

Simplified Speech #103 – It's Thanksgiving time again

Episode description

Gobble gobble! It's that time of year again. In this Simplified Speech episode, Andrew and Kassy talk about their families' Thanksgiving traditions and what it's like to celebrate Thanksgiving while living away from home.

Fun fact

In the United States, the president pardons a turkey each year, meaning he spares its life. This tradition started in the 1940s, but it wasn't made a yearly tradition until 1989 under the former President George H.W. Bush.

Expressions included in the study guide

- Marathon
- Friendsgiving
- Potluck
- To steal [one's] thunder
- Splurge
- To make [something] stretch



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's Andrew.

Kassy: And I'm Kassy.

Andrew: And this is the Culips English Podcast.

Andrew: Hello there, everyone. Welcome back to Culips. Today's episode is part of our Simplified Speech series. If you don't know what that is, let me explain. Simplified Speech is where we have natural English discussions about an interesting topic, but we make sure that they are clear and easy for you to understand. And we hope that by listening and studying with Simplified Speech, you will be able to increase your knowledge of essential English vocabulary and ultimately become a better English speaker and listener.

Andrew: Now, today, I am joined by my cohost, Kassy. Kassy, hey there. What are we gonna talk about today?

Kassy: Today we are talking about Thanksgiving, which is happening right around this time.

Andrew: Yes, it is the Thanksgiving time of the year. And I want to give a shout-out to one of our Instagram followers, Ketravel, who suggested this topic. Thank you for the fun suggestion. Kassy, you may or may not know that Canadian Thanksgiving is actually celebrated in October. So that's in the past and Canadian Thanksgiving is finished. But American Thanksgiving is happening right around now. So I thought we'll talk about it with you, because you are American. And I think Canadians and Americans, we celebrate Thanksgiving in a very, very similar way. So we can share some of our traditions and some of the things that we do to celebrate Thanksgiving. We'll talk all about those.

Andrew: But before we do, I do want to let all of our listeners know about the study guide for this episode. Guys, there's a study guide for this episode and it's jam-packed with helpful things, such as the transcript, detailed vocabulary explanations, descriptions, and examples of all the important vocabulary that you'll hear Kassy and I use here today. There is a quiz that will help you with your comprehension and also some prompts that you can use for writing practice or speaking practice. So to download the study guide, which comes in a PDF or mobile-friendly version, all you have to do is visit our website, Culips.com, and sign up to become a Culips member. So just visit Culips.com for all the info you need to do that.

Andrew: All right, Kassy. It's turkey time!

Kassy: Gobble gobble.

Andrew: Gobble gobble. I guess I'll start by asking you about some of the Thanksgiving traditions that are celebrated by you and your family. What does Thanksgiving look like for you back home?

Kassy: Well, my family is divorced, which is not a bad thing. It was actually a good thing for my family. But because of that, I have to go to two or three Thanksgivings in one day. So it's a **marathon**, Andrew.

Andrew: I kind of know what that's like, because one of my previous girlfriends was in the same situation. So on Thanksgiving Day, we would have to go to her dad's house and then her mom's house. So, yeah, that can be a little bit tiring. But that gives you, I think, a really interesting insight to the holiday, because you get to see how each part of your family celebrates it. So are there certain things that you do at one celebration that you don't do at another one?

Kassy: Yeah, so usually, I have Thanksgiving lunch with my dad's side of the family. And we eat a lot of the really traditional Thanksgiving foods, like turkey, extremely buttery mashed potatoes, buttered broccoli, buttered bread. I think you see a trend here.

Andrew: Lots of butter.

Kassy: Yeah. And then we usually watch a movie together.

Andrew: OK

Karry: Yeah.

Andrew: And then you have to go and eat a Thanksgiving dinner after that heavy lunch?

Kassy: Yes, at my mom's side of the family. And usually we have unique things, like fruit salad or half the family's vegetarian, so maybe a vegetarian lasagna, something like that.

Andrew: Nice. OK, that sounds great. Do you eat pumpkin pie?

Kassy: We have pumpkin roll, which is 10 times better in my opinion.

Andrew: What is that? I've never heard of pumpkin roll before.

Kassy: Have you heard of roll cake?

Andrew: I know roll cake.

Kassy: Yeah, so it's a homemade pumpkin sheet cake. And then the inside is a cream cheese filling and then you roll it up to make a pumpkin roll cake.

