

## Simplified Speech #067 – Noisy neighbours

### Episode description

Have you ever lived in a place with noisy neighbours? It can be quite annoying when you're trying to enjoy the peace and quiet of your own home, right? In today's Simplified Speech episode, which was requested by a listener, Andrew and Suzanne talk about their experiences with their own pesky, noisy neighbours.

### Fun fact

Studies on noise pollution have shown a significant link between loud, unwanted noise and stress levels. People who are subjected to unwanted noises on a regular basis are more likely to have undue stress, increased blood pressure, and eventual cardiovascular problems. Proper rest and relaxation are vital for a healthy body.

### Expressions included in the study guide

- Pesky
- Rev up
- Poor
- 100% sure
- Keep it down
- Turn it down a notch
- Beforehand





## 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.

Suzanne: And I'm Suzanne.

Andrew: And you're listening to Culips.

Hey there, Suzanne.

Suzanne: Hey, Andrew, how's it going?

Andrew: Terrible. It's going terribly.

Suzanne: No, why?

Andrew: I have a mosquito in my room here, buzzing around, and I've been trying to grab it and shoo it away for the last 20 minutes or so and I've been totally unsuccessful and now I have a mosquito bite on my ankle.

Suzanne: They always get you on the ankle, right?

Andrew: Yeah, it's true, always on the ankle. If you hear a sudden clap in the background, everyone, it's because I've caught the mosquito. And if you hear a scratching sound in the background, it's me dealing with my itchy ankle.

Suzanne: I have a few, too, so it might be me as well.

Andrew: OK, we're in the same boat here. It's definitely mosquito season, so it's always annoying, but it's just one of those things that happens in the summer.

Suzanne: **Pesky** critters.

Andrew: **Pesky** critters.

Suzanne, today we are going to do a Simplified Speech episode. And, guys, if you don't know what Simplified Speech is, it's our series where we have completely natural English conversations, but we slow them down and simplify our English just a little bit, right? Just a little bit. And today our topic is another **pesky** topic, actually. It's not mosquitos.



Suzanne: Yeah, that's true, it is **pesky**.

Andrew: But it is **pesky**, it is noisy neighbours. Noisy neighbours. And this is actually a topic that was suggested by one of our listeners, her name is Seoyeong. So thank you, Seoyeong, for the suggestion. And we always love it when you guys send us topics to talk about. It actually makes our life easier, doesn't it, Suzanne?

Suzanne: Yeah, it does, it really does.

Andrew: So keep them coming. Suzanne?

Suzanne: Yeah?

Andrew: What is the best way our listeners can study with this episode?

Suzanne: I'm glad you asked. The best way to study with this episode is to go to Culips.com and become a member and download the study guide for this episode. The study guide is going to have lots of great information and exercises. So check that out.

Andrew: Yeah, it is definitely an awesome way to study with us, and we custom design each study guide to teach you what we think, in our professional opinions, is the most important English that you need to know for having natural conversations when you talk in English. As Suzanne mentioned, just visit Culips.com to give it a download.

Suzanne: I don't know if you can hear outside my window right now. I have a **pesky** neighbour, I have a noisy neighbour, with his noisy motorcycle in the backyard. So I thought that was a good segue into our topic.

Andrew: Suzanne, the timing couldn't be better, just as we're going to talk about noisy neighbours.

Suzanne: Do you hear that?

Andrew: Yeah, I do.

Suzanne: Every morning, because it's sort of, you know, warmer weather, this neighbour **revs up** his motorcycle every morning. And it never starts on the first try, so.

Andrew: Now it sounds like it's quite a big motorcycle?

Suzanne: I guess so, yeah. I think it's just old. Do you guys hear that?

Andrew: I can't believe how good the timing is for that.



