

Simplified Speech #124 – What's new with Kassy and Andrew

Episode description

Ever wonder what life is like for our podcast hosts when they're away from the mic? Well, you're in luck! In this Simplified Speech episode, Andrew and Kassy catch up and swap tales of the exciting things that have recently happened in their lives.

Simplified Speech episodes are designed to help you improve your English listening and speaking skills. Two native English speakers will have a natural conversation using clear and easy to understand language.

Fun fact

Studies have shown that catching up with your friends is good for your mental health. Adults with strong social support are less likely to have significant health problem and are likely to live longer.

Expressions included in the study guide

- Amigos/amigas
- Run-down
- Creature comforts
- To jump through hoops
- Ballpark
- Connections



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 there, everyone. My name's Andrew.

Kassy: And I'm Kassy.

Andrew: And this is the Culips English Podcast.

Hey, friends. Welcome back to Culips. This is Simplified Speech, the Culips series that features clear and easy to understand conversations between native English speakers. And we hope that by listening to this series, you can improve your English listening and speaking skills. And today, I'm joined by my cohost, Kassy. Hey there, Kassy. How's it going?

Kassy: Hey, Andrew, I'm doing great. And today, we're going to be doing another catch-up episode. Exciting.

Andrew: That's right. So over the last couple of months, I suppose, Kassy, maybe it's been 2 or 3 months now, we get together and instead of talking about a specific topic, like we usually do in the Simplified Speech series. Instead, we just catch up and chat about what's happening in our everyday lives. And that's what we're gonna do here today. And we've got some big updates for everyone, some exciting things happening in our lives. So that should be fun to talk about, Kassy.

But before we do that, I want to let everyone know about the transcript and study guide that's available for this episode for all Culips members. Following along with a study guide while you listen is one of the best ways to study with us. And by becoming a Culips member, you'll support us and keep allowing us to make English lessons for people all over the world. And there are also a bunch of other extras that you'll get when you become a member. So to become a member and to get the study guide, just visit Culips.com.

Kassy: And before we get started, we also wanted to give a shout-out to one of our listeners, Mahdie from Canada, who left us a nice comment and a five-star review on Apple Podcasts. Mahdie wrote "Perfect podcasts ♡. I have learned many new words. Keep it up 👍."

Andrew: Well, we sure will, Mahdie. Thanks for that very nice review. And, listeners, if you could help us out by leaving a positive review and a five-star rating on Apple Podcasts or whatever platform you use to listen to Culips, that will help more English learners around the world find us and learn English with us. So even leaving just a short, one-word review is very helpful and we'd appreciate it a lot.

So with all of that out of the way, Kassy, I think it's time to start our catch-up chat. And let's do it. So, Kassy, what's new with you?

Kassy: Well, Andrew, I have two more weeks left of school. The school year is winding down. And I'm really excited for it to be over, because this year I am going to America to visit my family.

Andrew: Awesome. So for people who don't know, Kassy and I, we live overseas, away from our home countries. I'm from Canada. Kassy's from the States. And Kassy's a teacher. Teachers, of course, have a summer vacation. And so you'll be going back home during the summer vacation, Kassy.

Kassy: Yeah, and this is actually a really special trip. My family actually lives around the world. I live in South Korea, my aunt and cousins live in Sweden, my grandma and parents live in Pennsylvania, and my sister and aunt live in Oregon. You know, we're spread out all over. And last year, we were planning to all meet for, like, a family reunion beach trip, but then COVID hit and our plans were cancelled. But it looks like COVID restrictions have lifted just enough that we should be able to all meet this year instead.

Andrew: That's great. I'm sure you're really looking forward to it. By the way, when was the last time you saw your family?

Kassy: I went back to the US, oh, two Octobers ago. So it hasn't quite been 2 years. But I have not been in the same place with both of my sisters in 5 years. Five years, Andrew.

Andrew: That's a long time.

Kassy: So long.

Andrew: And I know you guys are really tight, right?

