keira:	Sure.

## Space cadet

Noun

A **space cadet** is someone who is not concentrating and does not know what is going on. There are many expressions that go along with this, such as head in the cloud, out to lunch, and spaced out.

Here's one more example with **space cadet**:

Liz:	My husband can really be a <b>space cadet</b> sometimes.
Beth:	Why do you say that?
Liz:	The other day, I asked him to pick up some garlic on his way home after work. So he shows up with a very large bag of onions and a case of beer!
Beth:	Oh my goodness, that's funny—at least he brought you some beer!

## To double-book

Verb

**To double-book** something is to make two different appointments for the same time.

Here's one more example with **to double-book**:

Stephen:	I'm sorry, but it doesn't look like I'll be joining you this weekend at the park.
Vernon:	Oh no. How come?
Stephen:	Silly me. I <b>double-booked</b> myself. I already had plans on Saturday.
Vernon:	That's too bad.
Stephen:	I know. In fact, I'd much rather be with you guys, but I have a get-together with my in-laws and I really should go.
Vernon:	I understand. I'm often in the same situation.

## To take a close look

### Idiom

In this episode, Suzanne suggests **taking a close look** at expressions used in a dialogue. That means she wants to go into greater detail. If you see something from far, you can't see too many details, but if you get closer to it, the details are clearer.

Here are a couple more examples with **to take a close look**:

Moira:	Do you notice anything different about me today?
Warren:	You seem much happier. Is it that?
Moira:	Not quite! It's about my appearance.
Warren:	I don't see it.
Moira:	<b>Take a close look</b> at my eyes.
Warren:	Oh, wow! You have coloured contact lenses. Light brown suits you well.

Sandra:	We've been walking around in circles for a while now. What are we doing?
Jack:	I guess my surprise is ruined. I was trying to find a really good beef restaurant for your birthday.
Sandra:	That's nice. Where is it?
Jack:	Well, if we <b>take a close look</b> at this map, it should be on this corner. But I can't see it.
Sandra:	Maybe it went out of business.
Jack:	Maybe. I'm so sorry. Um, McDonald's?

## On one's radar

### Idiom

A radar is a system for detecting objects. So when something is **on one's radar**, it is something the person is paying attention to. They are aware of it and following it. If something is not **on one's radar**, that means they have no idea and possibly don't care what it is.

Here are a couple more examples with **on one's radar**:

Nia:	Oh, thanks for sending me that link for the K-pop concert.
Peter:	Sure, no problem.
Nia:	How did you know there was going to be one in town?
Peter:	K-pop is always <b>on my radar</b> . I'm in a chat group with friends where we share everything about it.
Nia:	Can I join?

Rita:	What do you think of this new candidate for mayor? He's getting so popular.
Ethan:	I'm not the biggest fan, but he must be doing something right. Two months ago, he was <b>on nobody's radar</b> . Now, he's the front runner.
Rita:	I like him. I knew about his work years ago.
Ethan:	Really? I guess I'll take another look at his platform.

## To take the blame

Idiom

**To take the blame** for something is to be ready to assume responsibility for causing some kind of problem.

Here are a couple more examples with **to take the blame**:

Sheila:	Did you print this report on A4 paper?
Darryl:	I thought that's what you asked.
Sheila:	I said A5 paper. The boss is not going to be happy about this. You're going to have <b>to take the blame</b> .
Darryl:	But I thought ...
Sheila:	Check the email I sent. I clearly said A5 paper.

Alex:	You have to stop playing your music so loud at night. The neighbours are getting upset.
Chuck:	Really? It's not that loud.
Alex:	Loud enough for them to get angry. And I'm tired of always <b>taking the blame</b> for your actions. The next time they ring our doorbell, you answer.
Chuck:	All right. I'll be more careful.

## Quiz

**1. What is a space cadet?**

- a) someone who doesn't know what's going on
- b) someone who likes space
- c) someone who likes flying
- d) someone who is in the army

**2. What is NOT an example of something being on your radar?**

- a) you're waiting for a particular movie to be released
- b) you like someone's book
- c) you are following your friend on social media
- d) you know all the good Chinese restaurants in town

**3. Yes or no: Is scheduling two different appointments on the same weekend, but on different days, an example of double-booking?**

- a) yes
- b) no

**4. A coffee mug is broken. Your sister is willing to take the blame for you. What does that mean?**

- a) you didn't do it
- b) your parents won't get upset at you

**5. Which of the following is the best example of something that is cheap?**

- a) a \$20 meal
- b) a \$3000 car
- c) a car that always needs repair
- d) a trip to Mexico at a decent price

## Writing or Discussions Questions

1. What do you think is the best way to cancel a dinner date?
2. Is it difficult for you to cancel plans?
3. When a friend cancels a plan they had with you, how deeply do you inquire about their reasons for cancelling?
4. What strategies do you have to try to avoid scheduling problems?
5. What is something that is always on your radar?
6. Who in your circle of friends would you consider a space cadet?



## Quiz Answers

1.a    2.b    3.b    4.b    5.c

### Episode credits

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