

Real Talk #049 – How to make a reservation at a restaurant

Episode description

Have you ever tried making a reservation at a restaurant and it just didn't go as smoothly as you would have liked? Then tune in to this Real Talk episode where Andrew and Kassy teach you all the questions, answers, and expressions you need to know to make a reservation at a restaurant in perfect English.

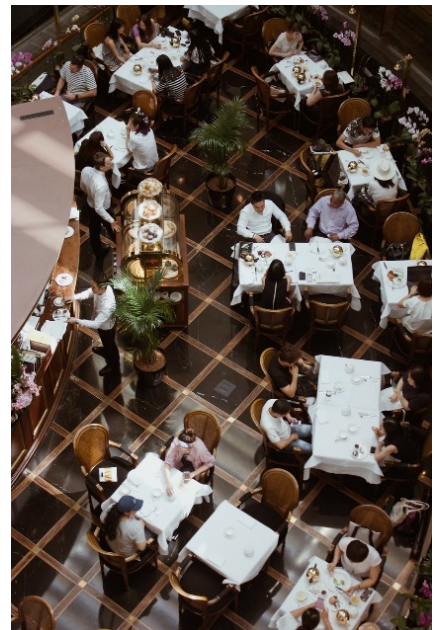
The Culips Real Talk series is great for high-beginner and low-intermediate English learners. By studying with Real Talk, you'll learn the English expressions you need to know for everyday, real-world situations.

Fun fact

Some restaurants have reservation lists that are beyond the imagination. One such restaurant is owned and run by chef Damon Baehrel. This chef is unique, because he runs his restaurant out of his home and he goes through every process of the food prep from growing his own produce, to preparing it, cooking it, serving it, and even cleaning the dishes. He prepares a 20+ course meal for each guest and the dining experience is said to take between 5-7 hours! At one point, chef Baehrel had a 6 year wait-list of customers dying to eat at his restaurant.

Expressions included in the study guide

- I'd like to make a reservation for [number] this [day]
- A party of [number]
- Under whose name are you making the reservation?
- To push [something] up
- To squeeze [someone] in
- A ballpark [something]



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. The transcript has been edited for clarity.

Andrew: Hello there, everyone. My name's Andrew.

Kassy: And I'm Kassy.

Andrew: And this is the Culips English Podcast.

Hello, friends. Welcome back to Culips. You're listening to Real Talk. Real Talk is the series where we teach you the English expressions that you need to know for real-world situations. And today, we're going to teach you how to make dinner reservations at a restaurant. Now I just said, "we're going to teach you." That means I am joined by somebody else. So, I should introduce my co-host for this episode, it's Kassy. Hey there, Kassy. How's it going?

Kassy: I'm doing great, Andrew, thanks.

Andrew: Perfect. So we'll get into this lesson in just a moment, everyone. But before we do, I want to let you know that the best way to study with this episode is with our study guide. So inside the study guide, you'll find a transcript, detailed vocabulary explanations, real-life examples, a comprehension quiz, and more. You can download it and follow along as you listen. And it's available for all Culips members. So to sign up and become a member and get the study guide, just visit our website Culips.com. Kassy, we also wanted to give a shout out to one of our listeners from Belarus, Victoria, who recently left us a five-star rating and a nice review on Apple Podcasts. And Victoria left us such a kind message. Kassy, would you mind reading it for us all?

Kassy: Sure. So Victoria says, "Hi there. I'm from Belarus and I came across this podcast a few weeks ago. I really enjoy listening to it since there are a huge number of different topics covered. I usually do it on my way to work or home. It's quite easy to understand. And it really helps to enrich the vocabulary and listening skills. I also like hearing your pleasant voices. Thanks for doing a great job." Thanks, Victoria!

Andrew: Yeah, thanks Victoria for that nice review. And listeners. If you would like to hear yourself at the start of an upcoming Culips episode, we would love to give you a shout out. So to do that, just leave us a five-star rating and a nice review on Apple Podcasts, or wherever you listen to your podcasts. And we'll try to mention you in an upcoming episode. All right, so let's get into our episode for today. Kassy, could you tell us what exactly we're going to cover?

Kassy: Yes. So we're going to be listening to a conversation between a restaurant host and a person who wants to dine at that restaurant. And we're going to be learning key phrases and questions that you might come across if you were to make a reservation.

