

## Simplified Speech #016 – American Thanksgiving

### Episode description

Have you ever wondered what Thanksgiving is all about, and why Canada and the United States celebrate it on different days? Come join Andrew and Suzanne as they explain this unique North American holiday.

### Fun fact

Canada began celebrating Thanksgiving before the United States. According to history, the first Thanksgiving celebration in Canada can be attributed to Martin Frobisher. Frobisher held a ceremony of thanks when he arrived in Newfoundland (Canada) in 1578, before the pilgrims on the Mayflower landed in Cape Cod (United States) in 1620.

### Expressions included in the learning materials

- A fail
- A bad rap
- A shortcut
- A mishmash
- To err on the side of caution



## 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: Hey everyone. I'm Andrew.

Suzanne: And I'm Suzanne.

Andrew: And we're back with another Culips episode.

Announcer: If you want to learn English for everyday use, you've come to the right place. At Culips, we help make English understandable. By listening to our podcast, you can learn natural expressions and conversational structure. If you're interested in learning more about Culips and what we do, check us out on Facebook or our website, Culips.com. That's C-U-L-I-P-S.com. Thanks for listening. We hope you enjoy this episode.

Andrew: Hey Suzanne. What's new with you?

Suzanne: I'm heading back home to see my family in Texas. And it was reminding me that the holidays are coming up in the US.

Andrew: Yes, just around the bend is Thanksgiving, right?

Suzanne: Yeah. And it's definitely a time when you go home and you visit your family.

Andrew: Yes, it's always nice to be with your family on the holidays. And now, in Canada, we already celebrated Thanksgiving.

Suzanne: That's right.

Andrew: We celebrated Canadian Thanksgiving around a month ago, but American Thanksgiving, your Thanksgiving, is coming up very soon.

Suzanne: Yeah. Do you know why that is? Why they're so far apart?

Andrew: That's a great question. I don't know. Do you?

- Suzanne: I do know. Well, in Canada, the Thanksgiving holiday is in October because the temperatures drop a little bit earlier in the fall, in the months of September and October, whereas the temperatures drop in November across the US. So because of that, the harvest—because Thanksgiving is a harvest holiday—the harvest is done earlier in the fall in Canada than in the US. And so you celebrate Thanksgiving, or the harvest of all of the crops over the spring and summer. You celebrate it in October, which is when you're kind of taking in all of the fruits and vegetables, and all of the food in the markets, and making a big feast. And in the US, it's done in November.
- Andrew: Wow! Now that you mention that, it makes perfect sense. I'm surprised that I never thought of that before, but yeah, that's very clear, right? In Canada ...
- Suzanne: It gets colder earlier. You're north!
- Andrew: Yeah, we live north of you. It gets cold earlier in the year. But yeah, down south, it's warmer longer. Well, I learned something new today. This is great.
- Suzanne: I'm so glad I could help out.
- Andrew: Today, we're going to do a Simplified Speech episode all about—you guessed it—Thanksgiving! And a Simplified Speech episode is where we have a natural conversation. We use everyday language, but we speak slower than we usually do.
- OK, let's get started. Let's talk more about Thanksgiving. And during Canadian Thanksgiving, my family and I, we like to eat foods like turkey, mashed potatoes, Brussel sprouts, and pumpkin pie.
- Suzanne: Yeah, Brussels. I love Brussel sprouts. I think Brussel sprouts get **a bad rap**.
- Andrew: They do have a bad reputation, don't they?
- Suzanne: But they're delicious. I think it's all in how you cook them.
- Andrew: Definitely. Oh, also stuffing!
- Suzanne: Yeah, stuffing.
- Andrew: Stuffing is a type of bread that you actually put inside the turkey, right? You stuff it inside the turkey while it cooks.
- Suzanne: Have you ever cooked Thanksgiving dinner, Andrew?
- Andrew: I have actually, yes. I've done the whole thing.

