

Simplified Speech #085 – Nature is all around us

Episode description

Nature is all around us. Some of us enjoy it and others prefer staying in the city. Andrew and Suzanne discuss nature in this episode of Simplified Speech.

Fun fact

Canada's biggest mountain is Mount Logan, which is a staggering 5,959 metres tall! The tallest mountain in the United States is Denali, which is 6,190 metres tall and the highest mountain in North America.

Expressions included in the study guide

- City person
- Nature-oriented
- Ruled by [something]
- To put time aside
- A skewed view



Transcript

Note: The words and expressions that appear in **bold text** within the transcript are discussed in more detail in the Detailed Explanations section that follows the transcript. The transcript has been edited for clarity.

Andrew: Hello, everyone. Andrew here. In this Simplified Speech episode, you'll hear a conversation that Suzanne and I had recently about the topic of nature. Nature. And I'm going to ask you three listening comprehension questions right now, and I'd like you to try and find the answers while you listen to us talk. Sound good? OK. Here are the questions:

1. What organization was Suzanne a member of when she was a child?
2. What did I build in the forest behind my house when I was a child?
3. How old was Suzanne when she learned how to snowboard?

Andrew: At the end of the episode, after the ending music, I'll tell you the answers.

Andrew: Hey, everybody. My name is Andrew.

Suzanne: And I'm Suzanne.

Andrew: And you're listening to Culips.

Andrew: Hello, everyone. Welcome back to Culips. You are listening to Simplified Speech, which is our series where we have completely natural English conversations, but we speak just a little bit slower than we do in our everyday lives. And we let you listen in so that you can start to learn how English speakers think and learn about the kind of vocabulary and expressions we use and really just upgrade your English listening skills. And today, I am not alone. I am joined by my cohost Suzanne. Suzanne, good morning. Hello.

Suzanne: Good morning. Yes, morning for me.

Andrew: Morning for you, evening for me. And, Suzanne, you know, I tossed it out there on Instagram to our Instagram followers and I said, guys, I'm recording with Suzanne. What should we talk about? And I got a lot of great suggestions. And one of our followers, I also assume that this person is a listener, too, but definitely an Instagram follower, his or her name, I can't remember, is Englishofk55. Englishofk55. And they suggested that we talk about nature, nature. And I know we are both nature lovers, right, Sue?

Suzanne: Yes, very much so. Yeah.

Andrew: So, I thought this would be a great topic to talk about. So that's what we'll do in this Simplified Speech episode.

Andrew: But, guys, just before we start, I want to let you know about the study guide that's available for this episode. It's jam-packed with a lot of great things that will help you make the most out of studying here with us today. There's a transcript inside, there are detailed vocabulary explanations and examples, there's some questions that you could use for speaking practice or writing practice, and there's a quiz, and probably even more in there, as well. I can't remember everything off the top of my head. So, if you want to check that out, just visit Culips.com and you can give that a download.

Andrew: OK, Suzanne, let's talk about nature. Again, this is a very big topic and this conversation could go in many different ways. So, where should we start? Well, you know, I know that you are a **city person**, right? You're from New York City. So, growing up in New York, while you were living in New York, did you get to spend much time in nature or were you mostly in the city?

Suzanne: I really didn't. I didn't have a family that was very **nature-oriented**. So I really spent most of my time in the city playing city games like hide-and-seek and, you know, stickball, which is, like, you have a stick and a ball. Like, we played outside, you know, we played outside a lot, even if it was snowing, we would play in the snow. So I always loved being outside, but it was really a city childhood. When my parents would take me places, it was really like to Broadway, to the Metropolitan Opera, you know, city activities, cultural experiences.

Suzanne: So, yeah, I didn't get a lot of nature experiences, although I was a Girl Scout. I was part of the Girl Scouts, and we would go camping a few times a year. And we would do a lot of nature activities. And I think if it weren't for the Girl Scouts, I wouldn't even understand nature, you know, as a child, so thank goodness for the Girl Scouts.

