

Real Talk #056 – Calling 911 in an emergency

Episode description

No one ever expects to be in an emergency, but sometimes we may be in a situation where we need to call for help. In this Real Talk episode, Andrew and Kassy teach you common expressions you can use when talking to a 911 dispatcher.

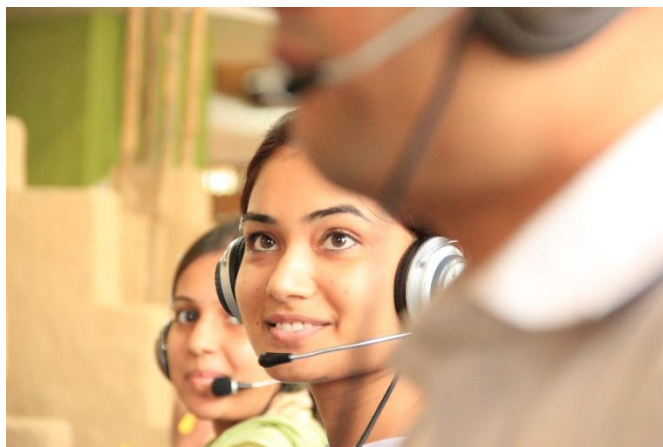
Real Talk is a series that helps you learn practical English expressions that you can use in every day natural conversations. Be sure to listen carefully to this episode for all the useful expressions!

Fun fact

911 is an emergency phone number used globally in many North, Central & South America countries. It first began being used by the fire department in the United States in 1957 because it had never been used as an area code. Other regions of the world use different universal emergency phone numbers such as 112 in Europe and 119 in many Asian countries.

Expressions included in the study guide

- Hit and run
- Blow through
- Stay on the line
- What's (someone's) condition
- Yada yada
- Clog up the line



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 am Kassy.

Andrew: And this is the Culips English Podcast.

Hello there listeners. How's it going? I hope everyone is doing well. This is Real Talk. The Culips series where we teach you the English that you need to know for real-world situations. And today, we are going to cover a very important topic, indeed. It is how to call 911 when you're in an emergency situation. 911 is the phone number that we call if you need help from the police, or the fire station, or even if you need to call an ambulance and go to the hospital yourself or call an ambulance for some other person. So, we'll get into that today, but I should introduce my cohost for today's lesson. It is Kassy. Kassy, how are you?

Kassy: Hey, Andrew. And hi listeners. I'm doing really well. It's a Friday today and I'm very happy about it.

Andrew: Happy Friday, happy Friday. And if you're listening on a Friday as well, happy Friday to you. So, guys we'll get started with our lesson here in just a minute, but before we do, we should talk about the study guide. So, there is a study guide that we made to accompany this episode. And in the study guide, you'll get a transcript, detailed vocabulary explanations, real life examples, and a comprehension quiz, plus more. So, you can download it and follow along as you listen. That is our recommended way of studying with the guide, and it's available for all Culips Members. So, guys, if you wanna get the guide, you have to become a Culips Member, and you can find all of the details and sign up on our website, which is Culips.com. So, Kassy, let's get started with the lesson then. Could you just break down and let us know exactly what we're going to learn about today?

Kassy: Sure. So, today, we're gonna learn some practical expressions you can use when calling 911. You know, there may come a time when you get into some sort of an emergency situation. In today's lesson, we're gonna teach you some phrases that might come up when calling 911 and how you can call and ask for help in an emergency situation. When people call 911, they're already under a lot of stress. So, it's really good to know what kind of questions you're going to be asked before you even make the call so that you're not stressed about the listening comprehension as well, right?

Andrew: Yeah Kassy, that's a great point actually, because you are under a great deal of stress and it's really important that you understand what the dispatcher is saying. So, the dispatcher is what we call the person who you will be talking to on the phone when you call 911. Dispatch means send. So, they send the police, or they send an ambulance, or they send the fire department. So, when you're talking to the dispatcher, you wanna understand exactly what they're going to say. That's a great point. It's very, very important.

Kassy: Yes, exactly. So, what we're gonna do today is we're going to listen to an example conversation between a man who's witnessed an emergency and a 911 dispatcher, which Andrew described is a person on the 911 hotline communicating with people in a crisis. After we listen to that example conversation, we'll go through it step by step and break down the key terms and phrases that we hear along the way.