Kassy: Yes, that's right. I've met them each separately on my last few trips back home, but never the three of us together. The three **amigos** joined together once again. **Amigas**, we're ladies.

Andrew: So what are you planning to do? What kinds of things will you do when you're back home?

Kassy: Well, the first stop is our beach trip. We're going to the Outer Banks, which is a beach on the east coast that my family has been going to for generations, actually. Yeah. It seems boring going to the same exact place every year. But no, it's magic.

Andrew: Do you always stay in the same place? Like maybe you have a cabin that you stay at or the same hotel or something or a friend's place?

Kassy: Yeah, we actually stay at this really wonky, **run-down** motel kind of place. Like it has cockroaches sometimes. It is not nice. But we love it.

Andrew: It's got more character than charm.

Kassy: Yes, that's right. And it's right on the beach. And it's cheap, which—our family likes to go for 3 weeks, 3-week beach trip, it's pricey. Most people can't do that. And so we're willing to, you know, give up our **creature comforts** for, you know, a long trip.

Andrew: Well, I guess if you're at the beach, you probably don't need to spend too much time in the hotel other than sleeping, right? So it's a fair trade-off.

Kassy: Yeah, that's right. So we love it.

Andrew: Nice. Now, I have to ask, Kassy, about what it's going to be like to travel during COVID times. I know in the USA, things seem to pretty much be back to normal from what I can tell, talking to some of my American friends. And right now it's the hockey playoffs. And I was watching an ice hockey game this morning that was happening in New York City. And the stadium was filled with fans. And nobody was wearing a mask and everybody was cheering. And I thought, wow, it's back to normal life in the States. So are there any special precautions or anything you need to take to travel back home?

Kassy: Yeah, that's right. So my family in the States are totally fine. They can travel wherever pretty much. But myself and my family in Sweden are kind of in a tough spot because vaccinations haven't rolled out in a significant number yet, you know. Only a small percent of the population in South Korea and Sweden have been vaccinated so far. And there's also a lot of **hoops that I have to jump through**, specifically, because I want to come back to Korea after my vacation.

Andrew: OK. So travelling to the USA is no problem. But after, if you want to re-enter Korea, then there are some precautions that you need to take.

Kassy: Yeah, you need to get a specific document from the office of immigration telling them a **ballpark** of when you want to come back, a certain range. And you need an antigen test before you go to the States and you need a negative PCR COVID test when you come back to Korea. And I also need to quarantine for 2 weeks in Korea even if I get the vaccine when I'm in the US, which I plan to do.

Andrew: So although you'll be vaccinated, you still need to quarantine for 2 weeks. So I guess that makes sense. I understand why Korea wants to keep the country safe. We've gone through a lot here. And I completely understand that rule.

The good news is, Kassy, when we record Culips, we usually do it from our own homes. So even if you're in quarantine, we can still record and make Culips episodes for everyone.

Kassy: That's right, we'll relieve me from some of the boredom.

Andrew: Yeah, you might, you might be bored that week. So maybe we could release a bonus episode or something.

Kassy: Yeah, but I think that's the biggest catch-up on my end. How about you, Andrew? Let's move on over to your side of things.

Andrew: Yeah. Well, it's been just a busy time. You know, as we talked about recently, my wedding just happened and getting prepped for the wedding and doing that was a really busy time. And I had a couple of weeks of downtime, and now it's busy again because I'm getting ready to move.

So my wife and I will be moving in together. It kind of feels weird because we're married, but our apartment wasn't ready for us. So we couldn't move into it right after the wedding. So we've been living separately, but we're getting ready to move into the new place together in just under 2 weeks. So it's going to be a busy time getting prepped for the move. This is actually kind of a funny situation, because I'm going to have to get rid of a lot of things.

Kassy: Why?

Andrew: Well, usually, you know, when you move, you pack up all your stuff and you bring it with you, right? But my wife has a lot better stuff than I do. I've been living like a bachelor, kind of, you know, like, I've got a frying pan, but it's just a cheap frying pan. And I've got, you know, some cutlery and cups and stuff, but they're just kind of cheap cutlery and cheap cups. So she said, yeah, just toss it all out and we'll use my stuff because it's much better. And I agreed.