Andrew: For our listeners who aren't familiar with the Girl Scouts, we should probably just quickly explain what that is. I was never a Girl Scout or a Boy Scout, but I was in a similar organization. But, from what I understand, Girl Scouts, it's an organization for probably elementary school-aged girls, right? And you kind of learn about nature and some survival skills. And what else do you learn in Girl Scouts?

Suzanne: Sell cookies.

Andrew: Yeah, you gotta sell cookies. That's why they're famous, right? Because—

Suzanne: You become really good salespeople.

Andrew: Every year, the Girl Scouts do a fundraiser where they raise money for, I guess, the organization and for the different trips and activities that the Girl Scouts do. And so, to raise money, they sell cookies. And the cookies are really famous. When I was a kid, I remember the Girl Scouts would knock on your door and come to your front door.

Suzanne: That was me, yeah. I did that. I know this episode is not about Girl Scouts, although we totally could make an episode about Girl Scouts and Boy Scouts.

Andrew: Right.

Suzanne: Because that is a very American and North American thing, I think. But, yeah, it's sad because, in fact, meeting Olivier, he really inspired me to—we go camping a lot, we go to rent a chalet or, like, a cottage a few times a year. And we go hiking, we take day trips to go hiking in nature now. And I didn't learn even snowboarding until I was 33. So I learned a lot of these sort of outdoor sports that require you to be in nature later in life. So that's unfortunate, but that's what happens, I think, when you have a very city-focused upbringing.

Andrew: Right, but it's great that you get to spend some time in nature now.

Suzanne: Yeah, I love it.

Andrew: Yeah. That's awesome.

Suzanne: Yeah, I'm not always good at it. Olivier laughs at me how much of a **city person** I can be.

Suzanne: And how about you? You probably have a very different upbringing than me.

Andrew: Yeah, well, it's funny. I'm kind of the opposite of you, because my childhood was spent a lot in nature. And now I'm living in the middle of one of the world's biggest cities. There's not as much nature around, you know? So it's kind of completely opposite of your experience.

Andrew: So when I was a kid growing up, the area right behind my house was a forest. So I had my backyard and then it was just forest. There were no other houses behind us. So my brother and my sister and neighbourhood kids and I, we would always go outside and spend a lot of time in the forest. There were some cliffs, which, at the time, seemed like they were really, really high that we used to love climbing. I'm sure if I went back there now, they'd be, like, 2 metres tall or something, you know. But at the time, they seemed like these really big cliffs. We used to climb up them, and we would build tree forts. So, yeah, make tree houses and tree forts. Yeah, spend a lot of time just, you know, going through the forest looking for wood, looking for old, old things that people had left behind to make a tree fort. So we would do that. And there were trails that we could ride our bikes on. So we did a lot of mountain biking.

Andrew: So, really, a lot of my younger days were spent outside. All of my playtime was spent outside. And, of course, in the winter in Canada, we're doing a lot of tobogganing and sledding and skiing and snowboarding, ice skating. So my childhood was, yeah, **ruled by the outdoors, ruled by nature**. I spent a lot of time out there.

Andrew: But now, you know, I'm in the middle of the city and it's hard to get to an area where it's just quiet. And that's one thing that is hard for me to adjust to life in Seoul, here, is that, you know, in Canada, you could just, kind of, get out of the city easily. But, in Seoul, you're kind of, even when you go outside of Seoul, it's still big city everywhere.

Suzanne: Yeah, that's it, right? In Montreal, you can drive just even a half hour and you're in nature. So it's easy. I forgot to say that I did move to Texas when I was 12. So when I got there, I did experience a lot more nature, just because there's more nature there. And it's less of a dense city in Houston, and I did go on ranches and stuff and see a lot of horses and armadillos.

Andrew: Nice, armadillos. Those are funny animals.

Suzanne: Yeah, yeah.