Andrew: Exactly. So if anyone ever has to make a reservation for a restaurant, in English in the future, this is going to be the perfect episode for you. And this is something that I think a lot of our listeners will maybe have to do at some point in their lives if they travel to an English speaking country or just travel in general to a place where they don't speak the local language and the kind of international language that is used is English. So first up, we'll listen to the conversation, and then we'll break it down and explain all of the key expressions that you listeners need to know. So, let's take a listen to that conversation now.

Kassy: Let's do it.

Host: This is The Mystique.

Guest: Oh, hello. I'd like to make a reservation for two this Saturday.

Host: All right. And what time will you be joining us this evening?

Guest: I prefer sometime between 7:30 and 8:00, if that's available.

Host: OK, let me see. We only have outside seating on the deck available at that time. Will that work for you?

Guest: Sure. Yeah, that'll be fine.

Host: OK then. I'll put you down as a party of two for 7:30, correct?

Guest: Perfect.

Host: And under whose name are you making the reservation?

Guest: McGrady.

Host: OK, thank you Mr. McGrady. We'll see you on Saturday night.

Guest: All right. Perfect. Thank you.

Andrew: All right listeners, so we just heard a conversation between the host at a restaurant who takes reservations and does customer service and that kind of thing at the restaurant, and a customer who would like to visit the restaurant on Saturday evening, that customer was making a reservation. So Kassy, why don't we go through this conversation now and highlight some of the important language that was used in order to successfully make that reservation.

Kassy: Yeah, I think we should definitely start with the very first thing, the person making the reservation said, which was, **I'd like to make a reservation for two this Saturday.**

Andrew: **I'd like to make a reservation for two this Saturday.** Exactly. So there's two things in this sentence that you may need to change depending on your situation, right? When we say for two, it means for two people, but if you had maybe a larger family or a larger, get together, and you had more people, then you would need to change that number, of course, right? **I'd like to make a reservation for four. I'd like to make a reservation for six,** like that.

Kassy: Exactly. And then the second part you might want to change is the day. So in this example, it was a reservation for two this Saturday, but maybe you would have it on a Sunday or a Friday or a Wednesday.

Andrew: And it might even be next week. So you might not say this Saturday, meaning the week that you are on currently, but it could be for the following week for the next week. **So I'd like to make a reservation for three next Wednesday,** something like that.

Kassy: Exactly. I mean, some really fancy restaurants even require reservations, you know, like a month in advance right, Andrew?

Andrew: Oh, yeah, absolutely. So you might have to, say, your ideal time. But if that time is booked and busy, then they might say, "Oh, sorry, we're busy at that time, the earliest we could **squeeze you in** would be next month", something like that. So if they're busy, they would suggest the soonest available time that you could visit, and you would just have to go from there.

Kassy: Exactly. And Andrew, what's our next expression?

Andrew: Well, the customer says when he would like to make the reservation, and how many people will be in that party. We call this a party, the people who will be visiting the restaurant are a party. So he says it's **a party of two** they want to visit on Saturday. And then the host asks, what time? What time in the evening will you be joining us? So what time will you be joining us that evening? And this is just a question that everyone should expect to be asked because it is important for the restaurant to know what time you will visit so that they can get prepared for you.

Kassy: So you would just choose **a ballpark** time that you'd like. In this case, it was between 7:30 and 8:00. You could say you wanted earlier time like 5:00 o'clock or later 9:00 o'clock. It all depends on what you need.

Andrew: And Kassy, you just used an interesting expression there, **a ballpark**. So **a ballpark** time, or ballpark figure is just an estimation, right? It's not like oh, I will be at the restaurant exactly at 7:35pm. It's more like a window, a gap of time, like between 7:30 and 8:00. And that is usually how we will make a reservation.

Kassy: Exactly.

Andrew: So following that the host checks her computer and sees that actually the restaurant is full, but they do have some space outside on the deck. So they have outside seating on the deck. Some restaurants will also call this area the patio. So you might hear deck, you might hear patio, both are common. And that just means seating outside of the restaurant these days because of COVID in North America, many, many restaurants have actually switched the layout of the restaurants to more of an outdoor dining area. So I think it's probably pretty common these days that many people are eating on decks and patios. So yeah, this is something that is kind of a new trend but very popular these days.