- Suzanne: That's really amazing. It is quite a feat! It is very much a big job.
- Andrew: But I have to be honest. I did cheat on the stuffing, and I used store-bought stuffing. **Fail**, right?
- Suzanne: Well, it's OK. But the reason why I ask is because the stuffing is very labour-intensive and very difficult. So if you're looking for **shortcuts**, that's definitely a place you can **shortcut**. But I usually make my stuffing from scratch.
- Andrew: Wow!
- Suzanne: So I have to buy, like, three long baguettes.
- Andrew: Wow!
- Suzanne: And I have to cut them up into small cubes, and soak them, and you put lots of things in stuffing, like herbs. And you can make a vegetarian stuffing with maybe mushrooms. The thing that's so difficult about stuffing is that it has many different parts that you have to put into one big **mishmash**. So you have to cook all of those parts separately, and then put it together, and then it bakes for like an hour. So it can be so labour-intensive. You can put sage and herbs in there. And thyme and rosemary, and it's so delicious. It's very savoury. Lots of butter too goes in there.
- Andrew: So much butter!
- Suzanne: So much butter!
- Andrew: That is my trick to cooking in general, so much butter.
- Suzanne: So much butter! When you do stuffing, you put the stuffing inside the turkey? Because I don't. I don't do that.
- Andrew: Well, to be honest, when I use store-bought ... No, I don't put it inside the turkey. But I believe traditionally, this is what people do. Hence, the name, *stuffing*.
- Suzanne: Yeah, exactly. I just get kind of scared that parts of the bird won't get cooked inside because it's stuffed with things. So I just put, like, lemons and onions and simple fruits.
- Andrew: Carrots.
- Suzanne: Carrots, some herbs, just to give it flavour. I don't know. I feel like sometimes stuffing can cause it not to cook so well.

- Andrew: Yes, well you don't want to ruin the bird, right? It's good that you're **erring on the side of caution**.
- Suzanne: Yes, because on Thanksgiving, sometimes it's called "Turkey Day."
- Andrew: Yeah, Turkey Day! Gobble, gobble.
- Suzanne: Gobble, gobble. So the turkey has the main role on Thanksgiving. So you definitely need to have a delicious turkey.
- Andrew: It is the focal point, absolutely. And aside from our Thanksgiving meal that we like to have with friends and family, what are some other traditions that you do with your family or with your friends on Thanksgiving Day? Do you do the same things every year? Do you do different things? Do you have no traditions? What does Thanksgiving Day look like for you?
- Suzanne: Well, when I was young and growing up, I definitely had traditions of going over to my grandmother's house. And we would cook with her and just eat for about 7 hours. I mean, it was course after course after ... I think we all just ate until we were exhausted, and then we would sleep on the couch and take a nap.
- Andrew: Beautiful. Sounds like a great day.
- Suzanne: It was a great day. And then we would wake up, and have coffee and dessert. And we would play cards and games at the table. But now, I've been living in Montreal, and most of my friends here are from France. I've a lot of friends from France who don't celebrate Canadian Thanksgiving or American Thanksgiving. And so I've been doing this for about 5 years. I've been cooking Thanksgiving for the French people because they've seen it on TV and in movies. And so they get really excited.
- Andrew: Yeah, of course. Everybody would like to try Thanksgiving if possible, I think.
- Suzanne: Yeah. We also play games, and we make hand turkeys.
- Andrew: Hand turkeys. Oh! I haven't thought of those for a long time.
- Suzanne: Maybe we can put a video on Facebook or a picture of how you can make a turkey using your hand.
- Andrew: That would be fun.
- Suzanne: And you can cut it out and hang it up, yeah.
- Andrew: Let's do that. One of the traditions that takes place in my house, with my family, is a football game.

