

Simplified Speech #070 – The most interesting man in the world

Episode description

How many people do you know who have founded a few international, multimillion-dollar companies? Well, today we're talking about one. He wants to go to Mars! He wants to send people from Los Angeles to San Francisco in 36 minutes! Today, our hosts Andrew and Jeremy talk about one of the most interesting people in the world, Elon Musk.

Fun fact

Elon Musk is a fascinating man. He was born in South Africa but went around the world creating companies all over. In fact, he has three different citizenships: South African, Canadian, and American!

Expressions included in the study guide

- Visionary
- To program
- If stuff goes down
- To cut costs
- To alleviate
- To remove (something) from the equation



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: You're listening to the Culips English Podcast. To download the study guide for this episode, which includes the transcript, detailed vocabulary explanations, real-world examples, and a quiz, visit our website, Culips.com, C-U-L-I-P-S.com.

Hello, everybody. My name is Andrew.

Jeremy: And I'm Jeremy.

Andrew: And you're listening to Culips.

Hello, guys, welcome back to Culips. Today's episode is a part of our Simplified Speech series. And this is where we have totally natural English conversations, but they're just slightly adjusted. We slow them down a little bit for you. And today I am joined by my partner in crime, Jeremy.

Jeremy, what's up?

Jeremy: Just for the record, we commit no crimes in the making of these episodes.

Andrew: Yeah, it's just an expression. Partner in crime is an expression that we use to talk about a sidekick or a partner.

Jeremy: Someone who does something with you frequently, I guess.

Andrew: Exactly.

Jeremy: Anyway, I am doing pretty good. And I'm actually excited about this episode, because I think we have a very interesting person to talk about.

Andrew: In fact, I would argue that maybe he is the most interesting person alive right now.

Jeremy: The most interesting man in the world.

Andrew: It's a very clickbait-y title that we have here today. But I think you could say that it's true. But, Jeremy, we'll give the big reveal and tell everyone who we're talking about in just a moment.

Andrew: But before we do that, I wanna let everyone know about the study guide for this episode. It's awesome, it's jam-packed full of great things that will help you improve your English, like a transcript, and detailed vocabulary explanations, and examples. There's a quiz, there are prompts that you can use for speaking or writing practice, and it's made with love by the Culips team. So, guys, check it out. It's available on our website, Culips.com.

So, Jeremy, who is the most interesting man in the world?

Jeremy: The most interesting man in the world: Elon Musk.

Andrew: Yeah, Elon Musk.

Jeremy: May I give the intro in the movie voice?

Andrew: Sure.

Jeremy: Elon Musk is an entrepreneur, business man, inventor, scientist, engineer, technologist, and **visionary**. Born in South Africa, he taught himself **to program** when he was 12 years old and sold his first game for \$500. Now, he is one of the richest and most powerful men in the world.

Andrew: Sometime we should do a whole episode with you using the movie voice.

Jeremy: We should ask our listeners if they want that first, I guess. Please let us know. You can email us at contact@Culips.com.

Andrew: All right. So, yeah, Jeremy, Elon Musk is all of the things that you just mentioned, right? He's a famous entrepreneur and business man, founder of many different companies, and a South African. And so this episode is not meant to be a bio of Elon Musk, because I think that would take too long, but I thought we could just talk about some of the companies that he is operating and what products and services those companies do. Maybe we don't even have too much time to talk about all of his companies in detail, because he has so many.

But why don't we start at the beginning? The first company that he started was called Zip2, Zip2. And, you know, this was a long time go. I'm not actually sure even what this company did, but he sold the company to the computer company Compaq. He made \$22 million with his share of the company sale, and with that money he started PayPal. And this is a company that is still around today and I think is familiar to many people, PayPal. So he started PayPal and he ended up selling PayPal and made a lot more money. He made \$165 million from the sale of PayPal, and it was with this capital, this money, that he was really able to start going crazy and starting many, many, different businesses.

