

Real Talk #029 – Don't you think it'd be better if we?

Episode description

What happens when someone comes to you with a suggestion you really don't like? That could be awkward. In this Real Talk episode, Andrew and Suzanne discuss ways of politely offering alternative options.

Fun fact

Native English speakers often contract don't you to sound like don't cha. In fact, *Don't Cha* is the name of a popular song by The Pussycat Dolls.

Expressions included in the study guide

- Don't you think it'd be better if we
- To kick things off
- It's supposed to
- To lean towards [something]
- To book [something/someone]
- Bossy



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.

Hey, everybody. My name is Andrew.

Suzanne: And I'm Suzanne.

Andrew: And you're listening to Culips.

Hey, guys, you are listening to Real Talk by Culips, and that's the series where we teach you the English expressions that you need to know for everyday, real-life situations. And, Suzanne, today I think we have a great episode planned out for everybody.

Suzanne: I do, too, it's pretty awesome, guys.

Andrew: Yeah, today we're going to teach you guys how to suggest an alternative idea, OK? Somebody wants to do one thing, but you don't think that's a good plan. So you wanna suggest an alternative idea. We'll teach you the language and the structure that you can use to do just that.

Suzanne: Sounds exciting, Andrew. But, before we get into it, I just wanted to remind everyone that the best way to study with this episode is with our study guide. With the study guide, you'll get the transcript, detailed vocabulary explanations, real-life examples, and so much more in the study guide. So check that out.

Andrew: Yes, the study guide is available right now on our website, Culips.com.

Suzanne: All right. So what's our plan for today, Andrew?

Andrew: Well, we're going to look at an extremely useful sentence pattern that you can use whenever you need to suggest an alternative idea.

Suzanne: OK. Right. So, for example, imagine your coworker asks you to work with him on a project during the weekend. But you don't want to do that, so how could you suggest an alternative idea to your coworker's plan?

Andrew: Well, you could say something like **don't you think it'd be better if we** stayed later to finish the project tonight, so we don't have to come in to the office on the weekend?

Suzanne: Exactly. And the sentence pattern that you just used, Andrew, the “**don't you think it'd be better to**” pattern is exactly the one we'll look at in today's episode.

Andrew: Cool. Good stuff. So, let's **kick things off** by listening to two short dialog examples that use this structure.

Suzanne: Sounds good, then we'll pick them apart and take a close look at the details to see how we can use this sentence pattern in a natural way.

Andrew: Right on. OK, let's listen to those examples right now.

Friend 1: I've been thinking, we should totally go on a picnic soon.

Friend 2: Sure, that sounds fun.

Friend 1: Awesome! How about tomorrow?

Friend 2: Hmm, **don't you think it'd be better if we** waited until next week? **It's supposed to** rain all weekend, remember?

Friend 1: Oh, right, OK. Yeah, yeah, let's wait until next week, then.

Friend 1: OK, so I'm just looking right now at airplane tickets to New York City for our trip. OK, there's two options, it looks like. There's a flight that leaves at 7 a.m. and one that leaves at 1 p.m. **I'm leaning towards** the 7 a.m. option. What do you think?

Friend 2: Hmm, **don't you think it'd be better if we** took the afternoon flight? That way we wouldn't have to wake up so early.

Friend 1: OK, I'll **book the tickets** for the afternoon flight, then.

Andrew: So, in both of those examples, we heard someone suggest a new, different, and alternative idea by using the sentence pattern “**don't you think it'd be better if we** blah blah blah” if we do this, if we do that, OK? And, Sue, I think now is a good time for us to dive a little deeper, take a closer look at this expression and find out when and how our listeners can use it.

- Suzanne: OK, Andrew, let's first maybe look at the meaning of this expression. Could you get into that a little deeper?
- Andrew: Yeah, so I think the main point that I wanna talk about here with this expression is just to be careful when you use it, because although it is a polite expression, it can be patronizing if you use the wrong tone, OK? So if you take a **bossy** tone and have a **bossy** attitude when you use this expression, then it could really rub someone the wrong way.
- Suzanne: Totally, yeah, especially if you stress, like, I, I think it'd be better.
- Andrew: Why did you organize the files like that? **Don't you think it'd be better if we** organized the files like this? You know, like, if you have that, sort of, I know better than you tone, then it's going to rub somebody the wrong way.
- Suzanne: Yeah, I agree.
- Andrew: But if you use this sentence structure in a more open-minded way, when you're just politely suggesting to the person to take a second to rethink their plan and, you know, suggest an alternative plan, then it's fine, right? Like in the example we heard, oh, **don't you think it'd be better if we** waited until later to go on the picnic, because **it's supposed to** rain tomorrow, right? And this way is not patronizing. Now, when it comes to the pronunciation of this structure, there's some interesting things happening, isn't there?
- Suzanne: There's an interesting little thing that happens, and it's called a contraction, right, Andrew? We're contracting the it would be, right? It would. So when we contract something in English, it makes it a bit more causal and a little bit more personable. If you're speaking at a conference, you probably wouldn't use so many contractions, for example. But, you know, if you're making a suggestion politely, you would use a contraction. And it's very common in English because it makes it efficient.
- And we do that a lot in English, we try to blend words together, link things quickly, and contract things or delete and reduce. So, in this case, we have don't you think it'd, think it'd be. Instead of think it would be, right? So we take away the wou- part and we make it it'd. **Don't you think it'd be better if we?** Don't you think it'd be, think it'd. So it's almost like you're saying gid or kid, right? By contracting that it would sound.
- Andrew: Yeah, so the main point here is that there's a ton of contractions happening, right? **Don't you think it'd be better if we? Don't you think it'd be better if we?** And, as always, as an English learner if you want to speak slower and pronounce each word clearly so that who you're talking to can understand you, that's fine, because you'll make yourself very clear.

