

## Simplified Speech #113 – Let's talk about DIY projects

### Episode description

Do you love making or fixing things on your own? You're probably a DIY enthusiast! You'll enjoy today's edition of Simplified Speech, where Andrew and Jeremy talk about do-it-yourself projects and whether or not it really is a good idea to do it yourself.

Listen and improve your English skills! You'll hear a conversation between two native English speakers as they discuss DIY projects. You'll also learn useful idiomatic expressions and phrases. This audio lesson is perfect for intermediate level English learners who want to improve and practice their English listening and comprehension.

### Fun fact

Small DIY projects are a great way to relax after a stressful day of work. Many people make these little projects their hobbies, spending their evenings embroidering, knitting, painting or crocheting.

### Expressions included in the study guide

- Underground
- DIYer
- Live with [something]
- Leave [something] in the hands of [someone]
- Learning curve



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## Transcript

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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.

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**Andrew:** Hello, everyone. I'm Andrew.

**Jeremy:** And I'm Jeremy.

**Andrew:** And this is the Culips English Podcast. Hey friends, welcome back to Culips. Today, we have a Simplified Speech episode for you all. Now Simplified Speech is the series that features clear natural conversations that are designed to help you boost and improve your English listening skills and also grow your knowledge of essential English vocabulary. And we have a study guide available for this episode for all Culips members on our website [Culips.com](http://Culips.com). It includes the transcript so you can see all of the words that we say and follow along with that transcript as you listen to Jeremy and I today. And if you want to get the study guide, just visit [Culips.com](http://Culips.com) to download it. So I'm here with Jeremy today. Jeremy, hey, what's up?

**Jeremy:** Hey there, Andrew. So in this episode, we're going to talk about DIY.

**Andrew:** DIY such an interesting topic. And I have to shout out and give thanks to one of our Instagram followers Irina Reason who suggested this topic. So Irina thank you for bringing this topic to our attention. It's a fun one and I think we're going to have a great conversation about it here today, Jeremy. So I guess we should start with breaking down DIY and explaining it. So it's an acronym and what does it stand for exactly, DIY?

**Jeremy:** Do it yourself. Do it yourself.

**Andrew:** Do it yourself, DIY. Do it yourself.

**Jeremy:** Now, I've also seen this written as do-it-yourself. I have seen it written that way before.

**Andrew:** Yeah, I think you could spell it that way, as well. But to be honest with you, most of the time, I hear people say DIY, and I also see it written as DIY. So it's a very common acronym, and a really good one to know the meaning of because it is pretty common in many different parts of life. And I guess that's what we'll get into a bit in this episode. So, Jeremy, when you hear DIY, what pops into your head? What is DIY mean to you?

**Jeremy:** Well, I think of Home Depot, and like hobby stores, like we have a place out here called JoAnn Fabrics, but they have like buttons and fabric and glue and all kinds of little things so that you can make your own art projects, or blankets or clothes or whatever you want. And Home Depot is a big home improvement store where they sell all kinds of tools and wood and supplies so that you can build your own stuff. So when I hear DIY, I think of those kind of stores.

**Andrew:** Man, I love Home Depot. For people who have never visited a Home Depot before or a home improvement store like this, it's like a huge warehouse, these stores are really big. And they're just full of all of the things that you need to improve your house to build your house or to do a renovation. So like Jeremy said, wood and lumber, power tools, that's what I really love Jeremy, is the power tool aisle.

**Jeremy:** Me too.

**Andrew:** And there's paint, there are appliances. Like you could shop for a new toilet, for example, in Home Depot if you needed to put a new toilet in your house. So lots of cool things in Home Depot. But that's really interesting that your mind goes to home improvement and building things yourself like crafting, because I have a different thing that pops into my head when I think of DIY and maybe that's because of my involvement in the music scene when I was younger, because when I think of DIY, I think of the punk subculture which was very much about doing it yourself.