- Jeremy: Probably the most well-known of his companies that he recently started are Tesla, the electric car company, and SpaceX.
- Andrew: SpaceX, yeah. So why don't we start by talking about Tesla? Tesla's an electric car company and, actually, the guy that lives across the road from me has a Tesla and it's parked outside every day when I'm walking home.
- Jeremy: To make you jealous.
- Andrew: I think, wow, that Tesla would be a lot better than the legs that I have that are carrying me home right now. I would rather move my body with that car because it's really, really cool looking, very sharp.
- Jeremy: Have you ever driven one?
- Andrew: No, I haven't. Have you?
- Jeremy: I have.
- Andrew: Wow, how was it?
- Jeremy: A very awesome and different experience. Very different from driving a normal car.
- Andrew: OK. So how is it different?
- Jeremy: There's no shifting. So I accidentally went from zero to 90 on the freeway.
- Andrew: Ninety miles per hour?
- Jeremy: Ninety miles per hour is about 40% over the speed limit. It's too fast. I didn't notice I was going 90. There was no one on the road, I just pushed the gas pedal and took off very quickly. And the lane changing, the steering, everything is very tight, very, very easy to control. It's a very fun experience. It makes driving a lot more fun, that was my impression.
- Andrew: Wow, yeah, I can't wait to try one out. One of the other characteristics of the Tesla car is that, as you mentioned, they have a kind of AI [artificial intelligence] built into it, so that they can change lanes automatically, and they even have some features where you don't even have to control the wheel, right? They're self driving, to an extent.
- Jeremy: I think you have to be touching the wheel, technically.
- Andrew: OK.
- Jeremy: I heard there's some kind of hand sensor, so you have to be touching the wheel at least basically. You can't sleep.

- Andrew: Right, you can't sleep and drive.
- Jeremy: But, theoretically, you could. These days the auto-drive feature is only available for the freeway. So once you get on the freeway, it'll drive the freeway for you. But once you get off, you have to start driving again. But who knows, maybe in a few years, by the time someone is listening to this episode, that might be different. Maybe auto-drive will be available for more situations.
- Andrew: So one of the reasons why Tesla is quite a famous company is that it really turned the automotive industry on its head, right? It introduced this super-fast electric car that has these advanced capabilities that no other cars have. And this is a real breakthrough in the development and innovation of cars, much like Elon's other company, which is SpaceX.
- Jeremy: SpaceX.
- Andrew: SpaceX. Let's talk about SpaceX for a just a moment. As if Tesla isn't enough, he's got this space company. I mean, the goal of the company is to one day make a settlement on Mars. You know, he wants to reach Mars and start a colony there so that **if some stuff goes down** on Earth, where we have to evacuate the planet, we can just all move to Mars.
- Jeremy: Yeah, commercial space travel, I think, is their initial goal, right?
- Andrew: Right.
- Jeremy: Actually, near where I live, there's—SpaceX is near where I live, the company.
- Andrew: Wow.
- Jeremy: So, I always see people walking around with their T-shirts that say SpaceX.
- Andrew: That's awesome, that's really awesome. The revolutionary thing about SpaceX is that Elon Musk was wondering why NASA, really the only other super-competitive space agency—I guess probably the Russians have a space agency too—but they were building rockets that were only used one time. So make a rocket, fire it into space, and then build another one. But he was, like, why are we doing this? We can just recycle the rockets. And so that was his big innovation, is developing recyclable rockets that I'm sure you've seen on YouTube. They go up into space and then they come down and they land on a landing pad. It's quite remarkable.
- Jeremy: So they have to keep their fuel cells, right? They have to keep their fuel tank at least enough to land. That's probably a big difference in design.