Andrew: All right. That sounds like a great plan. So, why don't we begin by listening to that example conversation right now?

Kassy: Let's do it.

Dispatcher: 911, what is your emergency?

Caller: I just witnessed a **hit and run**. I don't know what I should do. The man isn't moving. I think he's a student.

Dispatcher: All right, sir, stay calm. Where are you located?

Caller: Broad Street. By the entrance to the university.

Dispatcher: OK, can you tell me exactly what happened?

Caller: I was walking back to campus, and I saw a car just **blow through** a red light and hit this guy walking across the street. The guy stopped for a second and then he just drove off and the man didn't get up. What should I do? There's a lot of blood.

Dispatcher: OK, sir. Don't worry. Help is on the way. **Stay on the line**. I'm going to ask you a few more questions.

Caller: OK.

Dispatcher: Did you notice anything about the car? A model, license plate number?

Caller: I didn't see a license plate, but the car was a black Honda Civic.

Dispatcher: All right. How about the man? You think he's a student, right? Does he look young? **What's his condition?**

Caller: Yeah, he's—he's wearing a university sweatshirt. He's about 20-years-old. I think he's breathing, but he hit his head on the pavement. There's a lot of blood, hurry up! His arms are also at a weird angle.

Dispatcher: All right. Thank you for your information. An ambulance has been dispatched. **Stay on the line** until they arrive.

Andrew: OK, everyone. So, we just listened to a rather scary example conversation where a man had to call 911 because he witnessed an emergency situation. Of course, *witness* means to see, right? So, he witnessed—he saw—an emergency situation and he was just being a good citizen, right? In this kind of situation, you don't really have to help, but if you're a good person you will help, and that's what he did. So, he called 911, which is the emergency number in Canada and the USA. And Kassy, I don't know for sure if it is the same for all of the English-speaking countries. So, maybe in the UK, or Australia, or something, they use a different number. I'm not sure about that. Do you know?

Kassy: I'm not sure.

Andrew: You're not sure, OK. So, we can only speak, everyone, for Canada and the USA, but this is the emergency number. So, what we're going to do now is go back through that conversation and discuss it and talk about some of the key expressions that we heard and what they mean, and when you will hear them or when you should use them.

So, I think Kassy, the opening line that we heard the dispatcher say, "911, what's your emergency?" This is like the classic way that they answer the phone. Right? We can hear this on TV shows all the time. When you call 911, this is what you're going to hear the dispatcher say. So, you won't hear them say, "Hello?" Which is normal for most phone conversations, but instead they will answer the phone with, "911, what is your emergency?" And the person, the guy, who witnessed the emergency situation, he saw a **hit and run**. A **hit and run**. That's why he is calling 911. Kassy what is that? What is a **hit and run**?

Kassy: A **hit and run** is a type of car accident where one car hits either another car or a pedestrian—someone who's walking—and then doesn't stop and exchange information. They just drive off and kind of run away from the accident.

Andrew: Yeah, bad, bad situation, a **hit and run**. So, actually the name of this kind of accident really describes it very well, right? They hit something and then they run away in their car or vehicle. So, this person then, he witnessed a **hit and run**. A car hit a pedestrian and then the car ran away—drove away. And so, that is why he has called 911. And the next question that the dispatcher asks is, "Where are you located?" So, that is absolutely another question that you will hear the dispatcher ask you is, "Where is your

location?" And this can actually be a very stressful thing to answer, Kassy, can't it? Because you know, if you're just walking through a city, maybe it's not in your neighborhood and then suddenly you witness something like this. You might not know where, where am I actually? What street am I on? You might not know.

Kassy: Exactly.

Andrew: So, if you don't know, I guess you could just give a general location, right? If there's a landmark, right? This person was by the entrance to the university. So, he just said, "I'm on Broad Street by the entrance to the university." So, it's not a precise address, but it's like the general location. I think that's OK to do if you don't know the exact precise, like street address, right? Would you agree?

Kassy: Yeah, I agree. And oftentimes, almost always, I don't know what road I'm on. So, I think giving a landmark, like Andrew said, is a key way of informing someone where you're located. You could say I'm next to a lake, or I'm by this park, or I'm at the sharp turn in the road going towards **yada yada** town.

