

## Simplified Speech #117 – Let's catch up

### Episode description

In this Simplified Speech episode, Andrew and Kassy decide to catch up and share recent news about their personal lives. Andrew is on his way to getting his Korean driver's licence, and Kassy is going to supervise the SATs—an exam she took not too long ago—as a teacher!

In this episode, our hosts discuss the importance of pulling it together during moments of stress, of keeping at a task until you succeed, and of reading as many books as you can. Join Andrew and Kassy as they chew the fat!

### Fun fact

In this episode, Kassy says she will soon supervise the SAT for Korean students. Have you heard of this exam? Have you taken it? The SAT is a standardized test used in the United States to assess how ready high school students are for college. It is very influential. Every year, more than 2.19 million high school graduates choose to take this exam!

### Expressions included in the study guide

- To catch up with [someone]
- To chew the fat
- A big ask
- To have [something] in the bag
- Third time's a charm
- To pull it together



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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 there, everyone. My name's Andrew.

**Kassy:** And I'm Kassy.

**Andrew:** And this is the Culips English Podcast.

Hello there, friends. Welcome back to Culips. You are listening to Simplified Speech, the Culips series that features clear, natural, and easy-to-understand conversations about fascinating topics. And today I am joined by Kassy. Hey there, Kassy.

**Kassy:** Hey, Andrew.

**Andrew:** And Kassy we have an interesting topic for today's Simplified Speech episode. What are we going to do today?

**Kassy:** Today we **are just catching up**. We're going to talk about what's going on in our lives. And, yeah, that's it.

**Andrew:** All right. Sounds fun. So, Kassy, the reason why I want to do this today, just to chat and **catch up**, is that some of my friends recently started a podcast. And each week they release an episode. And the episode has a specific topic where they talk about mythology and fables, actually. But before they start talking about one of their fables, they just take 5 to 10 minutes **to chew the fat** and talk about what's been happening in their lives over the past week. And I find that to be one of the most interesting parts of their podcasts. So I thought it would be fun for us to give it a try and do it here on Simplified Speech as well.

**Kassy:** Sounds great. I'm looking forward to it.

**Andrew:** Perfect. But before we do that, I do want to let everyone know about the study guide for this episode. Guys, there's a study guide for this episode, and it's available for all Culips members. Following along with the guide while you listen is one of the best ways to study with us. And by becoming a Culips member, you'll be able to support Culips and keep allowing us to make English lessons for people all over the world. There are also a bunch of other extras that you get when you become a member. So sign up and get the guide by visiting [Culips.com](http://Culips.com).

**Kassy:** And before we begin the podcast, we'd also like to give a shout-out to Jumpforest, who left us a five-star rating and a positive review on Apple Podcasts.

Jumpforest wrote “Fantastic podcast. Thank you for your big work. I love listening to it every day. Regards from Poland.”

**Andrew:** Awesome. So thank you for that great review, Jumpforest. And, everyone, leaving a positive review and a five-star rating on Apple Podcasts, or whatever platform you use to listen to Culips, helps more English learners around the globe find Culips and learn English with us. So even if you leave just a short one-word review, we’d really appreciate it.

And with that being said Kassy, I think it’s time to get started with this episode. So let’s **get caught up**.

**Kassy:** Yes. Actually, Andrew, I think our first topic we should talk about is something I’m really curious about. A few weeks ago, you tried out for your driver’s licence, and I want to hear how it went.

**Andrew:** Yeah. So, Kassy, we usually record together on Fridays. That’s kind of when we get together to record new Culips episodes is every Friday. But a couple of weeks ago, I messaged you and said, oh, Kassy, I can’t meet at our regular time, because I have an appointment to do my driver’s licence. And this is something that I’ve been wanting to do for a long time but have just been putting it off and putting it off. Finally, my girlfriend has been really pushing me to get my licence because we recently got a dog.