- Andrew: And, by doing this, he was able **to cut the costs** significantly.
- Jeremy: You don't need to rebuild everything from scratch.
- Andrew: Exactly. And I'm not gonna sit here and pretend like I know what I'm talking about when it comes to space and rocket science.
- Jeremy: We are not rocket scientists.
- Andrew: But I know that was a pretty big breakthrough.
- So, yeah, he has these two companies, Tesla and SpaceX, and he's also involved with another company called SolarCity. Are you familiar with SolarCity?
- Jeremy: Oh, yeah, I see the sales representatives, the sales people going around this city quite often. SolarCity is a company selling solar panels, usually for residential use, meaning to go on people's roofs, on top of their house. This can cut energy costs, because then the house makes its own power or collects its own electricity through the solar panels on the roof. And they also make batteries that can go in your house to help store that energy, so you can use it during peak times. Peak times are when everybody is using their electricity. And this is a big issue for power companies, because at 4 a.m. nobody is using any electricity, and at 6 p.m. everybody is using electricity. So these batteries and solar panels are meant to offset or to balance out that imbalance in power usage.
- Andrew: And here you see some crossover where some of the developments that were learned in Tesla from developing electric car batteries are also shared with SolarCity. And I think this is one of the nice things about Elon being involved in so many companies, is that you can use this technology not just in one's sphere, but you can expand it to many different areas of technological development.
- Jeremy: Exactly.
- Andrew: Jeremy, I wanna quickly go through—just very briefly—his other companies, because they're all so cool. The Hyperloop: in a sentence, what is the Hyperloop project?
- Jeremy: So the Hyperloop is a high-speed rail. I think of it like those things they use in big warehouses to send letters or cheques up to the office at the other end of the facility.
- Andrew: Like you see in Costco.

- Jeremy: Yes, it's an air compression chamber, kind of. You put a little pod in there with the cheque or the paper in there and it sends it very quickly through air pressure to the other side. But Hyperloop is essentially that kind of thing for large vehicles, trains, cars, maybe, you know, freight.
- Andrew: His next company is The Boring Company. Boring here meaning to dig, right? To bore, to dig, not to be, you know, unamused. The Boring Company, in a nutshell, is a company that will make tunnels underneath Los Angeles **to alleviate** some of the traffic problems. And I heard in Los Angeles, there, you guys have it pretty bad with traffic and congestion.
- Jeremy: Yes, I live in the Los Angeles area and, just to give you all an example, at 11 p.m., if I drive from my house to downtown LA, it would take maybe 15 minutes. So it's only a few miles away.
- Andrew: OK.
- Jeremy: But during rush hour, it would take about an hour and a half.
- Andrew: Wow.
- Jeremy: Yes, and this is every day. This is the case. So if you go at the wrong time, you are stuck for a long time. And Elon was stuck in this traffic when he came up with this idea. And so the idea is to dig tunnels underground, deeper and deeper and deeper, so multiple layers of tunnels that will send cars very quickly from one place to another. Even, I heard, up to San Francisco.
- Andrew: Wow.
- Jeremy: San Francisco, for those who don't know, is becoming the most expensive place in the United States to live. And so if this project is completed, then people can live in LA and work in San Francisco. That's a 7-hour drive, normally, or a 1-hour flight. But people could do this in their own car, drive into the tunnel and go to work and come back.
- Andrew: Amazing, amazing.
- Jeremy: Pretty amazing.
- Andrew: The final company here, Jeremy, that I can't ignore is called Neuralink. And Neuralink just made an announcement recently, I think it was only a couple of weeks ago, where they have essentially—what Neuralink wants to do is connect brains and technology—and they have announced a device that they will be testing starting next year that will allow humans to interface with technology wirelessly, because they will implant the technology directly into your brain.