Andrew: Exactly. So, just try to describe it as best you can. Although, I guess now these days that everybody has a smartphone, you could probably, if you, you know, were really stuck and there were no landmarks around, or you didn't know where you were, you probably could just look on like Google Map and get a GPS pin. So, that might be something to do. But that could be hard to think of in the moment. And sometimes we don't think about using our phone apps when we're actually talking on the phone, right?

Kassy: Exactly.

Andrew: But that could be an option at least. Anyways, let's continue with the conversation. So, at this point, the dispatcher asks for more details, OK? She says, "Tell me exactly what happened." And this is where the expertise of the dispatcher comes into play, OK? Because the dispatcher's job now is to learn about the emergency and then to send the correct help. So, of course, you know, a situation like this, where there's a crime and an injury probably requires both the police and an ambulance. But there might be situations, you know, where it's like a fire and then you would have to send the fire station and an ambulance, maybe even the police. So, the dispatcher's job is to understand the emergency situation really clearly so that they can send the correct help to rectify and solve the problem. So, the dispatcher says, "Tell me exactly what happened." And they're trying to get as much detail from the caller as possible. And this is where the witness of the crime, the caller to 911 describes what happened. So, he said that he was just walking back to campus. So, I guess he is a student as well. And he saw a car **blow through** a red light. Blow. B-L-O-W. Now, Kassy, we usually think of this word "blow" when we're talking about breathing, right? We blow out air. Out of our mouth. But when you're driving and you **blow through** a red light. What exactly does that mean?

Kassy: It means that you don't stop at the red light and you just keep speeding through that red light.

Andrew: Exactly. So, I guess, when you're driving, there are a couple of ways that you could illegally pass through an intersection, right? You could run a red light or you could **blow through** a red light. And to me run a red light is, like you go, you approach the intersection and maybe you look both ways and slow down and you're like, OK, it's safe, and you keep going, right? Even though the light is red. But if you **blow through** a red light, you don't even think about the traffic lights at all, right? You just keep going. You don't stop to look. You just **blow right through**, you go through very quickly. I think that is the slight nuance there. Would you agree with that?

Kassy: Yes. And this, I think happens quite a lot with **hit and run** accidents. **Hit and run** accidents usually occur because the driver of the vehicle that made the collision is either drunk, or unconscious for some reason, or not in the correct mind state. So, a lot of people who **blow through** red lights as well, it's for that reason. It's because they're not thinking coherently or they've fallen asleep at the wheel. It's not usually a choice to **blow through** a red light. Unlike if you run through a red light, you're kind of like, "Oh, can I make it? Can I do it? Yeah, I think I can. "

Andrew: Yeah, like I remember when I was a young driver, like 16 or 17, and I had my first part-time job. I worked really early in the morning. I started at 5:00am in the morning and sometimes, when I was driving to work, it would be like 4:00am. And the streets were always totally empty in my small Canadian town at 4:00am. And I would have to stop at the red lights. You know, I'm a cautious person and I always follow the rules, even if I don't agree with them sometimes, I still always follow the rules. But it was very tempting. You know, you're standing still for two minutes at this red light at 4:00am in the morning with zero other drivers on the road. I always thought about running the red light, but thankfully, I never did. But yeah. I also heard Kassy that in college towns in the USA, **hit and runs** are much, much, much more common than in other parts of other cities. So, for whatever reason, maybe young drivers are more impulsive, or maybe they're just late for class or something, but it's more common around a university campus for drivers to **blow through** red lights and for **hit and runs** to be common. So, that's another interesting thing to keep in mind. But why don't we get back to the 911 call, which is our focus.

Kassy: Yes.

Andrew: So, unfortunately, this sounded like a really bad accident, right? The driver blew through the red light and he hit a pedestrian, and then the man didn't get up, and he was bleeding and the car drove away. And when the man was telling the details of this story, it sounded like he was a little bit panicked, right? He was stressed out, didn't know exactly what to do. So, how did the dispatcher respond to this situation?

Kassy: She said, "Don't worry. Help is on the way. **Stay on the line.**" These two expressions are very, very common in this kind of situation. A dispatcher's job is not just to find out what the emergency is, but to make sure that the person calling does not go into a full-blown panic attack and need help as well and escalate the situation. So, the phrase, "Help is on the way" is something that you are very likely to hear if you were to call 911.