Andrew: So, Sue, I should mention that, these days, one thing that I am doing, because I'm kind of trapped in a city is, I guess for the last—I just started doing this recently for the last maybe 2 or 3 months. Every Friday, I usually **put some time aside** on Friday to try and go to the mountains, because there's lots of mountains in South Korea. So I go to a different mountain and go for a hike. And I've been trying to get some nature time in that way. And I've noticed that it's been really great for my mental health, like, it's very refreshing and it's a great opportunity to think. I try to take paths that aren't too popular. And that's one of the reasons I go on Friday, is because the weekends have too many people. And when I go there, I always make sure to take my headphones out and just try and surround myself by the sounds of nature. These days, you know, it's springtime now, so there's birds chirping, the water is flowing, there's little waterfalls and, yeah, it's really lovely. It's been a great way to spend the last few months.

Suzanne: That's a great ritual to have. Maybe you can take a picture on your nature walk.

Andrew: Well, it's supposed to rain, so I'm really crossing my fingers that it doesn't rain, but the weather forecast is calling for rain and it's raining right now. So who knows? But if I do go for the nature walk, guys, I will definitely take a picture.

Suzanne: Something that I am always fascinated by about nature is how cruel it can be when you see the natural cycle of life, you know? And you just sort of see how certain animals are just prey to other larger, apex animals, or how, you know, hurricanes and rains can really affect people's lives, or earthquakes or the natural, you know, growth and death of nature. And it's humbling and very fascinating.

Andrew: Well, you're absolutely right, Sue, that nature is not kind. It's one of the most fascinating things, to me, just how perfect the system nature is, but nature is not kind. There's no compassion in nature. You know, my girlfriend loves animals and nature, too. She always follows, like, these cute animal Instagram accounts. Like, they're just, like, warm, heartwarming stories about, like, you know, like, a pigeon and a bunny become friends or something like this. But I like that, too. But I thought she was getting a kind of **skewed view** about what nature is about. And one of the accounts that I follow on Instagram is totally the opposite. It's called Nature Is Metal. Have you ever seen the account Nature Is Metal?

Suzanne: No.

Andrew: I wouldn't recommend it for any of our listeners who don't want to see the reality of nature, because this account is all just about the reality of nature. So you see, like, a bear hunting. You know, a bear will be eating a fish or, like, an owl will come and eat baby birds from a nest or something. And, of course, I don't like to see animals die. It's not about this at all, but it is really just humbling to see the reality of nature. And it kind of reminds you that, like, oh yeah, I'm just, like, an animal living in this world, too, and if it wasn't for this house, you know, that I live in, that would be me, I would be having to run away from these predators, too. So I think, between the accounts that my girlfriend likes to look at and the one that I follow, Nature Is Metal, I think we get like this kind of perfect perspective of the animal kingdom and of nature.

Suzanne: Yeah, it's true. It can be surprising and beautiful and adapting in these adorable ways, you know? And then also in a very scary and shocking and cruel way, as well. And I think that's important for us to realize, and it's humbling and it demands respect, right? Nature demands respect. And especially now, I find, so.

Andrew: For sure.

Andrew: Suzanne, you know, I'm getting a beeping in my earphone here reminding me that my battery is about to die. So I think we should probably wrap it up here before I get cut off. So, guys, thank you for tuning in and listening to Suzanne and I talk here about nature today. If you have anything that you would like to add to the conversation or let us know about, you can send us an email or reach us through social media. Sue, could you remind our listeners what our email address and social media accounts are?

Suzanne: Absolutely. So we love hearing from you guys. And you can find us on Twitter, on Facebook, on Instagram, YouTube. Gosh, we're everywhere! Just simply search for Culips, C-U-L-I-P-S, English Podcast and you will find us. And you can also always send us requests, suggestions for future podcast episodes by emailing us at contact@Culips.com. We love to hear from you guys.

Andrew: That about wraps it up for us. We'll catch you next time. Goodbye.

Suzanne: Bye.

Andrew: Here are the answers to the listening comprehension questions.

1. Suzanne was a member of the Girl Scouts.
2. I built tree houses and tree forts in the forest behind my house. These are the same thing.
3. Suzanne was 33 when she learned how to snowboard.