Andrew: But you need to know how native speakers are going to speak so that you can understand what they are saying, because when we make a suggestion like this, we are not going to pronounce each word individually, like, **don't you think it would be better if we?** No, we are going to say **don't you think it'd be better if we?** Right?

We're gonna cram all that together, so it's up to you if you would like to pronounce it like a native speaker, then you can put in the time and practice it, using these contractions that you just mentioned here, Sue. But if you don't wanna do that, that's fine. But I would suggest at least being aware that this type of contracting happens in English, so you'll be able to understand what you hear when you're talking to other people.

Suzanne: Yeah. And we're sorry that we make things so connected and contracted all the time.

Andrew: Everybody does it in their native language, I think.

Suzanne: For sure.

Andrew: All right, so finally, Suzanne, I wanna talk about the use, OK? Who can we use this expression with and when and where?

Suzanne: Yeah, so I would use this to offer a better suggestion with my boyfriend, with my close friends. Someone I feel a close kinship with, my family and friends. I don't know if I would say **don't you think it'd be better** to a professor, necessarily. I might say it in a different way. I might say, that's an interesting idea, we could also try blah blah blah, right? So if it's a professor or a boss, I might use a different format completely. I would keep this for my friends and family.

Andrew: I completely agree with you, that it's probably best used with people that you're close with.

Suzanne: Yeah.

Andrew: Now, Suzanne, that's interesting you brought up some alternative phrasings, and there's actually many ways in English that we can make a suggestion for an alternative idea. Off the top of your head, could you think of any other ways that you could make a suggestion like this in English?

Suzanne: Well, you could say or how about if we did this? Right? Or—meaning, like, another idea—or how about if we tried this? Or if we did this? How about is a good way.

- Andrew: How about, we could also say something like why don't we do that instead? Or why don't we do this instead? Why don't we have the picnic next week instead, it's gonna rain tomorrow.
- Suzanne: Exactly. If you wanted a more formal suggestion, first affirm their idea. Oh, that's a great idea, but another option could be this. Or that's a really great option, however, let's try this? Or what about this? So that could be used to a professor or a boss or, you know, a more formal context.
- Andrew: Very good.
- Suzanne, I think there's nothing else to say about this sentence structure, **don't you think it'd be better to** blah blah blah? I think we covered everything.
- Suzanne: I think it'd be better to close this episode.
- Andrew: All right, well, to do that we first have to thank all of our listeners for tuning in. So thanks to all you guys for listening. And just a reminder here before we take off that our website is [www.Culips](http://www.Culips.com), C-U-L-I-P-S, Culips.com. And if you wanna get the study guide, which includes the transcript and practice exercises for this episode, visit the website for all the details.
- Suzanne: Yes, and don't forget we're on Facebook at [Facebook.com/CulipsPodcast](https://www.facebook.com/CulipsPodcast), and you can get in touch with us as well by email at contact@Culips.com and now also on Instagram at [Instagram.com/culips_english](https://www.instagram.com/culips_english).
- Andrew: All right, everyone, we will be back soon with another brand-new Culips episode, so stay tuned for that and we will talk to you then. Goodbye.
- Suzanne: Bye.

Detailed Explanations

Don't you think it'd be better if we

Idiom

Don't you think it'd be better if we is a polite way of offering an alternative suggestion for something you don't really want to do. Similar patterns include that's a good idea but another option could be this, why don't we do this instead, and how about if we tried this.

Here are a couple more examples with **don't you think it'd be better if we**:

Ian:	Here, I got a few DVDs for the children.
Heather:	What? These are all action movies.
Ian:	Yeah, they're pretty good.
Heather:	Don't you think it'd be better if we showed them something more age appropriate, like an animated movie of some kind?
Ian:	OK. I guess I should find some.

Dave:	Remember when you said you wanted to take tango lessons? I signed us up for classes on Wednesday nights.
Rita:	Really? That's cool. Wait, don't you have swimming class earlier on Wednesdays?
Dave:	Oh, yeah.
Rita:	Don't you think it'd be better if we took dancing lessons on another day?
Dave:	You're right. I'd be pretty tired. I'll look into their schedule again.