Andrew: And "**stay on the line.**" That might be confusing for some English learners. They might not exactly know what does that mean? **Stay on the line.** And the line is just like an old-fashioned expression. When we had like wired phones. I think the phone line, you know, there would be a physical wire connecting your phone to the wall, something like that. I think maybe that's the origin, but it just means "don't hang up" right? Don't hang up the call, stay on the call. So, **stay on the line** means don't hang up. And as you said, Kassy, you know, the job of the dispatcher is to try and calm the caller down, dispatch send the appropriate help, but also they wanna get as much detail as possible, especially because of this criminal situation, right? It's a crime, a **hit and run** is a crime. And this might be the best evidence about the crime for like a future court case as well, right? Because they're talking directly to the witness who saw the accident and is witnessing it in real time. So, this is another reason why they want you to stay on the phone so they can get as much detail about what is happening as possible. And then the dispatcher goes on just to ask for some more information about the situation, right? She asks, did you notice anything about the car, a model, a license plate number? Let's just break that down. What do they mean? Like a model and what is a license plate?

Kassy: A *model* is the type of car. So, maybe you could figure out what brand it was. I don't know anything about cars, but there's usually a "make" so Honda or Kia or something like that, and model. So, the type of car for that company, again, I would be very bad at talking to the dispatcher about this, but others might be really good at it.

Andrew: Yeah, me as well. It's a black car. That's all I know.

Kassy: Exactly. And then the license plate number is usually on the back of a car and often on the front of a car. And it's that plate that goes right above your bumper. And it has a number that's specific to your car. It's registered under your name and your car. So, that police officers could look up that license plate number and figure out who was driving.

Andrew: Exactly. So, if you are a witness to this kind of situation and you can write down or remember the license plate number, that could be a huge help in the investigation. However, that is not easy to do. So, I don't think you need to feel guilty if you can't do that at the moment, because that is a really, really difficult thing to do. And in fact, in this situation, the caller didn't know the license plate number, which I think is probably very normal. So, that's OK. And the final question that the dispatcher asks is about the *condition*. What condition is the victim of this **hit and run** in? And so, unfortunately, it sounds like he's in pretty bad shape. He's in bad condition. He's bleeding. He hit his head

on the pavement on the ground and his arm is also at a weird angle. That is what we hear the caller say. His arm is at a weird angle. Kassy, if your arm is at a weird angle, I would imagine it means your arm is broken. Is that what you think of?

Kassy: Yeah, that's right.

Andrew: Yeah. So, an *angle* is like a bend, right? Or maybe Kassy, you are better at math than I am. Is there a better way to describe an angle than a bend?

Kassy: Arms usually go a certain direction, right? They go from your body outwards in a straight line. But if your arm is, you know, angled backwards towards your elbow, you know, uh, you probably broke something.

Andrew: Yeah, you don't wanna see that. That doesn't sound good. So, upon hearing about the crime, about the **hit and run**, about the condition of the man, the victim who was hit and about the details of the accident, then the dispatcher makes the decision that this is a real emergency situation and they need to send help as soon as possible. So, at this point in the conversation, the dispatcher says that she is sending an ambulance. So, she said an ambulance has been dispatched. And again, dispatched just means sent. So, she sent an ambulance to the accident scene and she finally asks the caller just to **stay on the line** until they arrive, until the ambulance arrives. And I imagine this would be just in case the ambulance has a hard time finding the accident location. Or just in case some other situation develops. But again, like we said, the 911 dispatcher usually tries to keep the call going for a long time to make sure that all of the information that is needed is there and they can help the situation. So, you shouldn't just hang up first. You should always just listen to the instructions of the dispatcher. And once they say it's OK to end the call, then you can end the call. But before that, I would just follow their instructions and try to do what they say as best as you can.

Kassy: Yes, exactly. And this conversation we just listened to is a example of what you're going to hear if you call 911 in an emergency, but there are so many different ways that this conversation could go depending on what your emergency is. But, you should always hear some key phrases such as, "what is your emergency?", "Tell me what happened", and "**What's the person's condition?**" Those are things that you're probably going to hear every single time you call 911.