Kassy: Yeah, that's right. I think especially in the summertime, this is popular anywhere. COVID or no COVID.

Andrew: Yeah, I love it. Personally, I like eating outside, patios are awesome in my opinion. And then the customer confirms yeah, that's OK I would like to sit on the patio, no problem. So the host responds by saying, "I'll put you down as **a party of two** for 7:30, correct?" "I'll put you down as **a party of two** for 7:30, correct?" And this is just a way to confirm that she has the information correct. Kassy, we talked about this party of two, right? Could you just remind us one more time what this means party of two?

Kassy: Yeah, so your party isn't, you know, like a fiesta, dancing and food kind of party, this kind of party is how many members are eating together in your group? So, **a party of two** would be two people dining together.

Andrew: All right. And then the last question, the last important piece of information that the hosts needs is the customer's name. So she asks, **"under whose name are you making the reservation?"** **"Under whose name are you making the reservation?"** And the customer responds McGrady. And the host knows that this is the last name. So Kassy, usually when you get asked this question, would you respond with your first name or your last name or both? How would you answer this question?

Kassy: This is really funny. I've never made many reservations. But the few times I have it would always be my last name.

Andrew: Always your last name. Yeah, I might give my first name or my last name in this situation. But I don't think we would give just our first names, right? Somebody said, under whose name are you making this reservation? Oh, Kassy or Andrew. Especially Andrew, my name, is really, really common. It's one of the top names for boys in my generation, I think it's the fourth most popular boys name from the 1980s when I was born. So if I say, Andrew, it's too common, I need to say my first name and my last name, or just my last name, just to make sure I don't get confused with any other potential customers.

Kassy: Yeah, this might be different in other countries. I'm curious to hear what listeners might have to say, because in countries like Korea, where we live, or maybe even India, you know, or maybe China too. Like, there's a few names that are really, really, really, really, really, really popular. So if you just give your last name on a reservation, you know, 10 people might have that same last name making a reservation.

Andrew: Yeah. Yeah. If you were like, from Asia, for example, maybe from China or Korea, and your family name was Lee, and you just said, Lee, it might be too common, right? There might be potentially other customers that have that same family name. So you might have to leave your full name, just to be safe.

Kassy: Yes, that's not as much of an issue in western countries like Canada or the US. So Andrew, we actually have a part two to this conversation, correct?

Andrew: Yeah, that's correct. So in part two, we're going to hear a follow up where the customer calls the restaurant again, calls The Mystique and just confirms his reservation. So let's listen to part two of this conversation now.

Host: This is The Mystique.

Guest: Hello. I'm just calling to confirm my reservation for tomorrow night.

Host: What's the name under the reservation?

Guest: McGrady.

Host: Yes, we have you here as a party of two 7:30 on the patio. That's correct?

Guest: Yeah, that's right. And I know it's last minute, but would it be possible to push our reservation up just a bit, to like 6:30?

Host: I think we can squeeze you in then. But it'll have to be a high top near the bar. Is that all right with you?

Guest: Yeah, sure. That's fine. Thanks again for fitting us in earlier.

Host: No problem, sir. We look forward to seeing you tomorrow night.

Kassy: OK, like we said, this is a follow up conversation. It's sometimes customary for people to call back the night before just to make sure their reservation is on the books, you know, you don't want to show up and then find out your reservation was magically erased or something. So the person calls back and he makes his first expression which is I'm calling to confirm my reservation for tomorrow night. I'm calling to confirm my reservation for tomorrow night.

Andrew: Exactly. So, if we think about it a bit, this customer actually doesn't want to confirm his reservation. He wants to change his reservation, but he's kind of breaking the ice and just making sure first that the reservation was made and that there were no errors. And that was actually written in the reservation book, as you mentioned, Kassy. So he confirms first by saying, "Hello, I'm calling to confirm my reservation for tomorrow night." And then the host and the customer confirm the reservation, everything's OK. And then he asks the question that he originally called for, right? He says, "would it be possible **to push our reservation up to 6:30?**" OK, would it be possible to do blah, blah, blah, it's just a really polite way to ask a question. So would it be possible to push our reservation up to 6:30? Push up is the phrasal verb. And this is a phrasal verb that can be separated, you can put the object of the sentence in between push and up. So, push what? Push our reservation up to 6:30. Meaning to move it an hour earlier in the day.