- Suzanne: Oh yeah! Totally.
- Andrew: We always watch football, American-style football, even though we're watching Canadian teams and the Canadian league, the CFL, on Canadian Thanksgiving. This is American-style football. And yeah, it's just something that's always on during Thanksgiving Day. I don't know if we watch it too closely, but it's always on in the background, the football game. This is a tradition in my house.
- Suzanne: That's really very common. I think that's a very traditional thing to do, to watch the football game on Thanksgiving. In the US, we have Thanksgiving on a Thursday, and most people take off Wednesday so that they can prepare the cooking. Because I don't know if you know, but the average Thanksgiving meal takes about 2 days of prep and cooking.
- Andrew: It sounds unbelievable, but I believe it. Like I said, I've cooked Thanksgiving before. It's a lot of work!
- Suzanne: Yeah, and then what's funny is we also have Friday off. So we eat on Thursday, and then we have Friday off as well. And we call that Black Friday.
- Andrew: Black Friday. Correct me if I'm wrong, but that's the big shopping day, correct?
- Suzanne: That is correct, yes. It's also called Black Friday in Canada, even though you don't celebrate it after Thanksgiving, like we do in the US.
- Andrew: Right, this is something that's new in Canada. We never used to have Black Friday, but stores are trying to cash in on this American shopping day. And so now, you're seeing it slowly appear in Canada too.
- Suzanne: Yes. And do you know why it's called Black Friday?
- Andrew: I think I do, but I'm too embarrassed to potentially say the wrong answer. So why don't you explain it for us.
- Suzanne: Well, this is what's called the fourth quarter of the year, right?
- Andrew: Yeah, the financial year.
- Suzanne: Yeah, in the financial year, you have four quarters, and each quarter consists of 3 months. Thanksgiving and Christmas fall in the last quarter, the last 3 months of the year. And most stores use this to drop their prices and go from being in debt, or in the red, to having a surplus, or being in the black. When you're in the black, you have a profit. When you are in the red, you have a debt. You have negative.

Andrew: Right. Back in the day, before computers, accountants used to write debts in red and profits in black ink.

Suzanne: Yes.

Andrew: And I think this is where this expression comes from. *In the red* means you're in debt. *In the black* means you are profitable. And so Black Friday is kind of a profitable day for stores.

Suzanne: Exactly, exactly.

Andrew: This is why it's called Black Friday.

Suzanne: Yup. And everyone goes to the stores because they have incredible savings and great deals. And it's definitely the time to shop because also it's 1 month before Christmas, usually. So it gives you time to check off all of those gifts on your Christmas shopping list.

Andrew: Suzanne, I think we should wrap it up. I really enjoyed talking about Thanksgiving today. And you know what? I'm feeling pretty hungry now. I'm sad that I have to wait so long to eat turkey again.

Suzanne: You will have to maybe, at least, get, like, a frozen turkey dinner so that you can experience it where you are.

Andrew: Yes, definitely.

Well, I want to thank all of our listeners for listening. And, you know, I'm curious. Most countries and most cultures have some sort of harvest celebration. And Thanksgiving is our harvest celebration. We want to know about yours. So definitely head on over to our Facebook page: [facebook.com/culipspodcast](https://facebook.com/culipspodcast). And send us a message, or even better, leave us a comment and let us know how you and your family celebrate the harvest celebration in your culture.

Suzanne: And come and check out our website at [Culips.com](http://Culips.com), and study with us. Sign up to become a member because, when you become a member, you have access to all our learning materials.

Andrew: Yeah, the learning materials include transcripts, detailed explanations, and quizzes for each and every episode. So members get tons and tons and tons of study material, and it's just a great way to have fun while studying with us. So definitely check out our website, and consider becoming a member.

OK, Suzanne, thanks again! We'll talk to you next time.

Suzanne:      You too, Andrew. Bye!

Andrew:      Bye!



## Detailed Explanations

### A fail

**A fail**, meaning a failure or a misstep, is a recent expression associated with internet and meme culture. You can use **a fail** to talk about a specific mistake or instance of misfortune. So if you sleep through your alarm in the morning, you can call that **a fail**.

**Fail**, without the article *a*, is used as an exclamatory phrase to point out a botch or non-success. For instance, if your friend accidentally drops their coffee, to draw attention to their accident, you could say, “**Fail!**” The expression **fail** is often used in response to an accident or bad thing that is unfortunate but funny.

**Fail** is an informal expression that is best used with friends and family. It would not be appropriate to use this expression with acquaintances or in formal situations. So if your boss makes a mistake, it would be inappropriate to exclaim, “**Fail!**”

Therefore, you can use **fail** as an exclamation to point out a failure or mistake, and you can use **a fail** to refer to a specific instance where you made a mistake.

