

Simplified Speech #098 – Convenience stores

Episode description

What's your favourite thing to buy at the local convenience store? In this Simplified Speech episode, Andrew and Kassy talk about their favourite convenience store snacks, special features of convenience stores in North America, and differences between convenience stores in the United States and Canada.

Fun fact

7-Eleven convenience stores can be found in countries around the world. It is estimated that there are 68,236 locations globally. Japan has the most 7-Eleven locations in the world, with a whopping 20,904 stores!

Expressions included in the study guide

- Bad for [one's] waistline
- Sidenote
- Religiously
- Rowdy
- To loiter around
- Easy target



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. My name is Andrew.

Kassy: And I'm Kassy.

Andrew: And you are listening to the Culips English Podcast.

Andrew: Welcome back to Culips, everyone. How is it going? This is a Simplified Speech episode. Simplified Speech is the series that features 100% natural English conversations that are clear and are designed to help you boost your English listening skills and increase your knowledge of important English vocabulary. Today I am joined by my cohost, Kassy. Hello there, Kassy.

Kassy: Hey, Andrew.

Andrew: Kassy, I've been noticing on social media that so many people are spelling your name incorrectly. And I think that's just because it's a super unique spelling. Could you tell everybody how to spell your name?

Kassy: Yes, of course. My name is unique. And it's spelled K-A-S-S-Y.

Andrew: Right? So, so many people spell it, like, C-A-S-S-Y or C-A-S-S-I-E, but it's actually with a K and a Y.

Kassy: Yes, that's right. You can take up that argument with my mother if you're confused why it's spelled that way.

Andrew: All right. Well, maybe we'll have to interview her in a future episode and ask her why she chose that spelling.

Andrew: But for now, Kassy, we should get started with our episode. And I want to kick things off by giving a shout-out to one of our listeners from Germany, Dominic. And Dominic sent us a very lovely email this week. So Dominic wrote, "I started learning English at the beginning of 2019. That was one of my New Year's resolutions. I started learning English with Babbel, maybe you know what that is? After I finished all the lessons there, I needed more. So I started listening to your podcast, and it's simply awesome. I've been listening to your podcast for about 4 months, and it's a fixed part of my day. When I drive home from work in my car, the first thing I do is set up a new episode of Culips for my way home."

Andrew: And he goes on to say that, “I just want to say thank you. I love listening to the podcast. And I love that you have clear conversations that are easy to understand, and I can understand almost everything.” So Dominic from Germany, thank you so much for your message. It’s great to hear that you are following through on your New Year’s resolution. This is a really hard thing to do, is to keep that momentum throughout the year. But seems like you’re doing a great job.

Kassy: Yes, I totally agree and keep up the good work.

Andrew: Kassy, I messaged you a little earlier on and asked you if you had any ideas for what we should talk about today. And you had a great suggestion. Do you want to share with our listeners what your idea was?

Kassy: Yes. Today my idea was talking about convenience stores, one of my favourite places to get snacks.

Andrew: All right, convenience stores. So that is a great topic and it’s what we’ll talk about today. And there is a study guide that accompanies this episode. It’s available for all Culips members from our website, Culips.com, and we recommend following along with the study guide while you listen to us here today.

Andrew: OK, Kassy, let’s get into it. Convenience stores. You mentioned they’re one of your favourite places to get snacks. But maybe before I ask you about what kind of snacks you buy at the convenience store, we should give a quick definition. So maybe some listeners aren’t familiar with this word, convenience. Why don’t we start there. What is convenience? What does that word mean?

Kassy: Convenience means easy to access or when you’re in a rush, you can get something quickly, easily.

Andrew: Mm-hmm. It means easily, easily accessed, exactly. So then a convenience store is like a small shop that is usually close to where many people live and is open 24 hours a day, most of the time, and just has a lot of products that make your life easier, right? Snacks, drinks, little things for your house, like maybe a toothbrush or toothpaste or batteries, a light bulb, just those random objects that you need quickly when you run out of them.

Kassy: Yes, exactly. And then, I don’t know about in every country, but in America, small-town America, at least, convenience stores are usually attached to gas stations, as well. So it’s a great place where you can do two things at once, buy gas and then also buy something that you might need to pick up on your way home from work.

Andrew: Yeah, totally. In Canada, as well, so many convenience stores are attached to gas stations, especially in smaller towns. In, like, a big city like Vancouver or Toronto, there are a lot of standalone convenience stores in the city, urban core. But outside of the cities then, yeah, they're almost always attached to gas stations, which was just a brilliant move by the gas station owners, when you think of it, to open a little store at the gas station. They probably tripled their profits because of that idea.

