

Simplified Speech #027 – Advice

Episode description

Giving and taking advice can be tricky. In this Simplified Speech episode, Andrew and Morag share their thoughts on both giving and taking advice. Take our advice, and tune in right away!

Fun fact

There's a lot of great advice, or guidance or recommendations, out there. For instance, a great piece of advice about learning is the following: the best way to learn something is to surround yourself with people who are better at it than you are. In other words, the best thing that you can do to learn English is to keep spending time with Culips' hosts! Keep up the great job!

Expressions included in the learning materials

- To wing it
- Downtime
- To settle down
- To be spot-on
- The received wisdom



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 everybody. My name is Andrew.

Morag: And my name is Morag.

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

Good morning, Morag.

Morag: Good morning, Andrew. Or should I say, "Good evening"?

Andrew: It's actually evening where I am, yeah.

Morag: Mmhmm.

Andrew: And thanks to the internet, we are talking from opposite sides of the world. How amazing.

Morag: It's super cool.

Andrew: Today, I had an interesting experience when I was teaching in my classroom.

Morag: Mmhmm.

Andrew: I went to use the internet, and the internet was down.

Morag: Oh my God!

Andrew: I couldn't access my Google Drive account, and I couldn't download the file that I needed to teach my class. But luckily, I'm pretty good at **winging it**, and this was no big issue. But it got me thinking, "Wow, I depend on the internet so much." And when it's not around, it's kind of weird, isn't it?

Morag: I totally know what you're talking about. The last time that I had no internet for a couple of minutes, I was lost. You know, talking about not knowing what to do without the internet, a friend gave me a piece of advice the other day. He told me to delete Facebook from my phone so that when you have some **downtime**, you can't immediately check Facebook to keep yourself entertained. So it's like you don't have the immediate amusement part of the internet, even though you do. Does that make sense?

- Andrew: That makes sense. Reserve it for your computer so that you cannot be distracted by Facebook on your phone when you're trying to work or concentrate.
- Morag: Or just be a little bit less dependent on constantly being amused by something.
- Andrew: It's interesting that you talked about your friend giving you some advice because that's actually the topic of today's Simplified Speech episode.
- Morag: Hmm!
- Andrew: Of course, a Simplified Speech episode is where we have a completely natural and unscripted conversation, but we turn down the speed a little bit. We speak slower than we would in our everyday lives. And I'm curious, Morag. Do you often listen to advice from your friends?
- Morag: No.
- Andrew: No?
- Morag: I'm one of those people who gives a lot of advice, but I don't take my own advice, nor do I tend to take other people's. I'm a learn-it-yourself kinda girl.
- Andrew: A learn-through-experience type of person.
- Morag: Make your own mistakes, and I do.
- Andrew: Well, we all do. I also don't like taking advice from people. Maybe this is me being too stubborn. I'm not sure, but when someone gives me advice, I feel like if I accept it, I'm kind of a failure.
- Morag: Oh!
- Andrew: What I mean is that I like to come up with solutions to my problems myself. I like to solve them. So if I am unable to solve my own problems, and I take somebody's advice, then in a way I failed myself.
- Morag: Sounds like a lonely road, Andrew.
- Andrew: Maybe.
- Morag: Also, I mean let's take the example of ... Oh, I don't know, for some reason, web design.
- Andrew: OK.
- Morag: Just bear with me here.

Andrew: Mmhmm.

Morag: You can design a web page totally from scratch. You can do everything yourself. You can write every line of code yourself, or you can use the wealth of knowledge and experience and premade code that other people have available online through things like JavaScript libraries and all kinds of stuff.

So you can make something that looks better, often works about the same or better, way faster by using the experience and knowledge of other people. Do you get what I'm trying to say?

Andrew: I understand. And this actually raises a really interesting point. Because would you consider this to be advice?

Morag: What I just said?

Andrew: Yeah. Is getting help from the internet, professional help to build something like a website, is this advice or is this just research?