Andrew: Ooo. Sounds good. But I'm a bit of a traditionalist. So I love eating pumpkin pie at Thanksgiving, probably the only time of the year that I ever eat pumpkin pie.

Kassy: Are you a pumpkin spice latte fan, Andrew?

Andrew: No, not really. To be honest, and I was thinking about this the other day, I don't really eat pumpkin at all, except for pumpkin pie, which I eat once a year. So I don't eat pumpkin as a food very often. But maybe I should more often, it is actually pretty delicious.

Kassy: But of course you have the same situation, Andrew. Since moving abroad, the way I celebrate Thanksgiving is very different.

Andrew: Yeah, so these days, I don't really do anything special for Thanksgiving. And in fact, when it was Thanksgiving this year, I totally forgot about it until Thanksgiving was over. Then I realized, oh, yeah, it was Thanksgiving the other day, whoops. I forgot.

Kassy: Yeah, I've been abroad for 4 years. And I think two of them I didn't do much, but two of them, we had a **Friendsgiving**. Me and a couple of friends got together. And you know, since we're all apart from our families, we had our own little Thanksgiving with friends, **Friendsgiving**.

Andrew: Nice, I like that. That is a pretty common tradition, I think, for not just people that live abroad, but anyone that lives away from their family. So I remember having **Friendsgiving** when I was a university student and I lived away from my hometown. Sometimes we also called it orphans' Thanksgiving, orphans' Thanksgiving.

Kassy: That's so sad.

Andrew: You know, I lived in Montreal for a long time and there were a lot of people who I knew from British Columbia that had moved to Montreal, and we were all kind of expats living there. You know, none of us had family, we all just moved there as students. So we would all hang out and have a **Friendsgiving** or an orphans' Thanksgiving together, and that was really fun.

Kassy: I think it's almost better than a family Thanksgiving in some ways. First, you won't be subjected to all of the family gossip and questioning that usually comes with a family holiday. And second, usually the host or the mom or someone is stuck cooking 90% of the dishes. But when you have a **Friendsgiving**, usually we have a **potluck**, which is when each person brings one or two items to the dinner that everyone shares.

Andrew: Exactly, yeah. This is what we did, as well, for our **Friendsgiving** is we had a **potluck** party. So everyone would prepare one or two dishes or, if you don't know how to cook, you could buy one or two dishes. And then you bring them and kind of put all of your food on the table and we just had a buffet. So you could go up and eat what you want and you don't have to eat what you don't want. And, yeah, it was really fun. It's almost like a party, more of a party vibe than a holiday vibe, doing it with your friends. It's a lot more relaxed and chill and fun. Like you said, you don't have to deal with your old relatives asking you about when you're going to get married or have children, these kinds of things.

Kassy: Yes, I think everybody can relate to those kind of questions on the holidays.

Andrew: Kassy, what is your favourite part of Thanksgiving?

Kassy: My favourite part of Thanksgiving? You know, this might be kind of blasphemous since we're talking about Thanksgiving, but I'm not a big fan of Thanksgiving. My favourite part of Thanksgiving is that it's right before Christmas.

Andrew: That's interesting. And American Thanksgiving is usually seen as the kickoff to the Christmas season, right?

Kassy: That's right.

Andrew: There is the Thanksgiving Day Parade that happens on Thanksgiving. And you can see Santa Claus at the Thanksgiving Day Parade. The next day, following Thanksgiving, is Black Friday.

Kassy: Biggest shopping day of the year.

Andrew: The biggest, craziest shopping day of the year. And a lot of people use that day to buy Christmas presents for loved ones at a discount. And, yeah, I think I always remember it being officially Christmas season after American Thanksgiving.

Kassy: I think Thanksgiving was a really great holiday to celebrate long ago when families didn't have a lot of food. So, you know, they were celebrating one day a year where they could really **splurge** and eat anything they wanted. But nowadays, Thanksgiving kind of just seems like excess to me. It's just too much food.

Andrew: Too much food. Yeah. I love after Thanksgiving eating leftover turkey. Turkey sandwiches, turkey soup. My mom always **makes it stretch** for a long time. And, you know, turkey is a food that we don't eat commonly, except on Thanksgiving and Christmas, really. So it's nice to eat turkey once in a while. I feel bad for the poor turkeys, though, they have a rough time around this time of the year.

Andrew: Kassy, do you know about the turkey pardon at the White House? Have you ever heard of this tradition?

Kassy: Ah, is that when the President lets one turkey go free or something like that? Is that right?