Kassy: Yes, the opposite of push back.

Andrew: Right. Push back would be if you wanted to show up maybe at 8:30 or 9:00 o'clock, right? Then you could say, could we push our reservation back? But if you want to change it to earlier, then you could say, could we push our reservation up?

Kassy: Exactly. And there's a lot of requests that you can make that aren't in this example conversation such as, would it be possible to get a window seat? Or would it be possible to get a booth? Would it be possible to have a birthday song sung for my Grandmother? It's her birthday tomorrow, something like that.

Andrew: Would it be possible to add an extra person to our reservation? Could we change it from two people to three people or two people to four people? Something like that. So yeah, you're right, you can use this kind of question pattern to ask about many different kinds of changes.

Kassy: Good. So after he asks that question, the host says, a really cool phrase, "I think we can **squeeze you in**." "I think we can **squeeze you in**." Andrew, what does **squeeze you in** mean?

Andrew: Yeah. So if you squeeze somebody in, it means that you make space available for them, even though you are very busy, right? So the restaurant we can imagine at this time is very busy. There aren't too many extra tables available. But the hosts will make a special accommodation, and they will be able to welcome them for dinner at that time. So, squeeze in just means fit into a very busy schedule or a very busy situation.

Kassy: And in this case, they had to switch where they were sitting too, right Andrew? Instead of being on the patio, they're switching to a high top near the bar, which are usually just like small tables that are high off the ground, where only about two people can sit at usually.

Andrew: Yeah, so it's more like bar seating instead of regular dining seating, so maybe not as comfortable. But I guess the restaurant is too busy at that time. So that's the only table available. So the customer agrees yeah, no problem. That'll do. That's fine. And then he says, thanks for fitting us in. And that just means thanks for making a special accommodation for us even though the restaurant is very busy. Thanks for making room for us in this busy situation. That is, fitting us in in this context.

Kassy: OK, so we're almost at the end of today's episode, but before we go, let's summarize what we've covered.

Andrew: All right, so today we learned about how to make dinner reservations over the phone at a restaurant using English.

Kassy: We learned how to make a reservation and common questions that may come up when making a reservation over the phone such as, **I'd like to make a reservation for [blank] people tonight.**

Andrew: Yeah, **I'd like to make a reservation for two tonight** or we also learned OK, what time will you be joining us that evening?

Kassy: We also learned expressions such as party, the number of people who are dining together and seating such as outdoor seating, patio seating or high top seating.

Andrew: And we learned useful expressions for confirming an existing reservation, such as I'm calling to confirm my reservation for tomorrow night.

Kassy: And finally, we learned ways to modify an already existing reservation. For example, would it be possible to push up my reservation to so and so time, to 6:30?

Andrew: Well, that brings us to the end of the episode, everyone. Thanks so much for listening. We hope you learned a lot with us today.

Kassy: Our website is Culips.com. If you want to get the study guide, including the transcript and practice exercises for this episode, then check it out at the website and give it a download.

Andrew: Becoming a Culips member is a great way to support us, but it's not the only way. You can also support us by leaving us a five-star rating and nice review on your favourite podcast app. By telling your friends about Culips and by following us on social media.

Kassy: Yes, and stay up to date with Culips by following us on Facebook, Instagram, YouTube or Twitter. Our email address is contact@culips.com and if you'd like to send us a message, feel free to do that. We'd love to hear from you. We'll be back soon with another brand new episode. Talk to you then. Bye.

Andrew: Goodbye.

Detailed Explanations

I'd like to make a reservation for [number] this [day]

Phrase

When making a reservation, you can use the expression **I'd like to make a reservation for [number] this [day]**. The number represents how many people are in your **party**, so if you are planning to dine with 5 people you would say *I'd like to make a reservation for 5*. The [day] is the date you want to make the reservation for. The day could be this Friday, next Saturday, or even several months from when you make the reservation.