**Kassy:** You got a dog, Andrew? Oh my gosh, what kind of dog?

**Andrew:** Yeah, we adopted a dog about 3 months ago now. His name is Pinky. I think I’ve talked about him on Culips in the Fluency Files series and on our monthly livestreams for Culips members. So if you’re a Culips member, you’ll know about Pinky. But if you are not a Culips member, maybe this is the first time that you’re hearing about him, just like Kassy. I thought I told you, Kassy, but I must have not.

**Kassy:** I had no idea.

**Andrew:** Yeah, so we adopted Pinky around 3 months ago. He is just a mutt, kind of a mix of many different breeds of dog. We’re not really sure, but he’s a medium-sized, kind of poodle-ly looking dog. He’s very cute. And we adopted him from a shelter. He’s a grandpa, he’s around 12 years old. But it’s been awesome to have him. My girlfriend and I really love having him around. And it’s been a wonderful change in our lives having him with us.

But because now we have Pinky, we realized we're really limited in where we can go. You know, we used to like to visit a different city for the weekends or go to the beach or go to the mountain for the day. But we can't just leave Pinky at home for the weekend. And it's annoying to ask our friends all the time, like, hey, can you take care of our dog for the weekend? That's a **big ask** and something we don't really want to impose on our friends too often. And plus, we'd miss Pinky, we wouldn't feel happy if we left for the weekend and he was just at home or not with us. So because of this, I finally got that external motivation, that push to get my driver's licence, because if I have a car, then we can all drive together as one big happy family without any problems.

**Kassy:** Yeah, that's really great. However, I'm really curious because I've heard that getting your licence in Korea is not easy. I have my licence, but I was able to just exchange it, my US one, for a Korean one. But you went through the whole testing process, correct?

**Andrew:** Yeah. So if you're a foreigner living in South Korea, like Kassy and I are, there are two routes to getting a driver's licence. And the first one is just to simply trade your driver's licence from your home country and getting a Korean driver's licence, which is like what you did, Kassy.

However, my Canadian driver's licence has expired. I've been out of the country for too long. So it expired and I thought, hey, I could just go back to Canada and renew it. So last time I was in Canada that's what I tried to do. I tried to renew my licence. But they said, no, you can't do it, because you are not a resident of Canada anymore.

So there's no other option for me then to start at square one and go through the whole driving examination process here in Korea, which I am 75% of the way done so far. The first thing you have to do is sign up and take a short 1-hour class about driving safety, which was a whole big ordeal to take because I am not a Korean person, I am a foreigner. And that made things more complicated, but I finally got that done. And it was OK.

And then you have to do a written test. So I did the written test, passed that no problem. The next step is to do a driving test on a closed course. And, really, it's just testing to make sure that you know how to operate a car and do the basic maneuvers like, you know, turn on the blinkers and turn on the windshield wipers and reverse and you just have to go around this course. Now this is a notoriously hard driving test. And I saw on the internet that the failure rates is around 80%.

**Kassy:** 80% failure rate?

**Andrew:** 80% failure rates. Yes.

**Kassy:** Oh my gosh.

**Andrew:** So when I messaged you, Kassy, a couple of weeks ago to postpone our podcast recording session, that's what I had to do. I had to go do my driving test on the closed circuit. So I guess I was a little bit underprepared. I've been a driver for a long time. I drove in Canada for like a decade, I've driven across North America on road trips. I thought this is gonna be a piece of cake. I **got it in the bag**. No problem. But I failed it.

**Kassy:** Overconfident Andrew.

**Andrew:** Yeah, I was overconfident. It's a little bit nerve-wracking because you have a GPS that is talking to you and telling you to do certain maneuvers and you have to follow the manoeuvres. However, there are only about 50% of the manoeuvres that are dictated to you. And the other ones you just have to memorize, you have to know in advance where to do them and the timing that you should do them in. And I didn't know about those.

So I failed to do some things that were really basic, like turn on my blinker at certain parts of the test, and because of that I failed. So that was a little bit frustrating. And, really, I don't mind failing. But the most difficult thing about that experience is wasting time, because the driving licence testing centre here in Seoul is extremely busy and if you fail your test, you have to wait like a month before you can redo it again, because all of the appointments are booked up. So I had to wait a month. But, Kassy, this morning, I went back and I passed the test.