Andrew: Yeah. Yeah. For whatever reason, I'm not sure why this happens, but at Thanksgiving, one turkey is set free by the President. And it's kind of like, I guess an apology to all the other turkeys who are consumed at Thanksgiving. So that's always on the news. I remember seeing Obama letting a turkey go free and Trump letting a turkey go free. I don't know why they do that. It's a weird tradition, but it's a thing.

Kassy: That does bring something up. I'm from central Pennsylvania, and people love recreational hunting in that area. And the Monday after Thanksgiving, nobody has school, because it's the official first day of hunting season. So a lot of families, like, fathers will take out their sons, or daughters if they want, and go hunting together.

Andrew: Wow. OK, so maybe our listeners don't know what the hunting season is. Could you explain what that means to everyone?

Kassy: Yeah, sure. So every fall or early winter, people can hunt for deer, in Pennsylvania, especially. And you can only hunt during that time if you have a licence. So it's illegal to hunt other times of the year. So the first day of hunting season is really fun and exciting for a lot of families in that area, because it's one of their favourite hobbies, their favourite sports, and that's the first day they can do it.

Andrew: Yeah, so it is a way that the government conserves the animals, right? To make sure that they're not overhunted. And as far as I know, you have to buy a tag as well. So you have to, sort of, purchase from the government a licence to be able to hunt the deer.

Andrew: OK, Kassy I'm gonna put you on the spot here and ask you a question that—my family would always ask this question at Thanksgiving and I always remember feeling awkward answering it and not liking this part of the Thanksgiving dinner. And that was we had to go around the table and say one thing that we were thankful for. Did you ever have to do this?

Kassy: Yup, definitely. I think it's a tradition.

Andrew: Did you feel awkward about it like I do?

Kassy: Yeah. Especially on the years where I wasn't really thankful for much, like, oh, what should I say? World peace? Wish for that, not thankful for it.

Andrew: So I'm gonna put you on the spot Kassy and ask you, what are you thankful for this year?

Kassy: I think this one's pretty easy this year. 2020 was a really rough year for, I think, a lot of the world. And I'm just thankful that my year has been really pretty good, considering. I'm healthy, I still have my job, friends. And that's all I can really ask for in a year where a lot of people don't have that.

Andrew: Yes, well, you **stole my thunder**, because I was going to say the same thing, Kassy. This year has been so difficult for people all around the world. I know a lot of our listeners, too, have suffered this year. But thankfully, me as well, actually, I've had a pretty good year, all things considered.

Andrew: I still have my job. I'm still healthy, got engaged. It's been a big year for me this way. So, yeah, I'm thankful for all of those things. And also thankful that my family has been able to make it through the pandemic so far without any big issues.

Andrew: So, Kassy, with that being said, we should wrap things up. Happy Thanksgiving to all the Culips listeners out there.

Kassy: Yes, Happy Thanksgiving.

Andrew: And thank you for tuning in today.

Andrew: Guys, if you like Culips, if you listen to us often, and if you learn a lot with us, then we would really love it if you could support us. And there's many ways that you can do that. You could become a paid Culips member. And when you sign up to become a Culips member, you get unlimited access to our study guide library. We make a study guide for every episode. You also get ad-free episodes, exclusive access to our members-only series, the Fluency Files, and you get an invitation to our monthly livestream.

Andrew: But that's not the only way you could support us. You could also follow us on social media, or tell your friends who are learning English about us, or even leave us a nice review and a five-star rating on Apple Podcasts or wherever you get your podcasts.

Andrew: If you want to get in touch with us, you can send us an email. Our address is contact@Culips.com. And we'll be back with another brand-new episode soon. So we'll talk to you then. Goodbye

Kassy: See ya.

Detailed Explanations

Marathon

Noun

The most popular definition for a **marathon** is a race that lasts for about 42.2 kilometres, or approximately 26 miles. However, it is possible to use the word **marathon** to refer to any activity that requires a lot of time and energy. For example, solving a difficult puzzle could be referred to as a **marathon**. In this episode, Kassy likens Thanksgiving to a **marathon** because she spends all day eating copious amounts of food and making small talk with her extended family. Therefore, the word **marathon** does not just refer to running, but any activity that takes a long time and leaves one feeling exhausted.

Here are a couple more examples with **marathon**.

Sally: What did you do this weekend?

Kate: I decided to have a Harry Potter movie **marathon**. I watched every film over the weekend.