Here are a couple more examples with **I'd like to make a reservation for [number] this [day]**:

Host:	This is Langston Eatery. How may I help you?
Raj:	Hello. I'd like to make a brunch reservation for six this Saturday.
Host:	A party of six , right?
Raj:	Yes, that's right. We'll need a booster seat prepared for the baby as well.
Host:	Alright. Does 11:30 work for you?
Raj:	Yep.
Host:	Okay. Party of six, 11:30 . Under whose name should I make the reservation?
Raj:	Patil.

Tera:	Hi, my name is Tera Woods, and I reserved a table for 8 people this Friday at 6:30. I'd like to make a change to my reservation.
Hostess:	Okay, how would you like to change your reservation?
Tera:	Two more people are coming, so I'd like to make a reservation for 10 instead of 8.
Hostess:	Alright, I've made a note of it. Anything else?
Tera:	Nope, that's all. Thank you.

A party of [number] Phrase

When you are at a restaurant and a hostess asks you how many are in your **party**, they are not talking about a celebration like a birthday party or a costume party. **Party** is another word for group, so a similar question would be “how many members are in your group?” It is common for restaurant staff to ask you how many people are in your **party** rather than asking how many people are in your group. They might similarly ask, *how many people will be joining you?* In other words, how many people are you planning to eat dinner with at the restaurant.

Here are a couple more examples with **a party of [number]**:

Hostess:	Richardson, party of four ?
Daniel:	Yes, that's us.
Hostess:	Your table is ready. Right this way, please.
Daniel:	Yes, thank you.
Hostess:	Okay, here we are. Here are your menus. I'll be back in just a moment to get your drink order.

Host:	Hello. Welcome to Hank's Steakhouse. How many people are in your party this evening?
Gene:	Four.
Host:	Perfect. Someone will be with you in a moment. You may take a seat over there while you wait.
Gene:	Thanks. Oh, could we get a booth if that's available?
Host:	No problem, sir. We'll call you when your table is ready.

Under whose name are you making the reservation?

Phrase

When you make a reservation at a restaurant or hotel, you must give a name to assign to that reservation like your name or the name of the first person that will be arriving in your party. When you make a reservation under your name, it means that the reservation is tied to your name; no one else can take that reservation unless they give your name.

When you make a reservation at a restaurant, the hostess will usually ask you, “under whose name are you making the reservation?” so that she can save your reservation time with your party. The hostess might ask a slightly different question such as, “May I have your name?” or “May I ask who’s making the reservation?”

Here are a couple more examples with **under whose name are you making the reservation?**:

Jonathon: Hello, I’d like to make a reservation for Thursday night around 6:30.

Hostess: Of course, sir. How many people are in your party?

Jonathon: 3 adults and 2 children.

Hostess: **Under whose name are you making the reservation?**

Jonathon: Witherspoon.

Hostess: Okay, sir. We’ve got you down as Witherspoon for Thursday night at 6:30, 3 adults and 2 children. That’s correct?

Jonathon: Yep, that’s great. Thank you.

Hostess: See you on Thursday, good day.

Hostess: Hello, are you checking into the hotel?

Martha: Yes, please.

Hostess: **Under whose name did you make the reservation?**

Martha: Ryder.

Hostess: One moment please while I pull up your reservation.

To push [something] up

Phrasal Verb

To push [something] up means to move something on your schedule to an earlier time. The opposite of **to push [something] up** is **to push [something] back** meaning to move it to a later time. In this episode, one restaurant guest asked the hostess if he could **push his reservation time up** to 6:30 from the original time of 7:30.

Instead of asking to **push a reservation up or back** you could ask a similar question such as, *Can I modify my current reservation?* Or you could say, *I need to make a change to my reservation.*

Here are a couple more examples with **to push [something] up**:

Gina:	Hey, the weather forecast is calling for rain this afternoon, so we're pushing the match up to 9 o'clock tomorrow morning.
Freida:	Oh okay, what'll happen if it starts raining earlier?
Gina:	We'll have to cancel the match permanently. The other team leaves this afternoon. They can't reschedule for a later time.
Freida:	That's a bummer. Hopefully the rain holds off 'til we're finished.