So, instead of packing, I'm more like getting rid of things, trying to sell some furniture. And, you know, we have a lot of duplicates of things since we're both, you know, in our mid 30s. We have, like, all of the household items that you need already. So, yeah, just getting rid of all the duplicates. And like I said, most of the things that we have, she has a better one. So I'm getting rid of my things.

But interestingly enough, Kassy, this is the first time that I'm moving into a place that is empty, in terms of it having no appliances. So there's no fridge, there's no stove, no air conditioners, no washing machine, no dryer. All of these big appliances don't come with the new place. So we have been shopping around for appliances. It's like a very new experience for me. I've never had to buy a fridge or anything before. So, actually, last week, we spent all last week appliance shopping, and it's overwhelming.

Kassy: Do you go to a store to browse, or do you go to a store and then buy online? Or what has been your method?

Andrew: Yeah, so we had a **connection** to someone who works at an appliance store, through a family friend. And they said, oh, you know, since you're setting up your new home and you're buying all of your appliances at once, we can probably get you a deal if you go talk to this guy.

So we went and visited him last weekend at this appliance store. And he showed us all around and suggested appliances that would be a good fit for us. Because, of course, I know absolutely nothing about washing machines and air conditioners and stuff. So, yeah, we selected all the things that we wanted. And we sat down with him and we added everything up. And we talked about payment plans and delivery and everything.

And then at the end, just before we agreed to kind of buy everything, he was, like, kind of in a low voice, like, hey, guys, I think you should buy it on the internet, you can find it cheaper at a different store. He said, take this, just go home, search for everything on the internet, you could probably find it cheaper. He's, like, I just want to help you out, tell you the truth. We're, like, whoa, really?

Kassy: Oh my gosh, he just lost an amazing sale there.

Andrew: Yeah, well, I guess he wasn't the owner of the store. He was just a salesman there. I mean, I'm sure he lost out on a commission. But since he was a family friend, he wanted to help us out more than to get our money. So that was very kind of him. We did spend, like, several hours at that store. So I felt kind of bad about that. But, yeah, so that's what we're going to try and do, I think. This weekend, we're planning to go to another appliance store, a rival appliance store, and check out their prices. But if there's not a significant discount there, then we'll just buy everything online.

Kassy: Yeah, my friend actually moved into a place that was not furnished a couple months ago and she tried to lower the costs by buying used. But she said that, you know, by the time you pay for moving fees, cleaning fees, repairing if there's a small fix, something that needs fixed, like, it's almost the same price as new. So I think it's definitely a better route to, you know, shop in a store and then get it online like you're doing.

Andrew: Another fun thing that we bought was a mattress. And we went to the mattress showroom. And there's just, you know, hundreds of beds in this big showroom and you get to lie on each bed and try and find the perfect mattress for you. So that was actually really fun. Like, just jumping on the bed, ah, this one's too soft. Jump on the next bed, ah, this one's too hard. Just try all of these different options until we found the perfect mattress.

So we selected a mattress but that's pretty much the only thing that we have now. Everything else we'll have to buy and hopefully we can do that soon because, yeah, we have to move in, like I said, in just under 2 weeks, and it could be hard to live in a house with no fridge and other appliances. I don't know how long I could do that for.

Kassy: Yeah. So are you storing the mattress at one of your current places or?

Andrew: Well, we bought it, but we arranged for the delivery to come later.

Kassy: Ah, I understand.

Andrew: Yeah, they'll deliver it. So, yeah, in a couple of weeks, I'll be doing, hopefully for the last time in a long time, the activity that I hate the most in the world, and that is moving. Although, Kassy, did I tell you the new place is just directly across the street from where I'm living now.

Kassy: It's literally directly across the street?