Kassy: Yeah, totally. And I think the more rural you get, the more outside of the city you get, the crazier convenience stores get. I've seen convenience stores that serve full-course meals or they have a whole gift shop attached. Yeah, really.

Andrew: I did a road trip across the USA around 2012. And I remember stopping at a lot of different convenience stores in rural America. And you're totally right, it was awesome. Some of them were huge and had just so many different products that you could buy.

Andrew: You know, there's a lot of truckers—trucking is really common in North America as a way to transport goods from, like, warehouses to stores or from seaports and airports to warehouses. It's the main way that products move across the land in North America. So these truck drivers need a place to stop and they stop at gas stations and convenience stores. So there's a lot of products that are designed for them, too. And that was really cool to see, like, lots of just random things, sunglasses, hats, sunscreen, CDs, tapes, because they can't read while they're driving. So, books on tape, lots of really cool things that I wouldn't see in a city convenience store.

Kassy: Exactly. Yes. So, Andrew, in America, depending on which region you live in, there's, like, a really popular convenience store. And people **religiously** go to that convenience store over any other. In Canada, is it the same way?

Andrew: So you mean that in each state, there's a popular chain that everybody chooses as their favourite, and this kind of varies from state to state?

Kassy: Exactly. For example, in Pennsylvania we have one called Sheetz, and another area they have Wawa, and another area, who knows what.

Andrew: Sheet. S-H-E-E-T?

Kassy: Z, yes. S-H-E-E-T-Z, Sheetz.

Andrew: Oh, Sheetz! It's the Sheetz, OK. I've never heard of that before. I've actually never been to Pennsylvania, so maybe that's why. But to be honest with you, no, I don't think it's that way in Canada at all. I'm very sad about this.

Andrew: But when I was a kid and when I lived in Canada, the main convenience store chain was called Mac's, Mac's. It was originally called Mac's Milk. Like when my parents talk about convenience stores, they call it Mac's Milk, M-A-C, Mac, Mac's Milk. But when I was a kid, it was called Mac's. We just called it Mac's. And now Mac's is gone. It was bought by the American convenience store chain Circle K. So now it's Circle K in Canada. There's also—yeah, it's depressing. It's a little sad, like, when parts of your childhood disappear like that. We also have 7-Eleven. 7-Eleven, which we call the Sev. The Sev is the nickname for the 7-Eleven.

Kassy: In Canada, are 7-Elevens really famous for their slushies like they are in America?

Andrew: Yeah, slushies. We call them Slurpees. Do you call them Slurpees?

Kassy: Slurpees, slushies. It depends on the region.

Andrew: OK, yeah, same thing. They're super popular. And you can buy hotdogs and all sorts of delicious snacks that are **bad for your waistline** at the 7-Eleven. But to answer your question, no, we don't have different convenience stores for different provinces and different areas.

Andrew: However, in Quebec, convenience stores are called *depanneur*. And that's the French word, of course, because they speak French there, but all of the anglophones, the English speakers that live in Quebec, and many of the French speakers, too, we shorten that to just *dep*, *dep*. So I have to go to the *dep* means I have to go to the convenience store. And I found this word to be really fun, and even sometimes now I use it. Like I was talking to one of my coworkers the other day who's from the UK, and I told him, yeah, the other day I just was walking down to the *dep* and blah, blah, blah. And he's, like, what, what is the *dep*? And I realized, like, oh, yeah, he's gonna have no idea because that's such a regional word. Even a lot of Canadians won't even know that. It's just, like, in Quebec.

Kassy: If I heard that word, I would think you were talking about a department store or something.

Andrew: Do you have any nicknames for convenience stores in the USA?

Kassy: No, we just call them by their name. So I would never say, like, I'm going to the gas station. I would always say I'm going to Sheetz or I'm going to Wawa.

Andrew: Interesting. Yeah, I would always say the corner store. That was what I called it when I was a kid, because the store was on the corner of the neighbourhood. So I would ask my mom, Mom, can I go to the corner store? And I guess that just stuck with me. I think a lot of people still refer to it as a corner store, a convenience store.

Kassy: My dad referred to it as that, but no one my age referred to it as corner store.

Andrew: One thing that if a visitor to the USA or to Canada were to visit a convenience store in an urban area, they might be a little bit surprised. Because there is very high security in some urban convenience stores. Could you maybe explain about some of the security features that some convenience stores have?