Mark:	Dude, where are you?
Johann:	Just chillin' in my house, why?
Mark:	You haven't left yet? We were supposed to meet 20 minutes ago! Everyone's waiting for you.
Johann:	What? I thought we were meeting at 8 o'clock?
Mark:	No, man. We pushed it up to 6:00, remember?
Johann:	Ah, I totally forgot! Okay, you guys get started awhile. I'll be there in 15 minutes.

To squeeze [someone/something] in Phrasal Verb

To **squeeze [something] in** or **squeeze in [something]** means to find time for something, especially when the schedule is very tight.

In this episode, the restaurant hostess said that she could **squeeze the guest's reservation in** at 6:30. This means that the restaurant was very busy for that time, but she managed to find the time and space for them to be able to dine at the restaurant at 6:30.

The expression **to squeeze [someone/something] in** is used to show that you are really busy, but you are willing to change your schedule a bit to make time for that person or that thing.

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

Heather:	Do you think we have time to squeeze a workout in before we have to leave?
Ryan:	Yeah probably, if we start in the next 5 minutes.
Heather:	Okay, let's do it! Let me just change into my workout stuff.
Ryan:	Cool, meet you by the door in 5.

Philip:	Hey Stacy, I had a bit of a fashion emergency. Can you fit me in sometime his afternoon?
Stacy:	Hey, Philip. Long time no see! Well, it's kind of a busy day, but I think I can squeeze you in before my 4 o'clock. Come to the salon at 3:00 and I'll see what I can do.
Philip:	Thanks, you're the best!
Stacy:	I know, Darlin'. See ya in a bit!

A ballpark [something]

Adjective Phrase

A **ballpark** is an estimate or an approximation of something. For example, in this episode Kassy: says that reservations don't always need to be exact, they can be a **ballpark time**. In other words, a reservation doesn't have to be exactly one time, say 6 o'clock, it can be an approximate time like 6ish, meaning 6 o'clock give or take 10 minutes.

The adjective **ballpark** is commonly used in the phrases **a ballpark price** or **a ballpark figure** to describe approximately how much something will cost.

Here are a couple more examples with **a ballpark [something]**:

Wonshik:	Hey bro, can you give me a ballpark time of when you think you'll be arriving tonight?
Taegyun:	I think I'll be there around 8 o'clock.
Wonshik:	Sweet. Then, I'm just gonna head to the store real quick before you get here. You want anything?
Taegyun:	Can you pick me up a bag of Doritos while your there?
Wonshik:	No problem, man. See ya in a bit.

Jenny:	Excuse me, is this Wendy's Wedding Cakes?
Wendy:	Yep, that's me. How can I help you?
Jenny:	I'm getting married in December and I was wondering if I could commission you to do my wedding cake?
Wendy:	Sure, why don't you come in for a consultation and a tasting?
Jenny:	Alright, but before I do, could you give me a ballpark price of a 3 tier-ed wedding cake?
Wendy:	Well, it really depends on how much customization you want, but a typical 3-tiered wedding cake costs about \$500.

Quiz

1. What word goes in the blank in the following sentence: _____ whose name are you making the reservation?
 - a) about
 - b) around
 - c) under
 - d) above

2. Which of the choices below are POSSIBLE responses for the blanks in the following sentence: "I'd like to make a reservation for ____1____ this ____2____."?
 - a) 1)Thursday 2) restaurant
 - b) 1) four 2) Friday
 - c) 1) Saturday 2) Two
 - d) 1) Martin 2) Five

3. Which word has a similar meaning to the word *party* in the phrase "a party of four"?
 - a) celebration
 - b) person
 - c) time
 - d) group

4. Which word can replace the word *ballpark* in the sentence "Can you give me a ballpark price of the house"?
 - a) approximate
 - b) size
 - c) giant
 - d) exact

5. True or False: If you want to move something to a later time you push it up in your schedule?
 - a) true
 - b) false

Writing and Discussion Questions

1. Have you made any reservations recently? Where to? How far in advance did you make it?
2. Do you have any restaurants in your area that require reservations? How far in advance do you need to make a reservation to eat there?
3. When you make reservations at a restaurant or hotel, do you usually make the reservation under your first name, last name, or both?
4. Have you had to squeeze anything into your schedule recently? What was it?
5. Can you think of a time when your plans got pushed up or pushed back and you completely forgot about it? What happened as a result?

Quiz Answers

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

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