**Kassy:** Congratulations.

**Andrew:** Thank you. So on the second time, the **second time was the charm**. And now I only have one more test to pass. I have to do a road test, a driving test with the instructor where I go and drive through the streets of Seoul. I'll be doing that in about 3 weeks. And if I pass that, fingers crossed that I do, then I'll be able to drive here in Korea, and all around the world, actually. So that's what's going on in my life, getting my driver's licence.

**Kassy:** That's great. Do you know if the pass rate for the driving part of the driving test is, as, you know, horrible as the simulation part of the test?

**Andrew:** I don't think so. And I realized maybe why the failure rate is so high. It was kind of funny being at the driving licence office, because all of the people there that were doing the test with me were like 17 and 18 years old. And then I'm like this old guy doing it with them. That was pretty funny. But just watching some of the other people do the test. They were like, terrible. It seemed like they had never been in a car before. You know, they just passed the written exam. And I think many students just hopped into the car to try and pass it right away. They're, like, let's get this done and get my licence as soon as possible. But they didn't really know how to manipulate the car.

So I think that's why people fail so often. I think once you do pass the closed circuit driving course test, then you get your learner's licence. So now I have my learner's licence. And I can actually go drive legally on the streets. And so once people pass the first test, they get their learner's licence, then they can go and get real driving experience. They can go to driving school, and they can learn how to drive and study for the road test. So I think the pass rate of the road test is probably much higher. It's probably only like a 30 or 40% failure rate, which is still high, but more optimistic than 80% failure rate.

**Kassy:** Yeah, well, that's great news. Hearing your story, I'm very happy that I just exchanged my licence. Didn't do the whole process.

**Andrew:** Yeah. I don't know why but today, when I was doing the exam, I was really nervous all of a sudden. My heart was, like, beating really quickly. You know, I'm a runner. So I think I'm pretty in tune with my heartbeat. Like, I have a running watch and I check my heartbeat all of the time. And so I know what a high heart rate is like. Like, if I go running really hard my heartbeat will be like 170, 180 beats per minute. And it was up there at, like, the same beats per minute getting ready to do this driving exam. I was laughing at myself. Like, why am I so nervous to do this? But I was able **to pull it together** and get it done. So I'm relieved about that.

**Kassy:** Yeah, I think that's actually a good segue into something that's happening in my life. Tomorrow, actually, I am proctoring the SATs.

**Andrew:** Proctoring. What does that mean, proctoring?

**Kassy:** Proctoring is when students take the SATs, which is a really important standardized test that is necessary to get into a university in the States, in America. And I think it's related to this heartbeat thing you were talking about earlier, because I've noticed how different it is in the teacher role of SAT day versus as a student on SAT day. I remember as a student, I was panicked. You know, like, just like you before the test, my heart's racing, I'm, got the shakes in my hands. But as a teacher, I'm, like, OK, show up 5 minutes before the test. Get out my paper I gotta read and pass out some pencils, you know?

**Andrew:** I know exactly what you mean because, as an English teacher, I do speaking tests with my students. And I've also had to do speaking tests for different things in the past as a student when I attended Korean language school. And I had to do a Korean speaking test also to get a visa from the immigration office. So I know what it's like to be on the receiving end of a speaking test. However, when I'm giving a speaking test to my students, I feel totally relaxed. It's totally fine. You know, it's very chill for me. But the students are nervous, right? You can see them being antsy and stressed out. So I totally get what you're saying.

**Kassy:** Yeah, it feels almost like a power trip being the proctor, the teacher during this momentous time in these children's lives. I don't feel old enough to be the proctor. It feels like yesterday I was taking it. But it's definitely an interesting experience.



**Andrew:** So you have to just make sure that the students follow the rules and don't cheat and that kind of thing. Is that what your responsibility is?

**Kassy:** Yeah, it's actually incredibly boring. The test is about 4 hours. So I have to be there the whole time, watching to make sure there's nobody, like, taking a peek at, you know, the next student's desk or next student's paper or, you know, have some sort of weird spy pen recording answers. Kids are smart and devious these days, Andrew, you have to watch out.