To kick things off

Idiom

To kick things off is to begin something, like an activity or a season. In American and Canadian football, games begin with a kickoff.

Here are a couple more examples with **to kick things off**:

Gina:	How was last night's party?
Rex:	Pretty interesting.
Gina:	How so?
Rex:	Well, Jimmy kicked things off standing on a stage with his guitar and singing a few pop songs. Then more people joined him on stage. It got wilder from then on.
Gina:	I should have been there.

John:	I can't wait until next week.
Arthur:	I know. I always love the final week of the spring semester.
John:	We're going to have a barbecue at my house. Are you coming?
Arthur:	For sure! A barbecue is the best way to kick off the summer vacation.

It's supposed to

Idiom

In one of the dialogue examples heard in this episode, one friend says **it's supposed to** rain. **It's supposed to** is a fixed phrase that means you expect something to happen, usually because of some prior knowledge or action.

Here are a couple more examples with **it's supposed to**:

Sheila:	Are you still waiting for your delivery?
Ben:	Yeah. It's taking a while.
Sheila:	What did you order?
Ben:	A new rice cooker.
Sheila:	Is it a good-quality rice cooker?
Ben:	It's supposed to be. We'll see when it gets here.

Gary:	Have you finished fixing my car?
Don:	Yup!
Gary:	Does the engine start?
Don:	It's supposed to . Give it a try.
Gary:	Wow, it works! Thanks, Don.

To lean towards [something]

Idiom

To lean towards [something] is to consider choosing one option over any others.

Here are a couple more examples with **to lean towards [something]**:

Carrie: Have you applied to any universities yet?

Trish: Not yet.

Carrie: Is there one in particular that you're **leaning towards**?

Trish: Yeah, I'll probably apply to the University of Ottawa. They have a good education program.

Eric: Are you still car shopping?

Richard: Yeah. I'm down to two models.

Eric: Which ones?

Richard: This year's Hyundai Sonata or the Kia K7. I'm **leaning towards buying the K7**. What do you think?

Eric: Either one is good, I think.

To book [something/someone]

Verb

To book [something/someone] is to guarantee the services of something or someone. You can **book** a concert hall or a plane ticket. You can **book** a magician for a children's party.

Here are a couple more examples with **to book [something/someone]**:

Sharon: Is everything ready for our day trip to Ottawa?

Fernando: Almost.

Sharon: What's left?

Fernando: We still need to **book** the return bus tickets.

Sharon: I see. We can do that later at the bus terminal.

Vanessa: Is Bobby still going to sing at the wedding ceremony?

Tia: Actually, no. You might have heard that he has a small problem with his throat.

Vanessa: Yeah. So what are you going to do?

Tia: I'll just have to **book** someone else. Do you know anyone who's available?

Bossy Adjective

Bossy is a way of describing someone who likes to boss people around. This person likes to tell other people what to do, even though he or she might not be an actual boss. A friend, a coworker, and even a child can be **bossy**. **Bossy** has negative connotations.

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

Craig:	Oh, no. I'm working with Peter this weekend.
Mae:	What's wrong with Peter?
Craig:	Have you ever worked a shift with him? He's so bossy !
Mae:	That's the worst! I hate people like that.
Craig:	Hey, maybe you can switch with him and we can work together.

Lara:	I had a talk with Benny's kindergarten teacher this afternoon.
George:	Oh? What did she have to say?
Lara:	She was a little concerned about how bossy Benny can be with the other children.
George:	I see. Did she offer any suggestions?
Lara:	She said she'd monitor his behaviour and come back to us in a couple of weeks.

Quiz

- 1. Which of the following does NOT have the same meaning as don't you think it'd be better if we?**
 - a) how about we
 - b) perhaps if we tried
 - c) you should do this
 - d) another option could be

- 2. What does to kick things off mean?**
 - a) to hurt someone
 - b) to play soccer
 - c) to begin something
 - d) to move something with your foot

- 3. Which of the following is NOT a good example of booking something?**
 - a) buying train tickets
 - b) going for a walk in the park with a friend
 - c) hiring a band for a party
 - d) getting concert tickets online

- 4. Is being bossy generally seen as a good thing?**
 - a) yes
 - b) no

- 5. Which of the following is similar to saying, "I'm leaning towards [something]"?**
 - a) "The neighbour says this is good."
 - b) "I'm thinking we should ..."
 - c) "Which one do you like?"
 - d) "Don't ask me!"

Writing or Discussion Questions

1. How do you react when someone approaches you with a suggestion you really don't like?
2. Are you the type of person to accept what others suggest? Or are you the type of person who steps up and offers alternative options?
3. It's good to lean towards one option over another, but eventually you might need to decide! Are you a decisive type of person, that is, someone who would choose an option quickly and firmly? Or are you generally more indecisive?
4. Do you have friends who are a little too bossy? How do you deal with that?
5. What is your favourite method of booking travel arrangements, like hotels and various transportation?

Quiz Answers

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

Episode credits

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