- Suzanne: We couldn't have planned that any better. That was perfect.
- Andrew: OK Suzanne, so we just heard from one of your noisy neighbours starting up his motorcycle, which is hilarious that that happened just when we were going to talk about this topic. I think why this question was asked by our listener Seoyeong is because in Korea this is a big issue, noisy neighbours. You have a lot of people living in apartment buildings, right? Korea's a small country and a lot of people live in apartments, as opposed to houses.
- Suzanne: Yes.
- Andrew: And so because of this, you know, you have a lot of people living in a small space, there's bound to be noise issues.
- Suzanne: Absolutely.
- Andrew: But in Canada and in the USA, of course some people live in apartments, but we also live in houses. And what about your living situation right now, Suzanne? Are you in a house, are you in an apartment? What kind of place do you live in?
- Suzanne: Yeah, I live in an apartment, but it's a house that is like a two-family house. So I guess it's kind of like a duplex, I guess that's the word for it.
- Andrew: Duplex, OK.
- Suzanne: And we live in on the top floor and our neighbour with the motorcycle is on the first floor. But we each own our own floors, and so it is like two apartments. And then we have a similar situation throughout our street. We have that kind of shared house type of apartment living. There's also one or two people that live in their own, they own the whole thing. They own the whole house, so they don't have to worry about the neighbours so much. Maybe when they're outside but, for the most part, they have their own freestanding house, which is rare in a city and so nice.
- Andrew: So nice. So, actually, when I think of this topic of noisy neighbours, the first thing that popped into my mind was people listening to music too loudly.
- Suzanne: Totally. Or playing music, maybe they play the drums or something.
- Andrew: Well, I was going to bring that up, actually, because I play the drums, right?
- Suzanne: Oh, that's right you do play the drums. Yes.



- Andrew: So when I was a high school student and I lived at my family's house, my **poor** family, not only did they have to put up with the noise of me practicing the drums, but I'm sure that the neighbours on all sides of my house could hear me playing the drums. I'm sure it was super, super loud.
- Suzanne: The drums are so loud that even if you do live in your own freestanding house, you can still hear it throughout the neighbourhood or next door. They're like, oh, there's that Andrew. But maybe they thought, well, he's gotten so much better, like, maybe as the years went on you just got better and better, so they were happy to listen, you know?
- Andrew: Yeah, well, I can kind of understand that, because I used to live by a piano school and I could hear the kids practicing piano every afternoon. And it was a little bit annoying because, you know, they're kids, they're not very good. But I still didn't mind it, it didn't make me angry at all or annoyed because I thought, oh, they're practicing piano, that's so good for them, you know it's such a nice thing to do, that I was really accepting of it. But if they were drummers, I might have a different perspective.
- Suzanne: Well, I had a neighbour who's since moved away because I don't hear it anymore, but I use to hear in the kind of spring, summertime because that's when the windows would be open, they would practice some kind of horn.
- Andrew: OK.
- Suzanne: And I'm not **100% sure** what kind of horn it was.
- Andrew: French horn, perhaps?
- Suzanne: Maybe, maybe, because I do live in Montreal, French horn. But maybe, I think maybe it was a trumpet. But it was just like, you know, this like awful ... And I remember one year, they got better because I did hear them improve quite a bit. But a horn is pretty intense, you know? Like it's very invasive, I think, into your living space, especially in the summertime or springtime when your windows are open and you're wanting to air out the house and noise also comes into play.
- Andrew: Totally, noise from the street or motorcycles, something like this, right?
- Suzanne: Well, it's funny because not only is the motorcycle noisy every morning, but there's a lot of gasoline that comes from, it's also the smell of it. I smell motorcycle as the neighbour is **revving up**. So all of the fumes from the motorcycle come into the house with the windows open, so that's also a pollution, right? Like a noise pollution.
- Andrew: Literal pollution.



Suzanne: So annoying.

Andrew: When I think back to my university days when I lived in an apartment building, it wasn't a traditional apartment building. It was a smaller building that had four floors with an apartment on each side, so eight apartments in total.

Suzanne: Right, OK.

Andrew: But, it's the kind of apartment building that students would live in because it was low cost and the rent was really cheap and that place was noisy, let me tell you.

Suzanne: Students are noisy, right?

Andrew: Yeah, you think that students would study but, no, these students like to party, and so there's lots of loud music at all hours of the day and there were some noises from the upstairs neighbour. I don't know how to describe them politely, maybe some romantic noises, this kind of thing.