Andrew: Yeah, exactly. So, again, like you said, Kassy, it could go so many different directions. Unfortunately, there are so many different emergency situations out there, but at least you'll hear a lot of the same similar questions asked by the dispatcher, no matter what your emergency is. Why don't we talk quickly about some other reasons that you may call 911. We reserve this number only for real big emergencies, guys. So, you don't wanna call it, you know, if there's like a small problem in your life, like, uh, you're stuck in a traffic jam and you're gonna be late for work or something like that. That's not a reason to

call 911. But if you have a true emergency, you know, maybe your grandfather fell down and had an accident and maybe he broke his hip or something like that. Maybe you yourself have been in an accident. You know, maybe you are a carpenter and you're working with power tools and you cut yourself or something and you need to call the ambulance, you could call 911. Maybe there's a missing person, you know, that would be so horrifying and frightening. If you're a parent and suddenly you're in the supermarket or something, and you can't find your son or daughter and you're looking around and you can't find them, that kind of situation, absolutely, you may have to call 911. Or what happens if you're in a restaurant and somebody at the next table is choking and you're worried about that medical situation, they might die. You could call 911. So, any kind of real, true emergency, we call this number. But other than that, we don't like to call it. And in fact, if you abuse it, if you call it when it's not a real emergency, then you potentially could get in trouble. It's really only reserved for serious emergencies to do with medical situations, fires, or crimes. Those three things.

Kassy: Yes. That's exactly right. And that's why you have to really watch your phone around young kids. I've heard that 911 gets called by kids under the age of 5 a lot more than you'd think because little kids think it's cool to call 911, but it **clogs up the line**, and creates a lot of issues. So, watch out for that as well.

Andrew: And we also learn about it from a young age, right Kassy? Like, maybe that's the first phone number that we actually learn as little kids is 911, and maybe our parents' phone numbers. So, it's in our heads, and yeah, if you're just like playing, you know, pretending, playing as kids do, they might call that number accidentally. But anyways guys, we're at the end of today's episode. So, before we go, why don't we just summarize and wrap up?

Kassy: OK. So, today we learned about how to call 911.

Andrew: Yeah. And we also learned about common questions you'll be asked when making an emergency 911 call and how to respond.

Kassy: That's right. We learned the expressions, "What is your emergency?" And, "where are you located?" And, "**what's his condition?**" All common questions that you are going to be asked when calling 911.

Andrew: We also learned the expressions, "**hit and run**", "help is on the way", and "**stay on the line**".

Kassy: Well, that brings us to the end of this episode. Thanks for listening everyone and we hope you learned a lot with us today.

Andrew: We also hope that you never have to use what you learned today. One of the few times where we hope that. Guys, our website is Culips.com and if you want to get the study guide, including the transcript and practice exercises for this episode, please visit our website to download it.

Kassy: And guys, if you like this episode today, and you found it helpful, why don't you help support us by becoming a Culips Member? It is a great way of showing your support, but it's not the only way. You can also help us out by leaving us a five-star rating and a nice review on your podcast app, by telling your friends about Culips, and by following us on social media.

Andrew: Yeah, stay up to date with Culips by following us on Instagram, our email address is also contact@culips.com and if you'd like to send us a message, you can feel free to do that. We enjoy hearing from our listeners. We'll be back soon with another brand new episode. We'll talk to you all then. Goodbye and take care.

Kassy: See ya.

Detailed Explanations

Hit and run

Noun

In the example phone call in this episode, the caller reports a **hit and run** to the 911 dispatcher. A **hit and run** is a type of car accident where the driver flees the scene of the accident they caused. In the example, the driver hit a person walking near the university campus and then drove away. A **hit and run** can also be an accident where one car crashes into another car, and then drives away. In both situations, the driver that caused the accident doesn't stop to check if the situation is okay or wait for police to assess the situation.

Here are a couple more examples with **hit and run**:

Tanner: Why were you late to the office this morning? You're usually never late.

Josh: I would have made it on time, but I was in a **hit and run** accident.

Tanner: Oh my gosh! What happened?

Josh: I dropped my kids off at school, and when I came back out to the parking lot my car's front right headlights were broken and my bumper was dented. Someone must've backed into my car and then just drove off.

Tanner: Did you report it to the police?

Josh: Yeah, I reported the **hit and run** to the police. Hopefully, they find the person who is responsible.

Ray: Did you hear about James? He's in the hospital.

Kim: What happened? I saw him yesterday and he was fine.