So, you know, punk music is popular, but it's never reached extreme levels of popularity in the general public, right? It's a subculture for a reason. So a subculture means that a small group of people are very passionate about it, but just a small group of people. So bands in the punk music community then, they have to do everything, DIY to release their music. So recording at small home studios, pressing your own records that are independently funded, making your own art for the record, or making cassette tapes even, and then distributing it, planning tours to tour and support your music, and booking your own concerts. There is a big network across North America and Europe too of DIY communities related to punk music and indie music, or any kind of **underground** music that's not mainstream. So that is what pops into my head when I think of DIY.

**Jeremy:** That's very interesting. I would never have guessed that. I didn't know you were that into music when you were younger.

**Andrew:** Yeah, well, I played in lots of bands. And maybe why I know about this is because I did a lot of these things DIY. So my band would record and release cassettes or small records called 7 inches that we would pay just a small record company to produce for us. And we would sell them ourselves. We would make our own merchandise our own T-shirts to sell and we would sell these at our concerts. And this was just a way to keep the band alive, because we have to pay for our rehearsal space every month. So actually, a lot of indie bands and punk bands and smaller bands are very entrepreneurial they're making and selling things all the time, so that the band can keep going.

**Jeremy:** They have to be.

**Andrew:** Yes, you have to be. Let's get back to DIY. I guess I'm curious. What's your opinion on DIY? Do you think it's a good thing to do things yourself? Or is it better just to pay a professional?

**Jeremy:** Yeah, I think there is a fine line between something that a **DIYer** can do, and something that a professional should do. Now I just used the term DIYer. And this is a common thing we do in English, where we add “er” at the end of pretty much any word. And it means that that is a person or a thing that does that thing. So a buzz is a sound. And a buzzer is a thing that buzzes. Or there's play, a player is someone who plays. So this little “er” thing, we stick it on the end of pretty much any word to make a new word. So this one is no different.

So I think the fine line is drawn by how important the result is. So for example, my wife and I painted my parents house for them a number of years ago. And it was not easy. But we did it ourselves, so we were DIYers at that time. And we did a pretty good job. But if you go around and look really closely at the trim, you'll see some mistakes here and there. And a trained professional would know immediately that it was a DIYer that did it.

**Andrew:** So then what you're trying to say is that if the result is very important, you should probably hire a professional. But if you can **live with some imperfections**, then it's OK to DIY it.

**Jeremy:** Yeah, pretty much. That's my opinion. What about you, Andrew?

**Andrew:** Yeah, I think that's a good perspective. And it also depends on your budget, right? Like, if you can afford to pay for a professional then probably that's the easiest way to do it. But if you have an interest like Jeremy, if you were thinking about one day, maybe changing careers to house painting and to becoming a housepainter than a DIY project like that might give you some insight into what that kind of work is all about. So that could be helpful as well.

**Jeremy:** That's a good point, I guess. The experience is also really important too.

**Andrew:** Personally, I'm not very handy, which means I'm not very good at making things or fixing things. As much as I would love to be, I'm not very handy. So usually I try to avoid DIY projects, because I just know that I'll get frustrated, and that the results will be subpar. Not very good. And in that case, it's better to **leave things in the hands of a professional** who knows what they're doing.

**Jeremy:** Yeah, there is a reason that they are professionals. Usually, they have done that thing, hundreds or 1000s of times. And in all of my DIY projects that I've done, for the past few years, I have realized that all of the professionals made the same mistakes that I made. So really, the path to becoming a professional is a path laid by mistakes.

**Andrew:** Yeah, true. You learn through error, right? It's like anything in life, we learn how to speak English better through making mistakes when we speak English and avoiding those mistakes in the future. And we can learn how to become a better builder or painter or crafter through error when we're doing those activities as well.

OK, so Jeremy, we're almost done with this episode. But I have one last question for you before we wrap it up. And that is to outline the benefits and also negative things about DIY. So what do you think are the benefits of DIY?