Detailed Explanations

City person

Noun

A **city person** is someone who prefers living in a city over living in a more rural area. The opposite of a **city person** is a country person—someone who prefers living in a rural area, like the countryside. These are neutral descriptions, neither an insult nor a compliment, to easily describe someone who has a preference for either the city or the country. You could also replace person with boy or girl—**city boy**, **city girl**.

Here are a couple more examples with **city person**:

Johanna: So, Mathieu and I have been looking at houses outside the city, because they're the only ones we can afford. And I'm just not happy with any of these houses.

Rosita: Well, obviously. You're such a **city person**, like me. And I know I couldn't ever live out in the country like that.

Johanna: They're not even that far into the country! Just in little suburbs. But, yeah. No coffee shops, no buses to take me to the mall. Very inconvenient.

Rosita: And so quiet, too. Plus, how will I visit you if you live out there? No, you need to find something downtown.

Johanna: Ha! Only way we could afford that is if we won the lottery.

Aneesha: Ah! Fresh air and wide-open spaces—exactly what I wanted from our vacation.

Glenn: I'm getting hungry. Let's stop in the next town for a snack.

Aneesha: We won't get there until dinnertime. There's nothing but forest and highway for the next hour or two.

Glenn: That's insane! What about a gas station or ...

Aneesha: Don't stress out, **city boy**. I've done this trip a hundred times. Here, have some chips. That'll have to do until we get to the next town.

Nature-oriented Adjective

Nature-oriented is an adjective that means the person, place, or thing it is describing is focused on, very aware of, or otherwise follows the theme of nature. When Suzanne says that her family wasn't very **nature-oriented**, that means her family was not very focused on nature.

This adjective uses the suffix **-oriented** that, when added to a word, shows the direction of focus. You can put this suffix on any word to make an adjective. Here are some examples: a store that sells many types of coffee could be described as **coffee-oriented**; a person who collects and reads books could be described as **book-oriented**; a company that focuses on profit over customer service could be described as **profit-oriented**.

Here are a couple more examples with **nature-oriented**:

Silas: Hey, you and your family just got back from vacation, right? We're planning a vacation with the kids next month and need some suggestions.

Ioan: Oh, well, we went on a safari at a nature reserve. The kids loved it.

Silas: Hmm, not sure if a **nature-oriented** vacation is what my wife wants. We're more beach-oriented people.

Ioan: Here, I'll give you the number for my travel agent. She was really helpful and found us a great deal.

Imaan: I'm looking for a good book on climate change science. Do you have any suggestions?

Lizzie: Yes! We just got in this book about **nature-oriented** technology that's being developed to help combat climate change.

Imaan: Great! Where might I find it?

Lizzie: Follow me, it's over in this aisle.

Ruled by [something] Expression

Ruled by [something] means that the [something], usually a concept or thing, is the most important and controlling influence on whatever is being discussed. In this episode, Andrew mentions that his childhood was **ruled by the outdoors, ruled by nature**. Similar to nature-oriented, **ruled by nature** means that the something—in this case nature or the outdoors—had the greatest influence on his childhood.

If we take the examples given in the nature-oriented definition above, you could say that the coffee shop is **ruled by coffee beans**; the book collector is **ruled by books**; or the company is **ruled by profit**.

Here are a couple more examples with **ruled by [something]**:

Kiyan: Did you adopt another cat?

Prisha: Yes. Yes, I did. I saw his photo online and I just fell in love. As we both know, I'm **ruled by my heart**, so I just had to go and get him. His name is Mr. Snuggleboots and I love him.

Kiyan: More than you love your other four cats?

Prisha: Uh, no. I love them all equally.

Kiyan: You're going to be a crazy cat lady, you know that, right?

Prisha: Yup! Already am, and proud of it.

Aled: I've always wondered how authors manage to come up new stories. It must be a challenge to develop new plots and create new characters.

Elis: Well, I imagine writers' and authors' lives are largely **ruled by their imaginations**, so when they see something, their imaginations are able to take it some place new or different than where people like us, for example, would take it.