Andrew: Yeah, it's across the street, it's on the same street. It's not directly across, it's maybe 50 metres down. So it's 50 metres across the street, but exactly the same street. So I think I won't have to, you know, bother my friends to help me with moving. Usually I have to do that. I have to beg my friends. Could you please help me move? I'll buy you pizza and beer after. We'll chill out. But this time since A) I'm getting rid of so many things and B) it's so close and C) we take possession of the new place in the middle of the month and I have until the end of the month before I have to leave my old place, so I can do it slowly over the final 2 weeks of the month. I think because of all these reasons, it's gonna be a pretty smooth move, I hope.

Kassy: The big question, Andrew. Is there enough space for all of yours and your wife's plants?

Andrew: Yeah, thankfully, the new place that we're moving into has a veranda. So it's almost going to be like a greenhouse, I think. We do have a lot of plants, especially my wife has a lot of plants. But if we need to downsize, we can. But I think we'll make it work. It should be a nice little getaway, almost. Like, I'm envisioning waking up in the morning and sitting on the veranda among all the plants and having a coffee in the sunlight. At least that's the dream. We'll see how it works out.

Kassy: Wow. I'll have to come visit sometime so I can see it.

Andrew: Yeah, absolutely. Next time you're in town, we'll have you over. Maybe we'll have like a little housewarming party or something. But, Kassy, for now I think we should wrap things up here.

Kassy: Sounds good.

Andrew: Well, everyone, that is it for this episode. Thanks for listening. We hope you enjoyed it. Hope you found it fun to catch up with Kassy and I, and, most importantly, we hope that this episode helped you to improve your English.

Now our website is Culips.com. And if you want to get the study guide, including the transcript and practice exercises for this episode, check out the website to download it.

Kassy: And remember, becoming Culips member is a great way to support us, but it's not the only way. You can also support us by leaving us a five-star rating and a nice review on your podcast app, or by telling your friends about Culips, and also by following us on social media.

Andrew: Yeah, you can stay up to date with Culips by following us on Instagram and YouTube. Our email address is contact@Culips.com and if you'd like to send us a message, feel free to do that. We love to hear your comments and episodes suggestions. We'll be back soon with another brand-new episode and we'll talk to you then. Goodbye.

Kassy: See ya.

Detailed Explanations

Amigos/amigas

Noun

Native English speakers will use words and phrases from other languages to emphasize their conversation. This is most often seen in countries or regions that have a widely used second language.

In this episode, Kassy uses words from Spanish when she says, “The three **amigos** joined together once again. **Amigas**, we’re ladies.” The Three **Amigos** is the name of popular 80s movie. With that movie title in mind, Kassy used the Spanish word for friends as a play on words. A Canadian might have said “mes filles,” which means “my girls” in French, because French is commonly used in Canada.

Here are a few more examples with foreign words used for emphasis:

Jack: Is it cool if I go grab myself a drink?

Brendan: Oh yeah! Definitely. Help yourself to whatever’s in there. **Mi casa es su casa!**

Jack: Thanks! Can I get you anything while I’m at it?

Brendan: No, I’m good. Holler if you need anything.

Crystal: I’m working on this project for Mr. Smith. Do you know if he wants it formatted the same way as the one we did for Mrs. Valentine? Or is it a different format?

Elise: **Je ne sais pas.** Sorry! I’ve been stressing over that for hours now.

Crystal: I’ll email him and see what he says.

Richard: I just found out that I’m losing my job.

Maria: **Oy vey.** That’s rough. Did they give a reason?

Richard: Not really. They said it’s nothing I did wrong. Just layoffs or something. Just my luck!

Run-down Adjective

Run-down, when used as an adjective, means dilapidated, neglected, tired, or unwell. When something is **run-down**, it's in bad condition. This could mean it's falling apart, dirty, or hasn't been well cared for. When someone is **run-down**, they're exhausted, feeling sick, or overworked.

Kassy and her family often stay at a **run-down** motel that "has cockroaches sometimes. It is not nice." This means the motel is in a very bad state.

Here are a couple more examples with **run-down**:

Siripon: Whoa. Is that your new car?