**Jeremy:** I would say, one benefit is that you gain experience. And another is that it's usually fun. At least for me, it's fun to try to build something or fix something myself.

**Andrew:** Yeah, that's awesome.

**Jeremy:** But the negative side is that sometimes, if you're fixing something, you make it worse. And then you really need to hire a professional to fix it. Or sometimes the result doesn't turn out so good. And you kind of waste money and time. So I can see both sides.

**Andrew:** Yeah, for me, the benefit of DIY really is about money, it's much more affordable, usually, to do something yourself, you still have to pay for all the material, but you don't have to pay for the time of a professional, it does cost you your own time. But like you said, Jeremy, it can be a great learning experience, and can be very fun. So those are definitely some benefits that I agree with you on. And I also agree with you on the negatives, at least, you know, in my experience doing things DIY, it often ended in frustration, where I just gave up and quit because what sometimes looks easy from the outside can turn out to be very difficult when you actually try to do it, right? If you see a house painter painting a house, you might think, "Ah, I could do that anyone can do that." But then like you said, Jeremy, when you did it yourself, you see all these little mistakes that a professional wouldn't make. So I think, for me, the biggest negative is the **learning curve**, and also the frustration aspect. I'm not good at dealing with frustration, I guess.

**Jeremy:** Yeah, that is one of the things that learning languages has helped me with the most. I also easily get frustrated, when things don't work. And learning Korean and Spanish, they have both been a good place for me to practice my patience in that regard.

**Andrew:** It's very true. Learning a language is great for becoming more patient. And in a way Jeremy, you could say that all of our listeners right now who are listening on their own, not in a classroom but maybe some of you out there are listening on the bus right now or vacuuming your house and listening to us right now. This is a kind of DIY English learning, isn't it?

**Jeremy:** True. Yeah, you could say that.

**Andrew:** Yeah, you guys have gone out and found Culips and are listening to us not because somebody is forcing you to do it or not because a teacher has instructed you to do it, but because you want to improve your English on your own. So this is a kind of DIY English learning and this kind of learning, I think is awesome.

**Jeremy:** So Culips is for DIY English learners.

**Andrew:** Yeah, perfect! So Jeremy, I think we can wrap things up here for now. That was a really interesting conversation and listeners, I hope you found it fascinating as well. If you like listening to Culips and learning English with us, then please support us there are several ways that you can do that. The most helpful way is to sign up and become a Culips member on our website, Culips.com and becoming a member really supports the show and helps us to keep making these English lessons for everyone. So it is the best way to support us and you get a lot of awesome perks and benefits when you become a Culips member. All the details about those can be found on our website Culips.com. But of course, there are other ways you can support us, such as following us on social media, telling your friends who are learning English to check out Culips and

also leaving us a five-star rating and a positive review on Apple Podcasts or wherever you get your podcasts. If you have a question or comment for us, you can send us an email. Our address is [contact@culips.com](mailto:contact@culips.com). We'll be back soon with another brand new episode and we'll talk to you then. Goodbye.

**Jeremy:** Bye everyone.

## Detailed Explanations

### Underground Adjective

**Underground**, when describing entertainment or art, means it is self-produced or has a unique appeal to specific audiences. Indie and **underground** mean the same thing.

Indie and **underground** are both the opposite of mainstream. Mainstream describes something that is widely available and created by well-known producers.

In contrast, individuals and small companies make **underground** art, so it's often hard to find.

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

**Russell:** What are you listening to?

**Seth:** Christian Leave's new song.

**Russell:** Who's that?

**Seth:** He's an **underground** musician. He started on vine, then he got popular making music and posting videos to YouTube.

**Russell:** Never heard of him. He any good?

**Seth:** Yeah, his music's pretty chill. I like it.

**Reina:** Are you free this weekend?

**Su:** Yeah, what's up?

**Reina:** Want to come see this **indie** movie with me? It's supposed to be really good.

**Su:** Sure! If you can come pick me up.

**Reina:** Deal! I'll swing by at 6pm.

## **DIYer** Noun

A **DIYer** is someone who makes or repairs something themselves. In other words, they are someone who does DIY projects. You are a **DIYer** anytime you decorate or repair something in your home instead of hiring a professional to do it.