- Jeremy: You could even say fingerless-ly.
- Andrew: Fingerless-ly, yeah.
- Jeremy: Right now, you need your fingers, we all need our fingers, to interact with these laptops and smartphones and things, right? His idea is **to remove that from the equation**.
- Andrew: Exactly. So I'm interested and also a little bit scared to see how this company develops, because it's quite wacky. I saw a demo of it and, yeah, they have a robot that installs all these little wires into your brain. And then you have to wear this piece behind your ear, a little piece of plastic with a Bluetooth receiver in it. And this will send information to your phone or laptop so you can control it without touching it, just with the power of your brain.
- Jeremy: A Bluetooth brain mouse. Maybe we could wrap up by saying why you wanted to talk about him today?
- Andrew: Yeah, so why I wanted to talk about Elon, well, he's just somebody that I look up to. And I also don't know how he does it all. Could you imagine being involved with all of these companies? He's also a father, he has five kids, he's got a girlfriend—a Canadian indie pop star, Grimes, is his girlfriend, which is also very interesting.
- Jeremy: At the moment.
- Andrew: At the moment, for the moment. So I don't know, a lot of people think that Elon Musk might be a robot or an alien. And I'm starting to think he might be, as well, to be honest.
- Jeremy: If he didn't sleep at all, then all of this might be possible.
- Andrew: Exactly. So, anyways, for those reasons I think he's one of the more interesting people out there and I'm glad he's around. I think he's doing a lot of good things for humanity.
- Jeremy: We shall see, we shall see.
- Andrew: We shall see, yeah.
- Well, Jeremy, let's wrap it up here. I wanna thank everyone for listening. And if you think Elon Musk is a force for good on the planet or a force for evil on the planet, we'd like to hear your opinion. You can send us an email at contact@Culips.com.

Andrew: And, also, don't forget about the study guide for this episode. It's available for download on Culips.com, our homepage.

Guys, if you use social media like Facebook or YouTube, Instagram or Twitter, just search for the Culips English Podcast and you can find and follow us that way. We'll be back soon with another new episode, and we'll talk to you then. Goodbye.

Jeremy: Bye.

Detailed Explanations

Visionary Noun

When Jeremy introduces Elon Musk, he calls him a **visionary**. A **visionary** is someone who has big dreams and ideas about the future. **Visionary** can also act as an adjective, as in a **visionary** company.

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

Sheila:	Hey, long time no see! Are you still with the same company?
Ryan:	No, I got a new job.
Sheila:	Oh, how come? You really liked your old one.
Ryan:	I did, but my new boss is a friend of mine. He has amazing ideas and plans about the future of business. He's a true visionary .
Sheila:	That sounds motivating. I can understand why you left.

Beth:	Oh, I'm sorry to say this, but you look really tired.
Cesar:	Yeah, I am.
Beth:	Working long hours again?
Cesar:	Yes. It wouldn't be so bad if I enjoyed my job, but this job is just so boring.
Beth:	You know, I never thought that job was good for you. I always saw you as a visionary with great plans for the future. You shouldn't be working at a desk like that.
Cesar:	What can I do?
Beth:	Start your own company, like Elon Musk!

To program

Verb

In this episode, Jeremy mentions how Musk taught himself **to program** at a young age. In this sense, **to program** means to write computer programming language. A person who creates computer programs is called a programmer.

Here are a couple more examples with **to program**:

Drake: What's the problem?

Gabby: I'm having difficulty with this stupid computer.

Drake: Do you mind if I take a look? I used **to program** when I was in high school.

Gabby: Be my guest!

Anne: I'm applying for universities right now, but I don't know what to study. Can you help me?

Marion: Sure. I remember you were really good with computers. Do you still **program**?

Anne: I can, but I haven't in a long while.

Marion: You should look into taking it up again. There's a huge demand for programmers right now, and it's always a skill you can use in the future.

If stuff goes down

Phrase

When talking about SpaceX, Andrew says the company's goal is to colonize Mars so that people have a place to live **if stuff goes down** on Earth. **If stuff goes down** is another way of saying if bad things happen. In this phrase, stuff is a substitute for a four-letter swear word that starts with the letter S. You can also change the phrase by saying when stuff goes down or when (something) hits the fan.

Here are a couple more examples with **if stuff goes down**:

Clint:	Are you going camping alone in the woods this weekend?
Grace:	Yup.
Clint:	That doesn't sound very safe.
Grace:	Don't worry. I have a lot of survivalist experience.
Clint:	And what happens if stuff goes down ? Do you have a plan B?
Grace:	A true survivalist has plans B through to Z. Don't worry about me!