Morag: Hmm, that's difficult. I think that advice and research all fall within a general category of information from other people that you can then assess and figure out how you feel about it.

Andrew: You can examine the information, and then make a decision about whether you want to follow it or ignore it, absolutely.

Morag: Yet usually, I think that, at least for me, the most interesting or useful part of other people's advice is not that they're telling me to do something, but it's trying to understand what position they're coming from or why they're telling me to do something, or what information is causing them to say that.

Andrew: Yes, interesting. It's the other person's motives that you have to carefully inspect.

Morag: Mmhmm. Because most often, advice comes from someone's experience, so it's going to be coloured. And it's going to be through the lens of that other person's life.

Andrew: You know, that web design example that you just mentioned got me thinking.

Morag: Mmhmm.

Andrew: I think we can divide advice into a couple of categories. We could have professional advice from maybe a mentor or a senior employee at a company, or your boss. And come to think of it, this type of advice I really enjoy hearing, and I really seek out.

Morag: Hmm.

- Andrew: Because I want to learn and grow, and become better at what I do professionally. But what I mentioned earlier about not wanting to follow other people's advice comes more when it's advice about my personal life.
- Morag: Ah.
- Andrew: Like, "Oh Andrew, you should **settle down**."
- Morag: Oh.
- Andrew: "You should get married." "You should do this." "Do that." Hmm, this type of personal advice rubs me the wrong way.
- Morag: You know, I get what you mean. I feel like that sort of advice, it's just not very good advice. It's very general. The people who tend to say things like that to me don't know me that well.
- Andrew: Exactly.
- Morag: So it's not so much thoughtful, honest, clear advice from a friend or someone you respect and/or care about, it's just **received wisdom** about what you're supposed to do, which is not great.
- Andrew: Hey Morag, this is an interesting phrase that you just used, **received wisdom**.
- Morag: Mmhmm.
- Andrew: What exactly do you mean by that, **received wisdom**?
- Morag: **Received wisdom** is a phrase that can be used to talk about general pieces of advice for how you're supposed to live within a particular society. So it's stuff that no one necessarily tells you directly, but are things that you just grow up knowing about how life works or how people are supposed to be.
- So in North America, **the received wisdom** about your early 20s is that you should be in college.
- Andrew: And then you should graduate, get a job, get married, have children, and then retire.
- Morag: Die. No ...
- Andrew: And die.
- Morag: Yeah.
- Andrew: This is **the received wisdom**.

Morag: Yeah.

Andrew: Thank you for that definition. Morag, we're almost out of time here, but I have a question for you, just before we finish.

Morag: Mmhmm.

Andrew: We talked about advice and receiving advice, but I wanna know if you've ever given some bad advice to somebody.

Morag: Hmm, I think my advice is pretty awesome, Andrew. Yeah, I'm sort of the semi-therapist for a number of my friends, so they'll come to me with relationship or, you know, just general anxiety-inducing issues.

Andrew: Mmhmm.

Morag: And I don't know. I think I'm pretty **spot-on**. I can't think of anything off the top of my head, sorry.

Andrew: Hey, that's OK. But maybe I'll share a story with you, and I'll let you and the listeners decide if it was really a case of bad advice or not.

Morag: OK.

Andrew: So when I was in first or second-year university, one of my close friends was considering going to film school. This friend is actually really talented and great at making films and movies, so I encouraged him, "Hey yeah, you should go to film school." But he told me, "Ah Andrew, there's a problem. Film school is so expensive, and I can't afford to go. The only way I can go is by taking a student loan." And I told him, "You know, you're so talented. You shouldn't let this opportunity pass you by. You've already been accepted into the school. You should just go."

And so he said, "You know what? I think you're right. I'll do it." And he went to film school. But after graduating, he never took advantage of the career opportunities that were available to him, and he never found work in the film industry. And so now, from time to time, I see him on Facebook complaining about his student loans. He's like, "Ah, I should've never went to film school. Now, I have this debt. I'm not using any of my education."