**DIYer** is said Dee-ahy-why-er – you just need to spell out the abbreviation DIY, then add “er” to make it into a noun rather than an adjective. You could also say “do it yourselfer”.

Here are a few more examples with **DIYer**:

**Sung-Hyun:** I was looking up tips on how to fix that leak in my tap. And it doesn't look as hard as I thought it would.

**Leyla:** Oh, that's good, right? You going to try to fix it yourself then?

**Sung-Hyun:** I think so. Though I'm not really a **DIYer**, so it may all go horribly wrong.

**Leyla:** If it does, give me a call. I'll want to take pictures.

**Sung-Hyun:** Haha, very funny.

**Takashi:** And this is my favourite DIY tool.

**Hunako:** It's a drill.

**Takashi:** Yup! Every serious **DIYer** should have a good, quality drill.

**Stella:** Dale, honey. Are you sure you know what you're doing?

**Dale:** Yes yes. I watched that tutorial online before I started.

**Stella:** Okay. It's just....

**Dale:** I know what I'm doing, Stella.

**Stella:** I'm just not sure re-plastering our whole living room is a job for a first-time **DIYer**.

**Dale:** It'll be fine!



## Live with [something]

Phrasal verb

**Live with [something]** means to be able to tolerate or accept something, especially if you can't change it. In this episode, for example, Andrew says "if you can **live with some imperfections**, then it's OK to DIY it." He means if you don't mind that the end result of your project is less than perfect, then you can do it yourself. As long as you can accept and tolerate the flaws.

English speakers will also use I can **live with that** to show acceptance. It means the same as "that's all right". For example, if you were discussing what to do with friends, and someone suggested an activity, you might say "I can live with that" to show that you're willing to go do the activity, but you're not really excited about it.

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

**Kanda:** I'm trying to decide between these two phones.

**Daiki:** Alright, so. They're basically the same except this one has more storage space.

**Kanda:** I really like the idea of having more storage. Means more pictures! How much more expensive is that one?

**Daiki:** It'll cost about twelve dollars more per month.

**Kanda:** I can live with that! I'll take it.

**Emmie:** I need a vacation. So let's take a week off and drive to the beach. We can stay in my parents' cottage, I've already asked.

**James:** I'd rather go overseas but if a beach getaway is all we can do right now, **I can certainly live with that.**

**Emmie:** Of course I'd rather go overseas too but this is all we can afford right now.

**James:** True. Well, we'll have fun at the beach. Make sure to thank your parents for lending us their cottage.

## Leave [something] in the hands of [someone]

### Idiom

When you **leave something in the hands of someone**, you give them control of or responsibility for it. This can be a physical action – giving an item to someone for safe keeping. Or a metaphorical action – assigning a task or job to a person.

The person who you give the item or task to is then responsible for it.

In this episode, Andrew says people who aren't very good at doing DIY projects should "**leave things in the hands of a professional**." He's suggesting that if you might not be able to do a good job at fixing or making something, then you should hire a professional instead of doing it yourself. A professional can be trusted to do a good job.

There are two ways we use this expression. The first is when using someone's job, position, or title. Or when talking about the name of an organization, company or institution. In this situation, we need to use the pattern **Leave [something] in the hands of [someone]**. For example:

Leave decision making in the hands of the manager

Leave the project in the hands of the design team

Leave security in the hands of the police

The second is when we use someone's name or refer to someone using a pronoun. In this case, we use the pattern **Leave [something] in [someone's] hands**. For example:

Leave the kids in grandma's hands

Leave the task in my hands

Leave preparing the meal in Paul's hands

Here are a couple more examples with **leave [something] in the hands of [someone]**:

**Zack:** Why were you working late last night?

**Stephen:** I was finishing that project for the director.

**Zack:** You know we don't pay for overtime. You shouldn't have stayed.

**Stephen:** You **left the entire project in my hands!** I needed to get it done so I could do my other work today!

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**Zack:** Calm down, calm down. I can help you now. Tell me what you need done.