Sally: Every single one? Aren't they each, like, almost 3 hours long?

Kate: Yeah, it was pretty intense. But it's a tradition in my family. We do it every year over the holidays.

Sally: Wow, I had no idea your family was so into Harry Potter.

Kate: Oh, yeah, we totally are. Sometimes we each choose a character, mute the movie, and start saying the lines ourselves. We know the first movie by heart.

Jack: Have you ever played Monopoly?

Raj: No, what's it like?

Jack: It's a **marathon**, man. I played it for the first time yesterday and it took 3 hours.

Raj: That's insane! I think I'll pass on that one. I'd rather play something simpler, like Go Fish.

Friendsgiving

Noun

Friendsgiving is a Thanksgiving party or celebration held with one's friends instead of with one's family. Those who live far away from home will often partake in **Friendsgiving** by celebrating with friends in the area who also live far away from their families.

A similar expression is an **orphans' Thanksgiving**. An orphan is someone whose parents have both died. Thus, an **orphans' Thanksgiving** is simply a Thanksgiving alone or away from family. The term **orphans' Thanksgiving** tends to sound a bit melancholy, while the term **Friendsgiving** has a much more positive feeling behind it.

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

Teresa: Are you heading home for the holidays this year?

Gina: No, I don't have a long break. I'm going to a **Friendsgiving** party instead.

Teresa: Oh, I'm jealous! I'd much rather eat turkey with friends than be subjected to all the questions my family will surely ask.

Gina: Yeah, it's a weird feeling. This will be my first Thanksgiving away from home, but I'm less disappointed about it than I thought I would be.

Teresa: Yup. Family is great and all, but only in small doses.

Minjae: Have you ever experienced a Western-style Thanksgiving?

Juwon: I mean, kind of. When I studied abroad in Canada, I went to a **Friendsgiving**.

Minjae: A **Friendsgiving**?

Juwon: Yeah. A bunch of the international students and some Canadian friends got together and we had a big potluck party to celebrate Thanksgiving with friends.

Minjae: That sounds really fun.

Juwon: It was, but I was so full afterwards I could hardly move. I'd never eaten so much in my whole life.

Potluck

Noun

A **potluck** is a meal with a large group of people where each participant brings an item or two to share with the group. **Potlucks** divide the burden of cooking or buying supplies amongst the participants. Dishes brought to a **potluck** can be homemade or store-bought. Participants often declare beforehand what they'll bring, so that the dishes are balanced evenly between sides, main courses, and desserts.

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

Regina: What are you bringing to the **potluck** this Saturday?

Cathy: I volunteered to bring the desserts, so I'm planning to make a cheesecake and a fruit salad.

Regina: Oh, that sounds delightful. I'm bringing the dinner rolls, plates, and silverware. Everyone knows I can't cook.

Cathy: Hey, there's nothing wrong with that. Your contribution is just as important. If you weren't there, we would be forced to eat with our bare hands straight out of the bowls.

Regina: Ha, that might be all right for the hamburgers and hotdogs, but it would be a funny sight seeing you all digging into the cheesecake like that!

Justin: Have you chosen a caterer for your wedding yet?

Martin: No. It's a bit irregular, but we've actually decided to hold a **potluck** at our wedding.

Justin: Wow, that is peculiar.

Martin: Yeah. We thought it would make the dinner more intimate and easier to incorporate foods from both of our cultures, since she's Filipina and I'm Canadian.

Justin: I think it's an awesome idea. Sign me up to bring the booze. Can't have a party without that!

Martin: Ha! OK, I'll be sure to let Arlene know.

To steal [one's] thunder

Idiom

To steal [one's] thunder is to do something that someone else wanted to do, and to do it before they have a chance so that you can receive all of the praise and notoriety that comes from that achievement. **To steal [one's] thunder** could also mean to take credit for someone else's work. For example, someone might work really hard to pitch a new idea to his boss. Then a day before he was scheduled to present his idea, a colleague swoops in and presents an almost identical idea to the boss, thus receiving all the recognition and praise. This is a prime example of **stealing [one's] thunder**.

Here are a couple more examples with **to steal [one's] thunder**:

Cara: Oh my goodness, everyone! Ashley's getting married!

Ashley: C'mon, Cara. You really **stole my thunder** there. I was planning to make an announcement during dinner.

Cara: Oh, I'm sorry, Ashley. I was just so excited to tell everyone.