**Andrew:** Yeah, no doubt. And I know with technology, it's getting even more and more difficult. There are so many little Bluetooth earbuds or something that you could wear and people could be telling you the answers from outside the classroom. Have you ever caught anybody cheating?

**Kassy:** I did catch one boy bubbling in answers for a previous section when you're not supposed to go back. I was allowed to give one warning, though, so I didn't have to send someone out of the room, thank goodness. That would be terrible.

**Andrew:** Kassy, another thing that you mentioned just before we started recording that I want to talk with you a bit about before we finish here is a book challenge that you're doing this year. It sounded so interesting. And I didn't know what a voracious reader you are. We are recording this episode in the middle of March. And, Kassy, you told me that this year you've already read, how many books was it, almost 30 books?

**Kassy:** Yeah, about 23 books.

**Andrew:** Twenty-three books. So that is almost two books a week. That's incredible. You are quite the reader.

**Kassy:** Yeah. It's my goal to read at least 100 books this year. And I really think I can do it.

**Andrew:** A hundred books a year. Wow. Yeah, I'm curious, how much time do you spend every day reading? You must read for an hour or two, at least, every day?

**Kassy:** Yeah, I probably read 2 hours a day. And then if I have time, like, a big stretch of 4 or 5 hours, I read, I don't watch TV. And I haven't been able to go to a lot of places because of, you know, COVID and various things. So reading is just my hobby, my obsession.

**Andrew:** Nice. So I imagine that you use an e-reader if you're blowing through that amount of books.

**Kassy:** Yes, I have a Kindle Fire, which is probably my most prized possession right now, yes.

**Andrew:** Nice. And you can hook a Kindle right up to amazon.com and just download the books right to the Kindle e-reader. So it's pretty easy, right?

**Kassy:** Yeah. And if you have a subscription to Amazon's Unlimited library, I think it's about \$10 a month, there's access to millions of books about any topic, even kids' books. Like, self-help, philosophy, fantasy, everything you could imagine. And I'm also a member of two free online digital libraries.

**Andrew:** Nice. So what is the best book that you've read so far this year?

**Kassy:** That's a tough one.

**Andrew:** Because they're all good?

**Kassy:** Almost all of them. There was one real stinker. But this actually surprised me the most. My favourite book this year is by a really obscure indie author. An indie author is someone who self-publishes through Amazon and they have to do everything themselves, find an editor, find someone to design the covers, everything is self-published. And this author is called Kate Stradling. I hope I pronounce her last name correctly. And she writes just really well-written fantasy novels. And not hardcore fantasy like Lord of the Rings but, like, single books, not series, that have you know, very simple, clean, easy-to-understand story that just pulls me away into a different world for a couple of hours. And I've read four of her books this year, and each of them was such a delight.

**Andrew:** Well, Kassy, I think we should wrap things up here. That was fun **to catch up with you** for a bit there and learn about your reading challenge and your proctoring challenge. And I hope everybody enjoyed hearing about my driver's licence saga, as well.

So, everyone, if you enjoyed this kind of episode, please send us a message and let us know if you'd like to hear more of these just daily conversations and **catching up** about our real lives. We can definitely do that if you would like us to. So just shoot us an email. Our email address is [contact@Culips.com](mailto:contact@Culips.com) and let us know.

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So we will end things here. Thank you for listening, everyone. We'll be back soon with another brand-new episode and we'll talk to you then. Goodbye.

**Kassy:** Bye.

## Detailed Explanations

### To catch up with [someone]

Idiom

At the beginning of their conversation, Andrew shares that the purpose of this episode is **to catch up with each other**. They want to know what is going on in each other's lives. Usually you want **to catch up with [someone]** because you haven't seen them in a while. Since the last time you saw them, a lot of things might have happened that you didn't know about. Kassy didn't know about Andrew's new dog and his driver's licence story. Now that she knows, she is all **caught up**.

A common variation of **to catch up with [someone]** is saying **let's catch up**. You can say this when you meet someone you haven't seen in a while but don't have time **to catch up** in the moment. Saying **let's catch up** is making plans for a future chat.