Jing: Yeah! Isn't it great? Got it for really cheap at the used car dealership just outside of town.

Siripon: Ah, used. I can tell.

Jing: OK, I know, I know. It's a bit **run-down**. But my dad said it's safe to drive and that he'll fix it up more for me on the weekends.

Siripon: By fix it up, do you mean he'll put back these pieces that just fell off? Because I think they might be important.

Josie: So, what did you do this weekend? Anything exciting?

Soloman: Uh, yeah. Very exciting! My friends and I went ghost hunting.

Josie: Oh? Where?

Soloman: Over in Bainsville. There's this **run-down** building that apparently used to be a clinic or asylum or something. There was a YouTube video about it. Anyway, we went there and snuck in to look around.

Josie: Did you see any ghosts?

Soloman: No, but I did get spooked a whole bunch of times. One friend actually ran out because he said a shadow moved! It was hilarious.

Creature comforts

Noun

Creature comforts are the things that make you feel at ease and relaxed. **Creature comforts** can be food, personal items—like a pillow or blanket—accommodations, and more. Having access to **creature comforts** makes you feel happy and comfortable. In this episode, Kassy mentions that she and her family were willing to give up their **creature comforts** for a long trip. This means that they were willing to be uncomfortable and without anything familiar in order to travel with each other.

Here are a couple more examples with **creature comforts**:

Carrie: Hello, friend! What do you have there?

Bo: This? Oh, it's my travel kit. I never leave home without it.

Carrie: That's pretty smart. You've got all the **creature comforts** in there to keep you sane on the plane.

Bo: Yup. Every time I travel, I take this with me and I know that I don't have to worry about where the tissues are or what to do if I feel nauseous. It's great. I think everyone should make one.

Sung-Jin: So, almost everyone in our group has said that they're coming on the camping trip. Except Isabella. She isn't responding to any of my emails or texts. Has she mentioned to you if she's planning to come?

May: Isabella? You seriously invited her? She'd never go camping. Ever. She can't go without her **creature comforts** for, like, an hour, let alone roughing it out in the woods for a weekend!

Sung-Jin: Really? Oh. I didn't know that about her. Well, still. She should have at least told me she wasn't coming. I've been waiting for her to respond so I could calculate the cost per person.

May: Didn't you already give us a cost?

Sung-Jin: That was just an estimate. I'm going to figure out the actual cost now. Thanks for letting me know about Isabella!

To jump through hoops

Idiom

To jump through hoops means to have to do a lot of elaborate or complicated things in order to complete your goal. The elaborate or complicated things are often extra tasks. So there is usually a simpler way to complete your goal. Usually, it is a person who is making you **jump through hoops**.

You can use this idiom when the extra tasks are silly or annoying. For example, you ask a friend to help you move. They say they will help, but only if you address them as “sir,” give them a bag of candy, and dress up like a butler for a day. Your friend is making you **jump through hoops** to get their help.

You can also use this idiom when the extra tasks are difficult. For example, Mark isn’t doing well in his math class. His teacher says he can raise his grade, but only if he completes five extra assignments and retakes all the tests from the past semester.

Here are a couple more examples with **to jump through hoops**:

Kenzo: Hello, I’m here for an appointment with Dr. VanSprout.

Receptionist: Oh, I’m sorry. Dr. VanSprout isn’t in today.

Kenzo: What? Why not?

Receptionist: Because of the storm.

Kenzo: You’re tell me that I **jumped through all those hoops** to get here, in the middle of a massive storm, and the doctor isn’t here? Why didn’t you call me?

Receptionist: I’m very sorry, sir. We did try to reach you but the number we have on file didn’t work.

Lucas: Oh man, I love this job!

Jemima: Really?

Lucas: Yeah! I used to have **to jump through hoops** just to get a new pad of paper and pen. Now I just have to ask and presto! It appears on my desk within the hour.

Jemima: Wow, OK, yeah. I can’t imagine working at a place that doesn’t supply basic stationery!