Ashley: It's all right. But, yes, it's true, everyone. I'm getting married on October 15th. You're all invited, of course. Cara will be my maid of honor despite her incredibly big mouth.

Cara: Cheers for Ashley and David! I can't wait to help you plan your wedding!

Miguel: I am so angry at my brother Ricardo right now.

Frances: Why? What did he do?

Miguel: He's always **stealing my thunder**, trying to suck up to our parents and prove that he's the perfect son.

Frances: Well, he is a handsome, successful doctor with a beautiful fiancée.

Miguel: I know. How am I supposed to compete with that? My mother's birthday was yesterday. I bought her this really lovely necklace and her favourite chocolates.

Frances: Let me guess: Ricardo's gift was better?

Miguel: Yes, he bought her a new car. A car! I mean, c'mon. Unbelievable.

Splurge

Verb

To **splurge** on something is to spend money freely and often excessively on something that one does not necessarily need. **Splurging** is an indulgence, meaning that the person who **splurges** on something does it as a treat for themselves and that person does not usually regret the money they spent so extravagantly, either.

People often **splurge** on things like clothes, designer handbags, or expensive sports equipment. None of these things are necessary, but they bring the buyer great joy.

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

Caroline: I'm going to treat myself to a trip to Italy this summer.

Annette: That sounds absolutely amazing! And you've been working so hard. You definitely deserve it.

Caroline: I know, right? I can't wait to **splurge** on designer shoes and gelato, lots and lots of gelato.

Annette: Hearing about your plans is giving me the itch to travel, too. Maybe I'll just see how much tickets to Thailand cost.

Caroline: Do it, girl! You only live once.

Drake: Dude, those are some awesome new cleats!

Victor: Thanks, bro. I kinda **splurged** on them. They cost more than I wanted to pay for new soccer shoes, but I saw them and just had to have them.

Drake: I'm totally jealous. All the other guys are gonna be, too, when they see you on the field.

Victor: Well, they aren't exclusive or anything. I'll send you the link for the shoes later.

Drake: Thanks, man.

To make [something] stretch

Idiom

To make [something] stretch is to use something sparingly to make sure it lasts for as long as possible and that nothing is wasted. Usually the phrase **to make [something] stretch** is used with items that are expensive or hard to procure, such as money, food, or exclusive products.

In this episode, Andrew says that his mom always **made the Thanksgiving turkey stretch** for a long time after Thanksgiving. In other words, she didn't let any of the turkey go to waste; she used the leftover turkey to make lots of new dishes, such as turkey sandwiches and turkey noodle soup.

Here are a couple more examples with **to make [something] stretch**:

Diana: Ugh. There are still 7 days until payday and I only have \$20 left in the bank. Why does this always happen?

Lilly: Well, you probably didn't need that new cashmere sweater.

Diana: No, I definitely needed that.

Lilly: How about that fancy back massager?

Diana: It was cheaper than paying for my monthly massages.

Lilly: You are a shopaholic, Diana. Admit it.

Diana: Oh, definitely. But no regrets! I'll just have **to make these \$20 stretch**. A week of ramen never killed anyone!

Carter: Just so you know, we're running low on shampoo.

Victoria: Ah, all right. Use it sparingly this week. You know I have to special order it, so we'll have to **make it stretch** until the new bottle arrives.

Carter: Sounds good, sweetie. Have a good day.

Victoria: You too, darling.

Quiz

1. What is something that people are likely to splurge on?

- a) clothes
- b) designer goods
- c) a fancy meal
- d) all of the above

2. Why would one need to make money stretch?

- a) they want to make more money
- b) they want to make the money disappear
- c) they need to make the money last as long as possible
- d) they need to give the money to someone else

3. If someone does the same thing as you but does it better, then they have stolen your _____.

- a) lightening
- b) thunder
- c) idea
- d) effort

4. What is a similar word for Friendsgiving?

- a) orphans' Thanksgiving
- b) Palsgiving
- c) Home Alone
- d) potluck

5. True or false? The host prepares all the food at a potluck.

- a) true
- b) false

Writing and Discussion Questions

1. Do you have a holiday similar to Thanksgiving in your country? How and when do you celebrate it?
2. What is your favourite holiday food? How often do you eat it each year?
3. Do you have potlucks in your country? How are they organized? What kinds of dishes are popular?
4. What is something that you love to splurge on? Why?
5. Has anyone ever stolen your thunder? How? Did you do anything about it?

Quiz Answers

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

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