Here are a couple more examples with **to catch up with [someone]**:

**Harry:** Did you get to bump into your ex Richard at the wedding?

**Jessie:** I did, but only briefly. It's too bad. I really wanted **to catch up with him**.

**Harry:** That would have been interesting. It wouldn't be too hard for me to find his number for you.

**Jessie:** Oh, that's OK. We've both moved on. Maybe we'll meet again at some other wedding.

**Mary:** I'm so glad we had the opportunity to chat today.

**Phyllis:** Me too. It was fun **catching up with you**.

**Mary:** Thanks. But like I said, I have an appointment at 4:00 so I have to get going.

**Phyllis:** We should meet up again soon.

**Mary:** For sure. I feel like we have much more **catching up** to do. I'll text you.

## To chew the fat Phrase

In this episode, Andrew mentions a new podcast his friends have been recording. Each of their episodes has a specific topic. But before they begin exploring their topic, they **chew the fat**. **To chew the fat** is to engage in small talk. It can also mean to have a long and informal conversation, especially with friends.

The origin of **to chew the fat** is unclear. However, most theories mention the idea of sitting around and talking while chewing on some kind of fatty substance. Your mouth's movement while chewing something is also similar to when you are speaking.

Here are a couple more examples with **to chew the fat**:

**Glenda:** What did you do last night?

**Suzy:** I hung out with Patty.

**Glenda:** Cool. Did you do anything special?

**Suzy:** Not really. We went to a coffee shop and **chewed the fat** for a few hours. It was fun. You should come with us next time.

**Kirk:** I'm nervous. This is my first meeting with the new boss.

**Paula:** Don't worry. I know her well. She's pretty relaxed.

**Kirk:** Are you sure?

**Paula:** For sure. In fact, she usually starts every meeting by **chewing the fat** for a few minutes before doing anything official. Get ready to talk about yourself.

**Kirk:** Oh no! I have to make small talk? Now I'm even more nervous.

## A big ask

Phrase, informal

In this episode, Andrew says one of the reasons he wanted a driver's licence is to have more freedom to move around the country. Since he has a new dog, he finds it **a big ask** of friends to take care of his dog while he and his girlfriend travel to another city. **A big ask** is asking someone for a big favour. This phrase changes the verb to ask into a noun, ask. It is a common phrase, but it is also an informal one.

Here are a couple more examples with **a big ask**:

**Victor:** Are you busy this weekend?

**Ahmed:** Um, you know I'm never busy on weekends. I feel like you're going to make me do something.

**Victor:** Ha! Yeah. I'm sorry if this is too much of **a big ask**, but can you help me move some furniture? I'm getting rid of some old dressers and they're pretty heavy.

**Ahmed:** Will there be pizza?

**Victor:** Of course.

**Ahmed:** Then I'm in!

**Gary:** I'm thinking about asking my in-laws for a loan so that we can buy a house. What do you think?

**Luka:** That's **a big ask**. Are you that close to them?

**Gary:** We're very close. And they've already mentioned that if ever we needed money, they could help.

**Luka:** Then go for it.

**Gary:** I know, I know. I just feel a little uncomfortable about it.

## To have [something] in the bag Idiom

Before his first attempt at passing his driving test, Andrew thought he **had it in the bag** because he already had so much driving experience. **To have [something] in the bag** is to be certain you will succeed at something. You have already done enough to succeed, whether it is studying or your past achievements. For example, if your team has a large points lead and the match is almost over, you can say you **have the game in the bag**.

Think of trying to capture some small wild animal, like a snake or a rabbit. The hard part is getting it into the bag. Once it is safely captured in the bag, you are confident that the job is as good as finished. Unfortunately for Andrew, he did not **have it in the bag** because he failed his driving test the first time he took it.

A common variation is to say **you got [something] in the bag**.