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

Joe:	Do we have everything for dinner tonight?
Amelia:	Yup, I got everything on the list.
Joe:	Even the special wine for my mom that I asked you to get a couple of weeks ago?
Amelia:	Oh dear, no. I completely forgot!
Joe:	<b>Fail!</b>

Kevin:	How was your date last night?
Bea:	Ugh, it was awful.
Kevin:	Oh no! Why was it so bad?
Bea:	The guy was so awkward! He kept trying these cheesy moves on me, and there were all <b>fails</b> .

## A bad rap

**A bad rap**, also known as *a bum rap*, means a criticism, bad opinion, or bad reputation that is unfair or untrue. It is frequently used in North America to mean a common but undeserved bad reputation.

You will often hear North American English speakers use **a bad rap** instead of *a bum rap* because **a bad rap** is more common than *a bum rap* in the United States and Canada than elsewhere.

In this episode, Suzanne mentions that Brussels sprouts, tiny cabbages that are often disliked, have **a bad rap**. By saying they have **a bad rap**, Suzanne is expressing her opinion that they are tastier than most people believe, and don't deserve to be disliked. So when you know someone or something has a negative reputation that is based on something false or unfair, you can say they have **a bad rap**.

Be careful: **A bad rap** is not the same as *a bad wrap*. Although both expressions are pronounced the same way, *a bad wrap* means a dissatisfactory or unappetizing sandwich.

Here are a couple more examples with **a bad rap**:

Angela:	Hey, wanna grab coffee sometime?
Paul:	Sure thing! Where were you thinking of going?
Angela:	I'm not set on the idea, but I was thinking of going to The Sleepless Goat Cafe.
Paul:	Hmm, I don't know about that place. I've never been, but I've only heard bad things.
Angela:	We should go! It has <b>a bad rap</b> , but it's a nice place. They have great food.

Jill:	I still can't decide what elective to take. Do you have any advice?
Dave:	Was there anything that stood out?
Jill:	Not really. I was thinking anything but the vampire course. It sounds ridiculous.
Dave:	Actually, I took that course and had an amazing time. I think it gets <b>a bad rap</b> because it sounds silly, but it was really interesting and I learned a lot!
Jill:	No kidding! Maybe I'll take that one after all.

## A shortcut

When you have a way of getting somewhere or accomplishing something faster than normal, you can call that **a shortcut**.

The most common way to use the expression **a shortcut** is when talking about a way to get from one destination to another faster than usual. So if you have a faster route to get somewhere, you can call that route **a shortcut**.

However, you can have **shortcuts** for many things. For example, in this episode, Andrew talks about **a shortcut** for making Thanksgiving dinner: using store-bought, pre-made stuffing. Because pre-made stuffing takes less time to make than homemade stuffing, we can call this time-saving measure (using pre-made stuffing) **a shortcut**.

Here are a couple more examples with **a shortcut**.

Isla:	Are you almost ready to go?
Fred:	I need another 15 minutes. What's the hurry?
Isla:	I just looked online, and there's a lot of traffic. It's gonna take 45 minutes to get to the cinema, and the movie starts in 50 minutes!
Fred:	Oh, don't worry. I know <b>a shortcut</b> that will get us there in 20 minutes.
Isla:	That sounds like <b>a magical shortcut</b> . I hope you're right about it!

Jessica:	How are you doing?
Dan:	Oh man, I'm drowning in homework.
Jessica:	I'm sorry to hear that!
Dan:	It's this darn stats class. I have to make all these charts for it, and they take forever to draw out in Word.
Jessica:	I know a website that will generate graphs like that for you! It's <b>a really helpful shortcut</b> so you can get everything done way faster.
Dan:	Thanks!

## A mishmash

**A mishmash** means a disorderly, confused mixture of things. When things are put together in a disorganized way that doesn't make much sense, you can call that **a mishmash**. For instance, if a neighbourhood is made up of many different styles and types of buildings, you can say, "The neighbourhood is **a mishmash** of architecture."