Kassy: Oh, well, first of all, there's always a CCTV [closed-circuit television] camera. And usually they have alarm systems. So, like, if someone comes in at gunpoint trying to rob you, they can quickly push the button. This is a very common occurrence, I can tell you.

Andrew: Yes.

Kassy: **Sidenote**, my father owned a convenience store for several years and his store was robbed multiple times.

Andrew: Oh no. I've seen many convenience stores that have, like, the cashier being behind glass. So it's almost like they're in a glass bubble where there's only a little window where you can pass money back and forth. And that is to protect the store from being robbed, but also to protect the employee that's working at the convenience store, because, you know, in North America, many stores close at night. There's not a lot of businesses that are open 24/7. But convenience stores are, and because many of them sell cigarettes and lotto tickets and alcohol, even. They are targets for crime activity. Usually, too, they're employing, like, just one or two people that may be working there and often they're, you know, part-timers, like high school or university students. So they're just **easy targets** for burglary and robbery, right?

Kassy: Yeah, that's totally right.

Andrew: Yeah, so that is one thing that might be shocking to, you know, somebody travelling to a big city in Canada or the USA is that there's a lot of security features, especially at night. Some of these things are removed during the day and then they're installed at night to keep the employees safe and the cash register safe, too.

Kassy: Speaking of night, you said that, you know, convenience stores are susceptible to crime at night but, actually, convenience stores are some of the only things open at night. So, in my town, teenagers would actually gather there, like, on a Friday night to hang out.

Andrew: Wow, that's really funny. I don't think I've ever hung out at a convenience store. But I remember in high school that was, like, the thing to do every lunch break is walk to the convenience store that was close to my high school and buy some snacks and then walk back to school. The owner of that convenience store would never let us **loiter around**. He had a no **loitering** sign so we had to shop and then leave. But in a small town, I could see where there's nothing else to do, that a bunch of kids would hang out at the convenience store.

Kassy: You **rowdy** teenagers were bad for business.

Andrew: Yeah, I'm sure we were, I'm sure we were. Did you ever hang out at the convenience store, Kassy?

Kassy: No. Usually it was kind of the bad kids who smoked that hung out at the convenience stores and I was kind of a nerd, so I didn't really hang out there.

Andrew: Probably a good decision. Probably a good decision.

Andrew: Kassy, last question for you and then we will wrap things up. Here, you know, we're living in Korea, Kassy and I, and there are convenience stores everywhere. In fact, I'm in my apartment right now and if I walked outside of my apartment, I would be able to visit four or five convenience stores within 200 metres of my front door. They are just everywhere. But it's not like this in North America, especially, I think, Kassy, we come from, you know, smaller towns in North America. So let's say, your American house, if you were walking from your house in the USA to the closest convenience store, how long would that take?

Kassy: Walking?

Andrew: Yeah, walking.

Kassy: I don't know, maybe 2 hours.

Andrew: Oh!

Kassy: There was, I lived in the woods. It was about a 15-minute drive to the closest convenience store.

Andrew: 15-minute drive. OK, so you were in a more rural area than I was, then. But I still have to walk at least 15 minutes to get to a convenience store. So, yeah, that would be a considerably longer walk for you if it was a 15-minute drive. But I guess my main point here that I want to make is that in North America, they're called convenience stores and they are convenient, but it's not like they're just right outside your front door. You still have to put some effort into getting to them.

Kassy: Yes, exactly. It maybe cuts your driving time in half compared to a grocery store, but it's still not exactly convenient.

Andrew: That brings us to the end of today's episode. Thank you for studying English with us today, everyone. Listening and learning with Culips like you did here today, this is one of the keys to achieving English fluency. So great job. You put in the time, you put in the work, and that is awesome.

Kassy: To recap this episode, we talked about convenience stores, some special features of convenience stores in North America, and some differences between convenience stores in Canada and the USA.

Andrew: If you enjoyed this episode and you found it educational and fun, then please support us. You can do that in a lot of different ways. You could tell your friends about Culips. You could follow us on social media. You could leave us a nice review and rating on Apple Podcasts or wherever you get your podcasts. Or you could even sign up and become a Culips member, which is the best way to study with us. Culips members get unlimited access to our study guide library, which includes study guides for every single Culips episode. You also get ad-free episodes, and much, much more. Check out our website, Culips.com, to find out all the details and to sign up.

Andrew: We'll be back soon with another-brand new English lesson and we'll talk to you then. Goodbye.