Here are a couple more examples with **to have [something] in the bag**:

**Jimmy:** I'm sorry I'm late. Oh no. It looks like I missed most of the game. How are we doing?

**Trey:** It's 4 goals to 2, and there are only a couple of minutes left.

**Jimmy:** Awesome!

**Trey:** We **have the game in the bag**. Where do you want to go to celebrate?

**Heath:** I'm going for a follow-up job interview today. Wish me luck.

**Iona:** You don't need luck. You've **got this in the bag**.

**Heath:** You think so?

**Iona:** Of course. They asked you for a second interview, didn't they? Anyways, good luck! Tell me all about it later.

## Third time's a charm

### Idiom

When Andrew talks about passing his driver's test on the second try, he jokingly says **second time's a charm**. It is a joke because the common form of the expression is **third time's a charm**. **Third time's a charm** means that you succeeded on your third try.

There are unlimited variations on this expression, because you can put any number at the beginning. As a joke, you can say something like **twelfth time's a charm** if you have only managed to succeed on your twelfth attempt.

**Third time's the charm** is also a common variation.

Here are a couple more examples with **third time's a charm**:

**Jill:** Were you able to book the hotel you wanted for your vacation?

**Mako:** It wasn't easy, but, yes, I did.

**Jill:** That's great. How many times did you try booking that hotel?

**Mako:** Three times.

**Jill:** **Third time's a charm.**

**Mako:** If at first you don't succeed, try, try again.

**Ryan:** Have you passed your real estate agent's test yet?

**Cole:** Not yet. I failed again.

**Ryan:** Again? How many times is it now?

**Cole:** This last time was number seven.

**Ryan:** Seven times? Maybe you should give up.

**Cole:** No way. I've got a good feeling about the next time. You know what they say, **eighth time's a charm.**

**Ryan:** Nobody says that!



## To pull it together

### Idiom

In this episode, Andrew talks about how nervous he was during his driver's test. Fortunately, he was able **to pull it together** and pass the test. **To pull it together** is to calm oneself down and to think more clearly.

If your thoughts are all over the place, it is a good idea **to pull them all together** so that you can concentrate. The same can be said about your emotions. Another way of saying the same thing is **to compose yourself** or **to collect yourself**.

You can also tell someone **to pull yourself together** if you feel they're not doing well and need to go back on the right path in life.

Here are a couple more examples with **to pull it together**:

**Nathan:** Congratulations on running your first marathon!

**Laura:** Thanks. It wasn't easy.

**Nathan:** Did you hit the wall?

**Laura:** Totally. I wanted to stop so badly.

**Nathan:** What did you do?

**Laura:** I told myself **to pull it together** and that I would be so proud myself if I kept going on. I just needed to concentrate and put one foot in front of the other.

**John:** I'm so tired of this job. I think I'm going to quit.

**Paul:** Don't quit now. You only need to work half a year longer to receive so many more benefits.

**John:** I know. But I'm sick of working here.

**Paul:** **Pull yourself together.** Take it day by day. Trust me, those benefits will last you a lifetime.

## Quiz

**1. Which of the following is the most common?**

- a) second time's a charm
- b) third time's a charm
- c) seventh time's a charm
- d) hundredth time's a charm

**2. True or false? You are pretty confident if you have something in the bag.**

- a) true
- b) false

**3. Which of the following questions is a good example of a big ask?**

- a) Can you water my plants tomorrow?
- b) Can you please turn your music down a little?
- c) Can you lend me enough money to buy a new car?
- d) Would it be OK if I called you later today?

**4. What are you NOT trying to do if you are trying to pull it together?**

- a) to get excited
- b) to calm down
- c) to concentrate
- d) to compose yourself

**5. What are you doing if you are chewing the fat?**

- a) eating a hamburger
- b) having a quick meeting with your boss about an important project
- c) biting your fingernails
- d) having a long, casual conversation with your friend

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## Writing and Discussion Questions

1. Right now, who is someone you would really like to catch up with?
2. Who is your favourite person to chew the fat with?
3. When is the last time someone has come to you with a big ask?
4. How easy is it for you to pull it together during stressful moments?
5. Do you have a driver's licence? How many tries did it take for you to succeed in getting it? Was it stressful?
6. If you don't have a driver's licence, why not?

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## Quiz Answers

1. b   2. a   3. c   4. a   5. d

### Episode credits

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