Ray: He was in a bike accident. I heard it was a **hit and run**. He was riding his bike and suddenly a car came out of nowhere and hit him, then drove off.

Kim: Is he going to be alright?

Ray: The doctor said his arm is broken, but other than that he is okay.

Blow through

Phrasal verb

In the example conversation, the caller says that he saw a car **blow through** a red light. To **blow through** something means that you move past a barrier or boundary without hesitating or stopping. In the example, the person should stop at the red traffic light, but instead they continue driving without stopping, so we say they **blew through** the red light. Usually, if a person **blows through** something, it means they move through it forcefully and at full speed without slowing down at all.

We can also use the phrase **blow through** when we are describing the way the wind moves in and out of a space. For example, if you open your car windows while driving, the wind will **blow through** the car.

Here are a couple more examples with **blow through**:

Kelly: I was picking my kids up from school yesterday and I saw a car speeding past the school. The driver must have been going at least 50 kilometres an hour even though the traffic sign clearly says the speed limit is 15 kilometres an hour during school hours.

Po: Wow, that so dangerous. Did the driver even slow down to check for kids crossing the street?

Kelly: Nope, I saw him just **blow through** the school zone without even slowing down. Thankfully, no kids were crossing the street. It still makes me angry to think about how reckless that driver was though.

Po: Me too. Next time you should write down the license plate number and report it to the police.

Eddy: What's that smell?

Sue: Oh, sorry. I was cooking and accidentally burnt the food. It smells smoky, doesn't it?

Eddy: Yeah, can I open the window and let some air **blow through**? It's kind of hard to breath.

Sue: Yeah, good idea. Sorry, I'll try to watch the food more carefully while cooking next time.

Stay on the line

Phrase

In the example conversation of this episode, the dispatcher tells the caller to **stay on the line**. To **stay on the line** means to not hang up the phone or end the call. We can also use the expression “the line” to refer to a phone connection. If you call someone and the call doesn’t connect because they are already on a phone call, you can say the line is busy.

You can use the expression **stay on the line** when you think someone might end the phone call, but you don’t want them to. Also, if you need to put the phone down or put the call on hold, you can tell the person to **stay on the line** so they know you aren’t ending the call.

Here are a couple more examples with **stay on the line**:

Aaron: Hello, this is technical support. How may I help you?

Gail: Hi, I’m calling about my account. I tried logging in, but it seems like my account is locked. Could you help me?

Aaron: You’ll have to talk to our account specialist. I can transfer you over to their department. Please **stay on the line** while I transfer your call.

Gail: Okay, thank you.

Charles: Hey, I’m at work right now but I think I left my car headlights on. Can you go downstairs and check?

Benny: Yeah sure. My phone is plugged into the wall, charging, so I can’t take the phone down with me but **stay on the line** for a minute and I’ll be right back.

Charles: Okay, thank you.

Benny: I just checked but your headlights weren’t on.

Charles: Great. Thanks for checking. That’s a relief to know.

What's (someone's) condition

Phrase

Near the end of the example dialogue, the dispatcher asks about the condition of the young man who was hit. The dispatcher asks, "**What's his condition.**" When asking **what (someone's) condition** is, you are asking if the person is hurt, injured, or needs medical attention. The word condition is defined as the state or status that someone is in. If someone is hurt, then they are in bad condition. If they are healthy and safe, then they are in good condition.

We can also ask **what (someone's) condition** is if they are recovering from a sickness or injury and we want to know if they are recovering well.

Here are a couple more examples with **what's (someone's) condition**:

Symone: I heard your mom is in the hospital? Is everything okay?

Joanne: She fell and broke her hip. Thankfully, I was visiting her, so she wasn't on the floor for too long before I called the ambulance.

Symone: Well, it is very fortunate that you were there. **What's her condition** now?

Joanne: The doctors say she's recovering pretty quickly. Hopefully, she'll be able to come home in a few days.

Sky: Do you know why Jeremy wasn't at basketball practice last week?

Todd: Yeah, he sprained his ankle falling off of a ladder.

Sky: Really? **What's his condition?** Is he going to be able to play in the tournament next week?

Todd: I don't think so. He's in pretty bad condition. He says he can't even walk on the sprained ankle.

Sky: Oh no. We're definitely going to lose the tournament now.