Kassy: See ya.

Detailed Explanations

Bad for [one's] waistline

Phrase

If something is **bad for your waistline**, it is likely to make you gain weight. For example, fried foods and sugary desserts are **bad for your waistline**. The convenience store snacks Andrew and Kassy talked about in this episode are often **bad for one's waistline**. Foods that are high in fat, sugar, and simple carbohydrates are all **bad for one's waistline**.

Here are a couple more examples with **bad for [one's] waistline**:

Henry: Ugh. I've gained so much weight this year. I need to start hitting the gym.

George: Yeah, but more than that, you should really cut back on the drinking. It's **bad for your waistline**, you know.

Henry: I'd rather keep this belly than cut down on alcohol. A nice cold beer helps me unwind after a stressful day at work.

George: Well, I guess you've gotta choose one or the other.

Henry: Maybe I'll try eating more salads instead. That should do the trick.

Lauren: Would you like a cookie? I made them myself last night.

Tracy: Oh, they look absolutely delicious, darling, but I just can't. Cookies are so **bad for my waistline**.

Lauren: How about we split one, then?

Tracy: I suppose that would be all right. Oh! They are so delicious! I haven't had chocolate for weeks.

Sidenote

Slang/idiom

To mention a **sidenote** in a conversation is like using the phrase by the way to introduce a minor piece of news or something partially related to the current topic being discussed. In this episode, Kassy and Andrew are discussing the number of burglaries that happen at convenience stores and Kassy makes a **sidenote**, or a semi-related comment, that her father was a convenience store owner. The reason she designates that fact as a **sidenote** is because her comment wasn't directly related to the topic they were talking about in that point of the conversation. It was mentioned as an aside for Andrew's general information.

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

Logan: I think we should be finished with the project by lunchtime.

Andrew: That's great!

Logan: Yes, we're just working on the finishing touches. Oh, and as a **sidenote**, I set up a meeting with Mr. Dedrick for tomorrow at 9:00.

Andrew: Oh, that's also excellent news! What would I do without you?

Rosie: Are you still free to go shopping this afternoon?

Summer: Yup! I totally need to buy some new shoes.

Rosie: Perfect. We'll go to the outlet first and then head to the mall after that. Oh, as a **sidenote**, did you know Izzy's Ice Cream Shop has been sold?

Summer: What? No way! It's a tradition to go there after a long day of shopping. What will we do without Izzy's?

Religiously Adverb

To do something **religiously** is to do something consistently, regularly, or with dedication. This word is not necessarily related to religion, but it implies that whatever you do **religiously**, you do it with the same fervour and dedication that you would have when practicing your religious faith.

For example, in this episode Kassy says that Americans in some regions choose one convenience store that they go to **religiously**. That means that Americans are often faithful customers of a particular chain of convenience stores. They go to this type of store consistently and regularly, while also avoiding other convenience stores of a different brand.

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

Vhan: Wow, you're really good at this now.

Frank: Well, I would hope so. I've been practicing **religiously** for weeks.

Vhan: Well, your hard work paid off. You are a parallel parking god now. You'll pass the test for sure.

Frank: I sure hope so. I'm sick of riding the bus to school every day.

Valarie: Do you like BTS?

Sophie: Oh my goodness, yes! I follow them **religiously** on YouTube and Instagram. I know all of their songs.

Valarie: Me too! Do you wanna go to their concert in New York with me in October?

Sophie: What? You were able to get tickets?

Valarie: Yeah, I won two in a raffle, but I don't have anyone to go with.

Sophie: I'm your girl! This is gonna be so awesome!

Rowdy Adjective

Something or someone described as **rowdy** is noisy, rough, and likely to cause chaos or trouble. For example, people at a crowded party would be considered **rowdy** with their loud music, drinking, and crazy behaviour. A **rowdy** person might also be called a troublemaker, a hooligan, or a thug. A **rowdy** crowd is the exact opposite of a calm and quiet crowd.

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

Bethany: I'm so excited to meet your family for the first time, but also kinda nervous. Are you sure they'll like me?

Marco: Of course they'll like you. I just hope you'll like them. My family gets kind of **rowdy** at these backyard parties. They're pretty wild.

Bethany: Oh, I'm sure I'll love them.

Marco: I guess. It's just so different from your family dinners.

Tyrone: Dude, can I sleep on your couch for a few days while my new apartment is being repainted and my stuff gets moved in?

Chris: What? You moved? Didn't you just move to your other place a few months ago?