So it's not too pleasant to be living in that kind of environment, but we do have some laws in place to prevent noise, right? And, Suzanne, what I wanted to ask you is what would you do in a situation when you have a noisy neighbour and it's driving you crazy and you can't really just ignore it any longer. What would you do as a first step?

Suzanne: That's a great question, because I think that's really helpful for our listeners, right? Like to really know, what do we do? How do you say this in English?

Andrew: Yeah.

Suzanne: I would, if it's in the moment, a loud party or loud music, I would probably go right over there or stick my head out the window if it's close by, which, in my little area, it really is, all of our terraces kind of look at each other. So I could easily just go out on my back porch and say, "Hey, guys, we're trying to sleep, can you **keep it down**?" Can you **keep it down** is usually what I would say, like we're watching a show or we're trying to sleep, can you please **keep it down**? And usually they'll go, "Oh, sorry" and they'll do it, for you know, maybe 20 minutes and then it goes back up again.

Andrew: Always.

Suzanne: Always, so I've actually invested in some ear plugs, which I find to be really helpful, or my headphones are like noise cancelling, a little bit.

Andrew: Those are really good, yeah.



- Suzanne: So I think it's important to have courage to ask your neighbours to **keep it down**, or **turn it down a notch**, if it's music. Can you turn it down a bit? Can you **turn it down a notch**? Meaning, you know, the music, but also take care of yourself and have ear plugs or headphones in those cases.
- Andrew: I think it's always a good idea to talk with the noise-maker first, before you escalate to a higher authority, like the building manger or the landlord or the police, right?
- Suzanne: Exactly.
- Andrew: If suddenly the police show up and knock on the noise-maker's door, they're going to be quite shocked, like, oh, "Why didn't you just talk to me? I would have quieted down." They're gonna have this kind of attitude, and it could really sort of hurt your relationship with your neighbours.
- Suzanne: Right, because you live with them, right? You live nearby, you see them maybe getting the mail or going in and out of your building. So It's important to keep it nice, you know? Keep it pleasant.
- Andrew: Right, and most people don't wanna be disrespectful, right? So if they realize that they're annoying somebody, they'll try, at least for a little bit, try.
- Suzanne: Yes.
- Andrew: And if the problem persists, well, then that's when you can say, "Well, hey, man, I tried my best and you weren't quiet, so I had to call the police" or, "I had to talk to the building manager," something like that.
- Suzanne: Right, there are steps you can take before that. Sometimes you can also leave a note, you know? If maybe you can't find the person, it's a big party, you don't wanna call the police, it's a little too extreme. So maybe the next morning, you might leave a note on their door like, "Hey, guys, I heard you had a party last night, just so you know, like, if you could **let us know beforehand** or try to keep the noise down in the future." You know, you could also write a note.
- Andrew: I think a note is a nice way to do it, too, especially if you don't know them very well.
- Suzanne: Yeah.
- Andrew: Yeah, it's just a good first step, a point of contact. Just write a little note, slide it under their door and hopefully it solves the problem.





Suzanne: Yeah, you could add a little chocolate or something, a nice little treat. But, you know, it's good sometimes to give them a reason why, like, "I work early in the morning, if you could, you know, just be more considerate about the noise" or, "We have a baby in the house, if you could just be conscious of the noise level." Usually people get it, people understand when you have those other things to consider.

Andrew: I think now that so many people have Bluetooth headphones, it's probably a really good thing for apartment noise, because people can just walk around freely and listen to their music as loud as they want without annoying anybody. And also, if you do have a neighbour that's making a bit of noise, you can just pop your headphones on and drown them out with your own music or your own podcast.

Suzanne: Yes, that's what I do a lot. I wear my headphones all the time, and people think I look like an alien because I wear my headphones all the time, but it's really because my neighbours are out on their back porch, the neighbours across the way are out on their back porch every day, even in the winter. So they're out there smoking and talking and I'm, like, it's freaking minus, you know, 20 degrees, how are you just hanging out on your porch?

Andrew: True Canadians.

Suzanne: Totally. So, for me it's a way to sort of avoid their conversation.