In this episode, Suzanne mentions that stuffing is one big **mishmash** of ingredients. So Suzanne is saying that stuffing is made up of many ingredients that are all mixed together—a disorganized mixture of ingredients.

So you can call something **a mishmash** when it is made up of different types of items that appear to be put together in a way that looks disorderly or chaotic.

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

Justin:	How did you enjoy the show last night?
Hannah:	The show itself was just OK, but the space it was held in was amazing!
Justin:	What made the space so amazing?
Hannah:	The basement of the venue was this wacky museum of creepy stuff. It was <b>a total mishmash</b> of objects, like dolls' heads and masks all over the walls. It was like being in a horror movie.
Justin:	That sounds terrifying! I would have hated it, but I'm glad you had fun.

Colin:	What do you think of my outfit?
Dede:	I don't mind it, but it's a bit of <b>a mishmash</b> of patterns.
Colin:	What do you mean?
Dede:	Well, people don't usually wear a plaid shirt with striped pants, a checkered sweater, and a polka-dot tie. That's a lot of patterns!
Colin:	I guess I see what you're getting at. If I want to look more put together, I should only wear a couple of patterns at one time.
Dede:	Definitely. This way, your clothing will be less confusing to the eye.

## To err on the side of caution

The expression **to err on the side of caution** means to be especially careful. When deciding what to do, if you pick the safe option instead of the risky option, you **are erring on the side of caution**. That is, **to err on the side of caution** means to be more careful and cautious than might be necessary to make sure that something bad doesn't happen.

In this episode, Sue talks about not putting stuffing inside her Thanksgiving turkey because she wants to make sure the whole bird cooks properly. Although many people successfully cook a stuffed Thanksgiving turkey, Sue wants to make sure her bird is perfectly cooked. She does not want to take any risks, so she does not stuff it with stuffing. In other words, Sue is **erring on the side of caution** because she is being extra careful.

Here are a couple more examples with **to err on the side of caution**:

Sarah:	Hey, do you want to come out dancing with us tonight?
Marc:	I'd really like to, but I don't know if I should.
Sarah:	How come? Do you have something important to do tomorrow?
Marc:	Yeah, I have a meeting at noon. While it would probably be OK since the meeting is later in the day, I think I'm going <b>to err on the side of caution</b> and stay in tonight. I gotta be alert for that meeting!
Sarah:	No worries!

Ariel:	I love swimming in this cove. It is probably my favourite spot because of the wonderful view. Do you see that cliff over there? I've always wanted to jump off the ledge of it and into the water.
Gareth:	Yeah, it looks like it will be fun and scary at the same time.
Ariel:	I'm going to do it! Are you going to come with me, or are you going <b>to err on the side of caution</b> ?
Gareth:	I know I've seen about 20 people jump off the ledge and be fine, but I just don't think I can do it. I'm going <b>to err on the side of caution</b> and stay here.
Ariel:	OK, wish me luck!
Gareth:	Good luck!

## Quiz

**1. What is another term for *a fail*?**

- a) a success
- b) a mistake
- c) a shortcut
- d) a fall

**2. John has a bad reputation that he doesn't deserve. What could you say about John?**

- a) John has a bad rip.
- b) John has a bad wrap.
- c) John has a bum rap.
- d) John has a bid rap.

**3. What can you call a group of objects that are randomly put together?**

- a) a mishmash
- b) a marshmallow
- c) a mandate
- d) a smash

**4. Sally has a method for cleaning her house faster than usual. In other words, Sally has \_\_\_\_\_.**

- a) a mishmash
- b) a shortcut
- c) a misstep
- d) a route

**5. True or false: To err on the side of caution means to be less cautious.**

- a) true
- b) false

## Quiz Answers

1. b   2. c   3. a   4. b   5. b

### Episode credits

Hosts: Andrew Bates and Suzanne Cerreta  
Episode preparation/research: Suzanne Cerreta  
Audio editor: Andrew Bates  
Transcription: Andrew Bates  
Learning materials writer: Morag St. Clair  
English editor: Stephanie Minelga  
Business manager: Tsuyoshi Kaneshima  
Project manager: Jessica Cox