Ballpark

Noun

A **ballpark** is an estimate or approximate amount. When you say you're giving, or would like, a **ballpark** amount, you are giving or would like an estimate. It doesn't have to be exact. A **ballpark** amount can be currency or cost, a measurement, a date or date range—really, anything that has a numerical value.

In this episode, for example, Kassy mentions her encounter with the office of immigration. They request “a **ballpark** of when you want to come back, a certain range.” A **ballpark** answer might be “Saturday or Sunday” or “sometime between July 20th and July 30th.”

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

Masashi: Hello! How can I help you?

Tracy: Hi, yes. I would like to know how much I could get for this item? I found it when we were going through my late grandmother's belongings.

Masashi: Oh, I'm so sorry for your loss.

Tracy: Thank you. Is this valuable?

Masashi: I can't say for sure. I'll need to run some tests. If it is authentic, I believe it'll be in the **ballpark** of \$500. But if it's a replica, it'll only be \$20 to \$50.

Tracy: Hmm, well, let's do those tests, then!

Jamie: I heard you're redoing your back deck. I just started a contracting business and can totally help you!

Shinju: Yes, we are. And, yes, that would be great! What are your rates?

Jamie: I'd have to check out what needs to be done first to give you an accurate quote. Do you want a **ballpark** now, based on what I can remember of your deck?

Shinju: Oh no, that's OK. Come over tomorrow. I'll show you our plans and the deck as it is now. Then we can get the actual figures for our budget.

Connections

Noun

Connections are people you know who are able to help you or can influence others to help you. These people can be social or professional contacts. They can also be family or friends. Sometimes you'll hear the expression "she's got **connections**." This is often said with a knowing expression and means that the woman knows people who can make difficult things happen.

For example, in this episode Andrew mentions having a **connection** to someone who works at an appliance store. This person was able to help Andrew and his wife find the right appliances and then gave them a tip to save money. Another example would be famous or rich people. They often know the owners of companies or people on the inside of an industry. These **connections** help them get deals or have experiences that others wouldn't ever get or have.

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

Zhou: Whoa! Where'd you get that purse? I saw online that it was sold out everywhere within an hour of it going on sale!

Rosemary: Oh, you know me. I've got **connections**.

Zhou: Wait. That's right. Your girlfriend works at that store, doesn't she?

Rosemary: Yup! She's my inside girl. I'll ask her to put one aside for you when they restock.

Zhou: Would you? Thanks!

Crystal: Did you hear? Jordan's got an audition in Los Angeles next week!

Haru: Seriously? Lucky duck. They've got major **connections** if they landed an audition from across the globe!

Crystal: Nope! Their friend gave them a heads-up, sure, but Jordan did a video audition and then the people who make those decisions called them for in-person auditions!

Haru: So they do have a **connection**! Their friend!

Quiz

1. Which of the following means in dilapidated, neglected, or poor condition?

- a) run-down
- b) run-up
- c) run-back
- d) run into

2. What are creature comforts?

- a) things that are made with animal fur or feathers
- b) things that make you feel stressed and agitated
- c) things that you cuddle when you go to sleep
- d) things that make you feel at ease and relaxed

3. Which of the following means you know people who can help you?

- a) you have connectivity
- b) you have connections
- c) you have contact lenses
- d) you have corrections

4. Which of the following means to have to do extra tasks in order to complete your goal?

- a) skip through hoops
- b) walk through hoops
- c) jump through hoops
- d) jump through hedges

5. If someone asked you to give them a ballpark, how would you respond?

- a) with a baseball glove
- b) with an exact number
- c) with tickets to the next baseball game
- d) with an estimate of the amount

Writing and Discussion Questions

1. Are there any foreign words, like amigos or amigas, that people often use in your native language? What are they and when are they usually used?
2. Describe the most run-down place you've ever stayed.
3. What creature comforts could you never live without, and why?
4. Describe a time when you had to jump through hoops to get or achieve something.
5. What are some connections you've made and how have they helped you?

Quiz Answers

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

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