Andrew: Right. I have a neighbour here in Seoul where I live—and I'm not sure exactly where this guy lives, if he's above me or beside me and I don't know who he is, I don't think I've seen him around either—but he speaks on the phone in Chinese all the time and I can hear his Chinese conversation, which is easy for me to ignore with a pair of headphones. So it's not like, you know, I know it's not his fault. He's not yelling on the phone; he's just having a normal conversation, it's just the nature of the way apartments are built here. The walls are really thin, noise travels easily, he's probably hearing me talk right now, in fact. So, I don't wanna say that he doesn't have the right to do this, I would never complain and this is why headphones come in perfect for this situation.

Well, Suzanne, this was a fun chat. And just to summarize, we talked about noisy, **pesky** neighbours and some of our experiences with these people, some of the run-ins that we've had over the years. And a big thanks again to Seoyeong for the suggestion, it was a fun topic.





Andrew: And, guys, we are always curious and we would love to know about your country. What are the noise levels like in your country? Do you hear your neighbours? Is this a common problem that people complain about or are your relationships quiet and peaceful and harmonious? I hope so, but I kind of have a gut feeling that this is an issue that effects people all over the world but, hey, you never know. Send us an email and let us know, OK?

Suzanne: You can contact us at [contact@Culips.com](mailto:contact@Culips.com).

Andrew: Suzanne, we're also all over the place on social media, on Instagram, YouTube, Facebook, Twitter, everywhere. So if you would like to follow us and stay up to date with all the current ins and outs over here at Culips, just search for the Culips English Podcast and you'll be sure to find us.

All right, we are off for now, but we'll be back soon with another brand-new episode and we'll talk to you then. Bye.

Suzanne: Bye.

## Detailed Explanations

### **Pesky** Adjective

**Pesky** is an adjective that means bothersome or annoying. Things like mosquitos or overly energetic kids are often called **pesky**, because they cause a constant feeling of irritation when they are nearby.

In this episode, Andrew and Suzanne describe their noisy neighbours as **pesky**. The constant revving of engines, banging of drums, and loud phone conversations cause even the most relaxed people to feel annoyed with the disruption of their beloved peace and quiet.

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

Sally:	Dez! Can you please catch that <b>pesky</b> fly? The constant buzzing is giving me a terrible headache.
Dez:	Sure thing, honey. Just give me a second.
Sally:	Ah, what a relief! Thank you, darling.
Dez:	No problem. What will you give me as a reward?
Sally:	A reward, huh? How about I make your favourite lasagna for dinner tonight?
Dez:	Wonderful! I couldn't ask for a better reward.

Annabelle:	Wanna go out and get some ice cream?
Bethany:	Yeah, definitely! I just have to take care of this one <b>pesky</b> problem first.
Annabelle:	<b>Pesky</b> problem?
Bethany:	I have to clean the carpet. The kids tracked some mud on it earlier today and I'm so tired of looking at the mess. For my peace of mind, I need to clean this before doing anything else.
Annabelle:	You mean these little specks of dirt? Did I ever mention how much of a clean freak you are?
Bethany:	Yes, many times. It's just who I am.

## Rev up Phrasal verb

To **rev [something] up** is to rapidly increase the speed of a motor by hitting the gas. When someone **revs up** his car or motorcycle it makes a loud growling sound that can be heard all the way down the road. Young men especially love to **rev** their engines, much to the annoyance of surrounding neighbours.

Here are a couple more examples with **rev up**:

Minjae: Are you OK? You look a little tired.  
SoMin: I am not a little tired. I am exhausted!  
Minjae: Why? What's up?  
SoMin: My extremely annoying new neighbour is what's up. I guess he works the night shift or something. Every night at 2 a.m. he wakes up the whole neighbourhood when he gets on his motorcycle, **revs up** the engine, and blasts down the street.  
Minjae: Wow, how rude. Has anyone complained?  
SoMin: Yeah, of course, but he doesn't seem to care. It makes me want to move.  
Minjae: Maybe you should buy some earplugs.

Doug: Bro, your new car is amazing! Can we take it for a spin?  
Fernando: Yeah, c'mon, let's go.  
Doug: **Rev up** the engine. I wanna hear this bad boy roar.  
Fernando: How's that? That's 760 horsepower, right there.  
Doug: It's unbelievable. I think I've just died and gone to heaven. Man, I would give anything to have a car like this.