And when I see this, I question myself. "Huh, did I make a mistake? Did I encourage him to do something? Did I give him advice to do something that I shouldn't have?" I think about this sometimes. So I don't know if I'm to blame or if he's to blame, or we're both to blame. But this could be an example of bad advice.

Morag: I have my thoughts, but we'll hold them.

- Andrew: All right. Listeners, I want to know what you think. Do you like to give advice? Are you a good advice giver like Morag claims to be, or are you potentially a sketchy advice giver like I claim to be? Let us know. Please get in touch with us. There are many ways you can do this. You could leave us a comment on our Facebook page, which is [Facebook.com/CulipsPodcast](https://www.facebook.com/CulipsPodcast). You could leave us a comment on our website, Culips.com, or you could send us an email. And my email address is Andrew@Culips.com
- Morag: The learning materials for this episode, which includes transcript, expression definitions, and a quiz, are available on our website, Culips.com. So look into becoming a member and getting your paws on those learning materials.
- Andrew: They are super helpful for taking your English to that next level and sounding more natural when you speak English.
- Morag, we're out of time. Everybody, thank you for listening, and we will catch you next time. Bye.
- Morag: Goodbye.
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Detailed Explanations

To wing it

To wing it is an informal phrase that means to do or to attempt an activity without preparation. If you improvise because you either aren't prepared or you haven't done something before, this is called **winging it**.

In this episode, Andrew mentions that he couldn't access the file that he needed to teach his class. He says that everything turned out OK because he's good at **winging it**. In other words, Andrew was able to teach the class, even though he didn't have his file, because he's good at improvising and teaching without proper preparation.

So when you attempt something without preparation, you're **winging it**.

Here are a couple more examples with **to wing it**:

| | |
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| Felicia: | How did your job interview go? |
| Ben: | It's not until tomorrow. |
| Felicia: | Are you nervous? Are you prepared? |
| Ben: | No, I'm not nervous. I don't need to prepare because I'm confident that my personality will help me land the job. |
| Felicia: | Don't you want to practise answering typical interview questions, so you know what to say? |
| Ben: | Nope, I'll just wing it . |

| | |
|----------|---|
| Hannah: | What a stressful day! |
| William: | What happened? |
| Hannah: | I had a big meeting at work, and I couldn't get my slideshow to work! I had to throw out all my plans and wing it instead. |
| William: | That sounds nerve-racking! Did it go well? |
| Hannah: | It went OK, or as well as it could have gone considering I was totally unprepared for the meeting without my slideshow. |

Downtime

Downtime is a noun with two related meanings: a time when a machine or a system is unavailable, and a time of inactivity or leisure.

First, **downtime** means a time when a machine, like a computer or a device, has stopped working or cannot be used. The most common reason for computer or system **downtime** is maintenance and repairs. This meaning of **downtime** is not as commonly used, but it's good to know!

Second, **downtime** means a time of reduced activity or a time where someone is not obligated to do anything specific. In other words, in this sense, **downtime** means free or spare time. So the time you take for a break at work is **downtime**, and the time you spend on vacation is **downtime**.

For example, in this episode, Morag talks about removing Facebook, a social media app, from her phone so she doesn't automatically check it during her **downtime**. In other words, she talks about removing Facebook to avoid checking it during her spare or free time.

So **downtime**, for machines and people, means a time of inactivity.

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

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| Mitch: | Happy Friday! Are you looking forward to the weekend? |
| Samantha: | I think so. |
| Mitch: | Do you have a lot to do this weekend? |
| Samantha: | Yeah, it's going to be busy. It's all fun stuff, though. My sister is in town, and it's my boyfriend's birthday on Saturday. |
| Mitch: | Yikes, that's a full weekend! It sounds like you're not going to have much downtime . |
| Samantha: | Tell me about it. |

| | |
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| Charles: | What do you like to do with your downtime ? |
| Josie: | When I'm not working, my favourite thing to do is to go for long bike rides. |
| Charles: | Me too! Even though it's exercise, I find the repetitive movements and fresh air relaxing. |

To settle down

To settle down is a phrasal verb with multiple meanings.