Aled: I guess. That does make a bit of sense. I have very little imagination. My dad always said my brain was **ruled by logic** and had no room for anything else.

Elis: That's what makes you such a good accountant.

To put time aside

Phrasal verb

When you **put time aside**, you're making an appointment with yourself (so not a formal, business-like appointment) to do something specific. You might make a note in your calendar or day planner.

Usually when you **put time aside**, the thing you plan on doing doesn't have a set due date or deadline. For example, in this episode, Andrew mentions that he usually **puts some time aside** on Fridays to go to the mountains. This is an activity he enjoys that isn't urgent, but that he likes to do. You could also **put time aside** to speak with a colleague or to do chores.

Other ways to say **put time aside** include **put aside some time**, **set aside some time**, and **set some time aside**.

Here are a couple more examples with **to put time aside**:

Falak: Hi, Oisín. Have you had a chance to read my email?

Oisín: I did, and I'd be happy to chat with you about your idea. Shall we **put aside some time** next week to discuss it?

Falak: Yeah, that'd be great. What day?

Oisín: I'll know better on Monday, so I'll email you then.

Chase: I've been feeling really sluggish lately.

Anisa: Have you been getting enough exercise?

Chase: No, probably not. Been too busy.

Anisa: That's not good! You've got to **put time aside** for exercise every week or you'll get even more sluggish.

Chase: Who's got time for that?

Anisa: You can't be so busy that you don't even have an hour a week!

Chase: An hour ... I suppose I could **put aside an hour** on Mondays.

A skewed view

Expression

When you have a **skewed view** of something, your opinion or perception of that thing is not correct. You see it differently than others do, usually in a bad way. **A skewed view** could be caused by a lack of information or bad personal experiences, among other things.

In this episode, the **skewed view** is due to a lack of information. Andrew's girlfriend reads and looks at cute images of nature and might believe that nature is all bunnies and friendships between animals, when there is actually a more dangerous side to nature.

Here are a couple more examples with a **skewed view**:

Shirley: My mother keeps lecturing me about using social media, like it's this evil being that's going to steal my soul.

Jem: Yeah, my dad's the same way. Always going on about the corporations and money or whatever.

Shirley: They've just got a **skewed view** of things. Like, the media's all angry about data or something, so that means all social media is bad.

Jem: But it's, like, the only way I keep in contact with my friends, you know?

Shirley: Same here! How else am I supposed to know how my friends are doing? Honestly.

Ruben: If you keep watching that stupid reality TV show, you're going to get a very **skewed view** on what it's like to live in the city.

Yvonne: What do you mean? Isn't everyone like that in the city?

Ruben: No, definitely not. People are a lot more normal than the ones on that show.

Yvonne: What? Really? I have to tell Shirley and Jem. They're going to be so angry that they did all that shopping for nothing.

Quiz

1. What does it mean when you put aside some time for something?

- a) you've put a clock or watch in a box on your shelf
- b) you've made an informal appointment with yourself to do something specific
- c) you've removed an appointment from your calendar
- d) you've decided to ignore something

2. What was it that Andrew said his childhood was ruled by?

- a) fun and games
- b) school and learning
- c) nature and outdoors
- d) friendship and family

3. Which suffix shows the direction of focus?

- a) -oriented
- b) -ment
- c) -ive
- d) -less

4. What is it called when someone has a different, incorrect perception of something?

- a) a skilled view
- b) a wrong answer
- c) a change of heart
- d) a skewed view

5. Which of the following could be used to describe someone who likes living in a city?

- a) an urban outfitter
- b) a country person
- c) a city person
- d) a city animal

Writing and Discussion Questions

1. Tell us why you are or are not a city person.
2. In this episode, Suzanne mentions that her family was not nature-oriented. Was yours? If not, then what was the important focus for your family when you were growing up?
3. What would you say your life is ruled by now, and why?
4. Have you recently set aside some time for a hobby or activity that you don't often get to enjoy? If so, what is it and why do you enjoy it?
5. In your opinion, what is often seen with a skewed view by your friends and family?

Quiz Answers

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

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