## Poor Adjective

The most common definition for **poor** is to have little or no money; however, there are a couple other meanings of **poor** that are used in everyday conversation. Another meaning of **poor** is low quality. For example, to have **poor** grades, is to have low-quality grades in school, often getting C, D, or F grades instead of A and B grades.

In this episode, Andrew used yet another example of **poor**. He mentioned his **poor** family, who had to endure the noisiness of his drum practice. In this example, Andrew is not saying his family is penniless; **poor** in this sentence means unfortunate or deserving of sympathy. Andrew is saying his family is unfortunate and deserves sympathy since they had to put up with the banging of his drums every time he sat down to practice.

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

Rudy:	Mom, the baby won't stop crying. What's the matter with him? You already gave him milk and changed his diaper.
Mom:	Oh, he's just teething.
Rudy:	Teething?
Mom:	Yeah. His baby teeth are growing in. When his teeth push through the gums, it's quite painful.
Rudy:	Aw, <b>poor</b> baby. Is there anything we can do to help him?
Mom:	Giving him something cold to suck on would help. Why don't you put one of the spoons in the freezer for a few minutes and then we'll let him suck on it.
Rudy:	OK!

Therese:	Do you see that dog over there? The <b>poor</b> thing only has three legs.
Gina:	Yeah, he must have been hit by a car. He seems all right, though. See? He can still run around like any four-legged dog.
Therese:	I guess you're right. He must have gotten used to it.
Gina:	Why don't we go over and give him a bite of our ice cream?
Therese:	Yes! I wanna pet him, too.

## 100% sure

### Idiom

To be **100% sure** of something is to be absolutely certain of something. For example, if someone says she is **100% sure** that she is correct about something, then she is saying that she is certain, without any doubts, that she is correct about that thing. People say 100% to emphasize their belief in what they are saying.

On the other hand, if one is not **100% sure**, that means that she is not certain and she has some doubts about whether or not what she said is correct. In this episode, Suzanne mentions a noisy neighbour who used to practice their horn with the windows open. Suzanne says that she isn't **100% sure** what kind of horn it was, meaning she doesn't know exactly what kind of horn her neighbour played.

Here are a couple more examples with **100% sure**:

Ralph:	Do you know what time that meeting is today?
Frank:	It's at 4:00.
Ralph:	Are you sure? I can't afford to be late again. Jones will kill me.
Frank:	I'm <b>100% sure</b> . I just checked the schedule 5 minutes ago.
Ralph:	OK, cool. Let's head over there around 3:15. We can grab a coffee on the way.

Cynthia:	Have you seen Dana? I've called her four times, but she's not picking up her phone.
Miko:	I'm not <b>100% sure</b> , but I think she's at some spa retreat thing today. Her phone might be off while she's there.
Cynthia:	Ugh! I really wanted to ask her about something.
Miko:	Is it important?
Cynthia:	No, not really. I can wait a few more hours and call her when she's back from the spa. Thanks anyways.

## Keep it down

Phrasal verb

**Keep it down** is something you tell someone when you want them to be quieter. In the phrase **keep it down**, “it” refers to the noise level. If you are impatient with someone, you might yell at them to **keep it down**. Or if you want to be more polite about it, you could politely ask them if they could try to **keep it down**, please.

Here are a couple more examples with **keep it down**:

Derrick:	Josh! <b>Keep it down</b> , will ya?! I’m trying to study over here.
Josh:	Well, I have a concert on Friday. I’ve gotta practice!
Derrick:	I have a test tomorrow!
Josh:	Then study on the porch or go to the library. Mom said I can practice until 6:00, so I’m not wasting any time.
Derrick:	Ugh. Fine.

Mrs Vying:	Isaiah, could you <b>keep it down</b> , please? Other students are trying to study in here.
Isaiah:	Sorry, Mrs Vying. I didn’t realize I was so loud.
Mrs Vying:	That’s all right. Just tone it down a bit.
Isaiah:	Yes, ma’am.