First, **to settle down** can mean to become calm, quiet, or relaxed. This meaning can refer to people, locations, or situations. For example, imagine that you go to a café and discover that it's completely full. You decide to leave and go back later. When you return, the café is calmer and less busy. In other words, the café has **settled down**.

Second, **to settle down** can mean to begin to live a steady, mature, and quiet life. That is, **to settle down** means to start to live a more traditional adult life that is focused on stability and family. Often, when someone says that you should **settle down**, they mean that you should get married.

For example, in this episode, Andrew mentions that he doesn't like advice about his personal life, especially when that advice is **to settle down**. In other words, he doesn't appreciate being told that he should get married and start a family.

Here are a couple more examples with **to settle down**:

| | |
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| Stephanie: | I'm going to Italy in 2 months. I can't wait! |
| Liam: | You know, Stephanie, you travel a lot. You're at the age where you should think about settling down . It's time to start saving money for your future. |
| Stephanie: | No way! I love the way I live. I'm not interested in getting a house or married. I would rather live in a dinky apartment and spend my money on new and exciting experiences. I don't want to settle down . |
| Liam: | OK, fair enough. |

| | |
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| Lydia: | I heard John will be at the wedding on Saturday. I'm excited to see him. It's been a few years since we last saw each other. That guy is always the life of the party. |
| Charley: | John's partying days are over! He decided to settle down and now lives in the suburbs with his wife and kids. If he comes, he won't stay past 9 p.m. |
| Lydia: | Good for him. |

To be spot-on

Spot-on is an adjective that means correct. If something **is spot-on**, it's perfect or flawless! In this episode, Morag claims that the advice she gives to others **is usually spot-on**. In other words, she thinks her advice is excellent and impeccable.

To be spot-on means to be exact or completely accurate. For example, if the weatherman predicts rain, and it rains, you could say, "The weatherman's prediction of rain **was spot-on**."

Here's one more example with **to be spot-on**:

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| Mia: | Wow, it's so hot today! |
| Victor: | I know! Going outside feels like walking into hot soup. What's the temperature outside? It must be 32 degrees out there! |
| Mia: | Let me check! Wow, it's 32 degrees exactly. You were spot-on ! |

The received wisdom

As Morag and Andrew mention in this episode, **the received wisdom** means the beliefs or views that people generally consider to be true. The term is often used to refer to unquestioned knowledge or advice that is widely accepted within a certain culture or group of people, but that isn't necessarily true. In other words, **the received wisdom** is the way things are usually done or the typically held beliefs.

The example discussed in this episode is that it's **received wisdom** that people should **settle down** and start to live quieter, more stable lives when they get older. Another example of **received wisdom** is that when a plan doesn't seem to be working, the best thing to do is to try to do something different. This is an example of **received wisdom** that isn't always true. As you might already know, sometimes success comes from sticking to a plan and not giving up.

Here's one more example with **the received wisdom**:

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| Steve: | I always thought that people hundreds of years ago believed the earth was flat, but I just read an article that says that's false! |
| Jonelle: | Wow, I thought the same. I guess it was just a piece of received wisdom , and not the truth. |

Quiz

1. To settle down means to start living a more _____ life.

- a) quiet and stable
- b) interesting and varied
- c) happy and fulfilling
- d) fun and exciting

2. True or false: Received wisdom is always true.

- a) true
- b) false

3. If something is completely accurate, it's _____.

- a) nose-up
- b) right-in
- c) spot-on
- d) wing-in

4. Which of the following is a synonym for downtime?

- a) machine time
- b) obligation time
- c) spare time
- d) free system

5. Doing an activity without proper preparation is called _____.

- a) spinning it
- b) loading it
- c) killing it
- d) winging it

Quiz Answers

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

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