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**Pearl:** Did you hear? Dad's retiring next month.

**Tabitha:** No way! He's so obsessed with his company, I thought he'd never retire.

**Pearl:** I know, I thought so too. But no, mom said he's ready.

**Tabitha:** Who's going to run the business?

**Pearl:** You remember that guy, Jake? He's **leaving the business in his hands**. There's going to be a transition period, I think, but yeah, it will be Jake.

**Tabitha:** Jake must be a really good businessman if dad's willing to let him run the company!

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## Learning curve

Noun

A **learning curve** is the rate at which someone learns a new skill or gains experience. It is the time and effort required to learn something difficult. The term comes from graphs made during studies done on how quickly or slowly people learn.

We often say that something that is difficult to learn has a “Steep learning curve.” Something that has a steep learning curve is very difficult to learn or will take a long time to grasp.

Here are a few more examples with **learning curve**:

**Alan:** Welcome to our product development department. We’re in the middle of a fine tuning our latest products. As you can see, things are a bit hectic.

**Josephine:** I love creative chaos! I’m so happy I can join the team.

**Alan:** That’s good to hear. There’s a bit of a **learning curve** for each product when it comes to finding what the customer wants and actually needs.

**Josephine:** This looks like it’ll be fun. I can’t wait to get started.

**Holly:** So, you took up a new hobby? I saw your pictures online.

**Takuya:** Yep! Knitting. I’ve been pretty stressed lately, and heard it’s supposed to help you relax. So I’m making a blanket for Jess’s baby.

**Holly:** That’s so sweet! How’s it going? Is it hard?

**Takuya:** Hard, not really? There’s a bit of a **learning curve**, especially when I try a new stitch or when I need to undo bits of it. But I’m getting the hang of it!

**Jeff:** How’s Hiro doing at school?

**Yuki:** I think he’s doing well. His teachers haven’t said otherwise. And Sadie? Is she back in the classroom?

**Jeff:** Yep. Everyone’s back in the school. The teachers say there will be a **steep learning curve** as they get everyone caught up on the syllabus. But I think the children are much happier this way.

## Quiz

### 1. What is a DIYer?

- a) Someone who does it with help.
- b) Someone who did it yesterday.
- c) Someone who does it themselves.
- d) Someone who hires a professional.

### 2. Sue wants to know how easily or quickly she can train for a job. What should she ask about?

- a) The learning curve.
- b) The learning line.
- c) The looming curve.
- d) The leaning tower.

### 3. Which of the following could you use to describe music, entertainment, or art that is not mainstream?

- a) Underwater
- b) Underground
- c) Underwear
- d) Underneath

### 4. If someone says, “I can live with that”, they mean:

- a) No, I disagree.
- b) I’m not sure yet.
- c) Sure, fine.
- d) I love this idea.

### 5. Which of the following would you say to tell your friend to let the expert handle it?

- a) Leave it in my hands.
- b) Leave it in the hearts of the experts.
- c) Leave it in the feet of the experts.
- d) Leave it in the hands of the experts.

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## Writing and Discussion Questions

1. Are you a DIYer? Why or why not?
2. Describe a time you made a mistake on a project (DIY or otherwise), where you thought, “well, I can live with that!” Is that mistake still there?
3. Have you ever fixed or made something then realized that you should have left it in the hands of a professional? What was it and why did you decide to try it yourself?
4. What was something you felt had a learning curve, and why?
5. Which artists or entertainers do you like? Would any of them be considered underground artists?

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## Quiz Answers

1.c    2.a    3.b    4.c    5.d

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### Episode credits

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