## Turn it down a notch

Phrasal verb

**Turn it down a notch** means to calm down or reduce the intensity of something. Imagine a volume dial that has notches to represent the levels of sound. If one were to literally turn down the volume on a machine, they would move the volume down a few notches on the dial. Therefore, if someone tells you to **turn it down a notch**, it means they think you are too loud or too excited and need to settle down a bit.

Here are a couple more examples with **turn it down a notch**:

Mom: Davy, I know you love this song, but do you mind **turning it down a notch**? I can't concentrate on my driving.

Davy: Oh, sorry, Mom. How about this? Is it better?

Mom: Yeah, that's much better, sweetie. Thank you.

Roco: Why did you tell Selina that I like her? Now the whole school is gonna know about it and make fun of me.

Alejandro: Sorry, man. I didn't know you'd get so upset about it. Calm down.

Roco: Calm down! Don't tell me to calm down!

Alejandro: Seriously, bro. **Turn it down a notch**. People are looking at us.

Roco: Good! You deserve to feel embarrassed after what you did!

Alejandro: All right. I get it. I messed up. I'm sorry, OK?





## Beforehand

### Adverb

**Beforehand** is an adverb that means in advance, before something occurs, or ahead of time. In this episode, Suzanne says that if you throw a party, it is polite to let the neighbours know **beforehand**, so that they are not angered by the extra noise. To let someone know **beforehand** is to tell someone something in advance so that they are prepared; therefore, in this example Suzanne says you should let neighbours know in advance or ahead of time that there will be a party so they are prepared for the extra noise.

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

Mimi:	Don't we need to go buy tickets before we enter the theatre?
Denise:	No. I bought them <b>beforehand</b> . I always get my tickets in advance to make sure I get the best seats.
Mimi:	Wow, that's so smart. I never think to buy tickets ahead of time. I'm actually usually late to the theatre and end up getting a ticket in the first couple of rows and have to crane my neck the whole time to see the screen.
Denise:	That would literally be my worst nightmare. It's always better to be prepared.

Bobby:	Mom, can I skip church and study for my math test?
Mom:	Why didn't you study for it yesterday?
Bobby:	Harris invited me to the skate park. I couldn't refuse.
Mom:	Oh, really? Well, you can't skip church. Let's go.
Bobby:	But Mom! I'm gonna fail the test if I don't study.
Mom:	You should have thought of that <b>beforehand</b> . Instead, you wasted your time at the skate park. Now I'm not going to tell you again. Get dressed and meet me outside in 5 minutes.

## Quiz

**1. Which is not something you can rev up?**

- a) car
- b) motorcycle
- c) bicycle
- d) lawn mower

**2. Which phrase does not mean to be quieter?**

- a) keep it down
- b) to downplay something
- c) turn it down a notch
- d) dial it down

**3. Which phrase doesn't mean you are absolutely certain of something?**

- a) 100% sure
- b) without a doubt
- c) for sure
- d) pretty sure

**4. Which definition is not a definition of the word poor?**

- a) to have little or no money
- b) to be low quality; not good
- c) to be unfortunate; deserving sympathy
- d) to be stubborn

**5. Fill in the blank with the word that fits best: The \_\_\_\_\_ mosquito annoyed me with its constant buzzing.**

- a) cheerful
- b) pesky
- c) drab
- d) cuddly

## Writing and Discussion Questions

1. Do you have a lot of noise pollution where you live?
2. What do you do to deal with noise pollution? Talk to the neighbours? Call the police?
3. What do your neighbours do that drives you crazy?
4. Has anyone ever asked you to keep it down? What were you doing to annoy them?
5. Do you like to rev your engine when you drive? Or do you like the sound of revving engines? Why or why not?

## Quiz Answers

1.c    2.b    3.d    4.d    5.b

### Episode credits

Hosts: Andrew Bates and Suzanne Cerreta

Music: *Something Elated* by Broke For Free, *Let It Go* by Scott Dugdale

Episode preparation/research: Andrew Bates

Audio editor: Andrew Bates

Transcriptionist: Heather Bates

Study guide writer: Kassy White

English editor: Stephanie MacLean

Business manager: Tsuyoshi Kaneshima

Project manager: Jessica Cox

Image: Jaden Hatch (Unsplash.com)