Florian:	I hear you've been going to Club Skybar a lot.
Cliff:	Yeah, it's really cool. A lot of interesting people go there.
Florian:	Isn't it a little dangerous?
Cliff:	Nah, it's all right. And, besides, I also go with John and Pete, my wrestling buddies. If stuff goes down , I've got good protection. Nobody would mess with them.

To cut costs Idiom

To cut costs is to reduce your costs. These costs can be the operating costs of a company, the costs of a trip, or the household costs you have. You can also turn the expression into an adjective, as in a cost-cutting appliance.

Here are a couple more examples with **to cut costs**:

Taylor:	Things are not going well at our New York factory.
Alexy:	What's the problem?
Taylor:	It's bleeding money. They lost \$2 million last month alone.
Alexy:	OK, that's serious. Let's call in management for a meeting. We'll look to see how we can cut costs without sacrificing productivity.

Russ:	Did you see our bank statement this month?
Jiwon:	I did. We're spending way too much on everything.
Russ:	I agree. I took a good look at our statement. I think we can cut into our entertainment costs next month to save some money. What do you think?
Jiwon:	Yeah. Some of those things we really don't need.

To alleviate Verb

To alleviate is to relieve pressure or stress on something. In this episode, our hosts talk about how Musk's Boring Company can **alleviate** some traffic problems. That means there will be less traffic. You can also **alleviate** pain, stress, a burden, or the weight of something.

Here are a couple more examples with **to alleviate**:

Bianca:	I heard about your accident. Are you all right?
Peggy:	I'm still kind of sore.
Bianca:	What did the doctor say?
Peggy:	She said I'll be fine in a few weeks. In the meantime, she told me to take these pills to alleviate any pain I might have.

Amjit:	Have you been sleeping well lately?
Lauren:	No, not at all. I don't know what it is.
Amjit:	I think it's your work. You're always so busy.
Lauren:	There's not much I can do about that—it's my job.
Amjit:	How about you go to the spa? That's really good for alleviating stress.
Lauren:	That's an idea. I might try that.

To remove (something) from the equation

Idiom

To remove (something) from the equation is to make something unnecessary. One of Musk's companies plans to integrate technology directly into human brains. With that, you won't need to use your fingers to type or give commands. Jeremy says that the company wants **to remove fingers from the equation**. You can also say this about a person. Perhaps you have a conflict of interest at work. You can say that you want **to remove yourself from the equation**.

Here are a couple more examples with **to remove (something) from the equation**:

Lucy:	I think our trip next month is going to be too expensive. We might want to rethink our plans.
Charlie:	OK. Looking at it, what do you think we could change?
Lucy:	Do you really want to make a side trip to Paris?
Charlie:	Well, I'd like to, but we don't really need to.
Lucy:	If we remove that from the equation , we could save \$200.

Pedro:	I didn't see Jean at the meeting today. Is everything all right?
Roy:	She thought she should sit this one out.
Pedro:	Why is that?
Roy:	She felt there would be a conflict of interest if she were there, so she decided to remove herself from the equation .
Pedro:	I see. Probably a good decision.

Quiz

1. Which company has Elon Musk NOT been associated with?

- a) SpaceX
- b) MarsCo
- c) PayPal
- d) Boring

2. What does it mean to be a visionary?

- a) the person has visions of the past
- b) the person sees things
- c) the person likes to think about things
- d) the person thinks of great plans for the future

3. When stuff goes down, is that generally a good thing or a bad thing?

- a) good
- b) bad

4. If you need to cut costs, what will you do?

- a) buy a Ferrari
- b) go to Costco
- c) try to spend less
- d) try to exercise less

5. True or false? To remove something from the equation is a mathematical question.

- a) true
- b) false

Writing and Discussion Questions

1. Which of Elon Musk's companies do you think will best serve humanity?
2. Elon Musk would like to send people to Mars. He would also like to send people from city to distant city by Hyperloop. Which one would you rather? Why?
3. Would you ever go to Mars? Why or why not?
4. Have you ever invented something that you found out had already been invented?
5. Which visionary do you look up to?
6. Have you ever thought of taking up programming? Do you think you would be good at it?

Quiz Answers

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

Episode credits

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