Yada yada Phrase

In this episode, Kassy explains that you can tell the 911 dispatcher where you are by saying you are by a landmark near the road going towards “**yada yada** town”. **Yada yada** is a term used to replace unspecific or undetermined information that is not important to the conversation. In this example, Kassy uses **yada yada** to replace the name of a specific town because the name of the town is not key information in the example sentence. In English we also use phrases like “such and such” in the same situation. Kassy could have also said, “The road going towards such and such town,” and it would have had the same meaning.

Yada yada is also used as a short way to talk about information you think is boring or not important. Using **yada yada** in this way shows that you don’t think the information is worth giving your attention to, which may be viewed as impolite if the person who said the information thinks it is important.

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

David: So, are you ready to sign the contract?

Rachel: Yep, just tell me where to sign and I’ll do it.

David: Did you read through the contract details in the copy I sent you last week?

Rachel: I skimmed through it. These contracts are basically all the same. I shouldn’t violate the agreement, I pay a fine if I cancel early, **yada yada**. Let’s just get it done.

David: This contract is very important. I wish you would take it more seriously.

Brian: How does the exchange student application process work? I’ve never done a program like this so I’m a little bit nervous.

Elijah: There’s no need to be nervous. It’s super easy. All you have to do is tell your university that you want to study at **yada yada** university in **yada yada** country and then they will give you all the documents you need.

Brian: Wow, is it really that simple?

Elijah: Yep, the application is the easy part. The hard part is really studying once you get there!

Clog up the line

Idiom

In this episode, Kassy mentions that children sometimes call 911 because they think it is cool, but it is actually an issue because **it clogs up the line**. To **clog up the line** means that too many people call one phone number at the same time, so that it becomes too busy. Like we talked about in the explanation of the phrase “stay on the line”, a “line” is the telephone connection. When something is clogged, it is backed up or blocked so things can’t pass through. If too many people call a phone number at the same time, or if one person uses the phone for too long, the phone connection becomes too busy and phone calls can’t connect. In that situation, we say that the large amount of calls **clogged up the line**. This is a big issue if the 911 emergency line becomes too busy because then people who are in an emergency can’t get help quickly.

Before everyone had their own individual cell phones, many homes shared one home phone. If one person used the phone for too long, it **clogged up the line**, and others weren’t able to receive phone calls.

Here are a couple more examples with **clog up the line**:

Charlotte: Hey, I tried calling your home phone last night, but the line was busy. Were you on the phone?

Emma: No, my little sister was **clogging up the line**. She was talking on the phone with her boyfriend for 3 hours! I told her to hurry up and finish her call, but she just ignored me.

Charlotte: That must have been really frustrating. I’m glad I don’t have any siblings who **clog up the line** at our house. It’s just my parents and me, and my parent’s rarely use the phone.

Emma: You’re so lucky.

Olivia: Ouch!

Liam: Are you okay?

Olivia: I just got a paper cut. It looks like it’s starting to bleed. Do you think I should call 911?

Liam: No, that’s not an emergency. You don’t want to **clog up the line** with something that small. Go in the kitchen and clean the cut, then put a bandage on it.

Quiz

1. What does stay on the line mean?

- a) balancing on a rope
- b) drive straight in a lane
- c) not ending a phone call
- d) hanging from a zipline

2. What does someone want to know when they ask about another person's condition?

- a) what their favorite food is
- b) if they are single
- c) if they are hurt or injured
- d) if they use conditioner in their hair

3. Blowing through a red light means slowing checking for other cars before turning left at a red light.

- a) true
- b) false

4. Which of the following situations is not a good example of clogging up the line?

- a) too many people calling at once
- b) calling 911 when there is no emergency
- c) talking on the phone for too long
- d) clogging a toilet

5. Which situation is a hit and run?

- a) a car leaving the scene of an accident
- b) hitting a baseball while running
- c) being hit in the face while running
- d) running a full marathon

Writing and Discussion Questions

1. Talk about a situation you were in where someone had to call 911. What was the emergency?
2. What are the types of situations that it is better to call someone rather than send a text message?
3. Are you the type of person who is very cautious about causing or being in an accidents, or are you more careless about safety?
4. How often do you make phone calls? Do you enjoy talking on the phone?
5. What do you think it would be like to work as a 911 dispatcher? Is it a job you think you could do well?

Quiz Answers

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

Episode credits

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