Tyrone: Yeah, but I couldn't take the noise any longer. My upstairs neighbours clomped around like **rowdy** elephants. I haven't slept a wink in weeks!

Chris: That really sucks, man. You can totally stay with me until your new place is ready.

Tyrone: Thanks, man. I owe you one.



To loiter around

Verb

To **loiter around** is to linger near a place for a long period of time, seemingly for no purpose whatsoever. For example, teenagers who gather at their lockers at school instead of going to class are considered to be **loitering around**.

Loiter around has a similar meaning to hang out, but it has a more negative feeling behind it. For example, teenagers can hang out in their houses and there is nothing wrong with that, but teenagers **loitering around** outside a convenience store are considered bothersome and are usually asked to leave.

Here are a couple more examples with **to loiter around**:

Store owner: You lousy kids! I've told you a thousand times. You can't just **loiter around** here scaring away all the good, paying customers. Now c'mon, go away!

Nicky: Aw, Mr. Sanders, don't be such a killjoy. We're not doing anything wrong.

Store owner: Not yet! But last week you were setting the trash cans on fire. I'm not taking any chances. Leave or I'm calling the police.

Nicky: All right, all right. We're leaving. See you tomorrow, Mr. Sanders.

Store owner: Not if I'm lucky!

Lena: Is that a puppy?

Rochelle: Yeah, I saw him **loitering around** the park all afternoon begging for food. I figured he must be a stray.

Lena: Has he got a collar?

Rochelle: Nope. I'm gonna take him to the vet tomorrow to see if he's chipped and to get him checked out.

Lena: Will you keep him? He's a cute little thing, that's for sure.

Rochelle: I don't think my apartment allows pets, but I think I'm gonna try. I've bonded with him already.

Easy target

Noun

An **easy target** is someone or something that is easy to bully, harass, or take advantage of. For example, tourists are often **easy targets** for pickpockets, who steal wallets and fancy watches, and politicians and celebrities are **easy targets** for the media, who often spread gossip about their personal lives.

A target is an object or person that someone intends to hit or attack. Therefore, anyone or anything that is easily manipulated, tricked, or bullied would be considered an **easy target**, something or someone that is easy to attack.

Here are a couple more examples with **easy target**:

Julia: Well, I'm off to buy my new car. Wish me luck!

Shane: You're not going alone, are you?

Julia: I am. Why? You don't think I can do it myself?

Shane: Well, I'm sure you could. But you're a young, attractive woman, so you're kind of an **easy target**.

Julia: Why did that sound like a compliment and an insult at the same time? An **easy target** for what?

Shane: For the car salesman who will try to upsell you! He'll try to tack on all of these useless features to make the car more expensive than it needs to be. You can avoid that by bringing along somebody else to back you up.

Julia: No, thanks. I'm sure I can avoid those schemes all by myself.

Shane: Suit yourself.

Rachel: Ugh. I wish I could go back to high school. Working every day sucks.

Mary: Not me. I hated high school. Everybody bullied me.

Rachel: Well, you were kind of an **easy target**.

Mary: What's that supposed to mean?

Rachel: I mean, you wore cat tail belts to school and made bird noises. People thought you were weird.

Quiz

1. Which food is NOT considered bad for one's waistline?

- a) donuts
- b) fried chicken
- c) carrots
- d) soda

2. Why might someone be described as rowdy?

- a) he is really loud and disruptive
- b) he is very calm and quiet
- c) he is confused and lost
- d) he is grumpy and lonely

3. Which phrase has a similar meaning to sidenote?

- a) over here
- b) by the way
- c) duly noted
- d) beforehand

4. True or false? Being called an easy target is a compliment; everyone wishes they could be an easy target.

- a) true
- b) false

5. Which examples below represent people who do something religiously? Select all that apply.

- a) a man who practices soccer 4 hours a day
- b) a woman who occasionally goes hiking
- c) a girl that goes swimming twice a week
- d) a kid who collects every Pokémon card in existence

Writing and Discussion Questions

1. What is your favourite convenience store and why?
2. What is your favourite thing to buy at the convenience store?
3. Do teenagers loiter around the convenience stores in your hometown? If not, where do they like to loiter?
4. What convenience store items can only be found in your country?
5. What is something that you do religiously?

Quiz Answers

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

Episode credits

Hosts: Andrew Bates and Kassy White

Music: *Something Elated* by Broke For Free,
Sleepless Aloha by Reed Mathis

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: CÔPAL (Unsplash.com)