

## Simplified Speech #125 – Summer Olympics

### Episode description

The Summer Olympics! They happen every four years... well, almost. The global pandemic has been difficult for everyone, but hopefully cheering on our national athletes will be good entertainment for us all.

In this Simplified Speech episode, Andrew and Suzanne share their thoughts on the Olympics. Which events do you think they prefer? Football, swimming, track and field? Give it a listen, find out!

### Fun fact

Did you know that athletes in Ancient Greece used to compete in the nude during the Olympic Games?

### Expressions included in the study guide

- [Someone] do their thing
- A [something] background
- To give credit
- Backing
- The crème de la crème
- A [something] investment



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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. My name is Andrew.

**Suzanne:** Hey, guys. I'm Suzanne.

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

Hello, friends. Welcome back to Culips, you're listening to Simplified Speech, the Culips series that features clear, natural and easy to understand English conversations about interesting topics. And today to help me with this episode, I'm joined by my co-host, Suzanne. Hello there, Sue.

**Suzanne:** Hey there, Andrew. And hi, listeners. Today, we have a really fun topic. We're going to talk about the Olympics.

**Andrew:** Yeah, that's right. The Summer Olympics are happening this year, finally, after being delayed for a year due to the COVID pandemic, but they're happening this year, Suzanne, in Tokyo, and I thought this would be a perfect opportunity for us to sit down and think about the Olympics a bit, chat about the Olympics a bit, and maybe talk about some of our favourite Olympic sports and memories.

**Suzanne:** That sounds awesome. I love sports and Olympic sports. But before we get started, Andrew, let's give a shout out to one of our listeners from Taiwan. We have Benny Yeh. And Benny left us a positive review and a five-star - we love that - rating on Apple Podcasts. Benny wrote, "Awesome English podcast, five stars. It's very interesting and educational, I highly recommend it." So if Benny recommends it, you know that you're in the right place, listening to us.

**Andrew:** Wow, thank you so much for that awesome, raving review Benny, we really appreciate it. And listeners leaving a positive review and a five-star rating on Apple Podcasts or whatever platform you use to listen to Culips, like it could be Stitcher or Castbox anywhere, leaving a nice review and a five-star rating just helps more English learners around the world find Culips and learn English with us. So if you could spare a moment to leave us a review and a high rating on your favourite podcast app, we would really, really appreciate your support. And thanks to everyone who has been leaving us reviews, such as Benny, who we featured here today. Suzanne, did you know that there is a study guide for this episode?

**Suzanne:** Well, now I do. And that's sounds pretty cool. What about this study guide, Andrew?

**Andrew:** Well, the study guide that we make for all of our Culips episodes is designed for everyone to really get the most out of studying and learning English with us. In the study guide, there's a transcript, there are detailed vocabulary explanations and real-world examples. There's a quiz, and more. And for anyone who's interested in following along with the study guide, while you listen today, you can get it by becoming a Culips member. And when you're a Culips member, you get lots of amazing perks, there is a small fee to join. But once you're a member, then you get unlimited access to all of our study guides, an invitation to our monthly live stream and mini lesson, exclusive access to the Fluency Files, and there are more benefits as well. So to sign up and become a member, just visit our website Culips.com.

All right, Sue, let's get into it and start talking about the Summer Olympics which are happening this year in Tokyo, a bit of a unique Olympics because it's still you know, in the midst of the COVID pandemic and there will be no spectators at this year's Olympics. No people in the stadiums watching the sports go down and happen, but we can still watch at home. And I guess a good place to start this conversation would be to ask you the question, Sue, if you're a fan of the Olympics? The Summer Olympics happen every four years. Do you tune in and watch when they're happening?

**Suzanne:** I do, Andrew. I really love sports in general and I really enjoy the competition and watching **people do their thing**. They've worked so hard, they've trained so hard and to watch them perform and to achieve their goals. Wow, that's just a really, really exciting thing. Yeah, I love watching the Olympics. How about you?

**Andrew:** Yeah, I'm a fan of the Olympics as well. I love the Summer Olympics. I also really enjoy the Winter Olympics, obviously, coming from Canada. Canada is stronger at the Winter Olympics. So usually, those are a little bit more exciting to watch because we win more medals. But we still do, OK, at the Summer Olympics usually, and we're competitive in some sports. In general I'm just a competitive person, so I like winning. And I like watching my country win. So it's good when we can compete and when we can win. Sue, what are some of your favourite Olympic sports to watch?

**Suzanne:** I really love watching gymnastics, like the women's gymnastics. That's always a favourite. And in the winter, I really love the figure skating too. But if we're focusing on the Summer Olympics, I really, really enjoy the gymnastics. I come from a **dance background**. So for me, gymnastics, and the artistry involved, really, really appeal to me. And I also lived in Houston for junior high and high school, where they had the very famous ranch and training center for the women's gymnastics team. And I was friends with some of them. So, I actually had mutual friends and we would hang out. And so I became a big, big fan of women's gymnastics because of that. So yeah, I would say I love the gymnastics. And I also really love the swimming.

**Andrew:** Swimming. Now you like figure skating in the winter, gymnastics in the summer. And I have to assume that you like synchronized swimming then as well. Is that true?

**Suzanne:** Oh, yeah, I do, I do. I mean, I do like synchronized swimming. It's not my favourite, but I definitely am in awe of it. It's a lot more challenging than I think we **give it credit** for. It's quite challenging, synchronized swimming.

**Andrew:** It's got to be one of the strangest sports at the Olympics, I think. I'm sure you're right, I'm sure it's very challenging to do. They're amazing athletes to be able to swim that well and contort their bodies underwater and move in tandem, and in sync with all the other members of the group.

**Suzanne:** It's like they're some kind of mermaid.

**Andrew:** It's really incredible. And also think about those athletes, they must be so dedicated, because as far as I know, and I might be wrong about this, but as far as I know, there's no money in synchronized swimming, right? Like those athletes are probably not getting Nike deals or sponsorships from big athletic companies.

**Suzanne:** Oh, and Andrew, something I'm really excited about this year, is that rock climbing is going to be a part of this Summer Olympics, did you know that?

**Andrew:** I knew that. And then I forgot. And I'm glad you reminded me because that's really cool. I love rock climbing. And there's a kind of rock climbing that will be featured in this Olympic Games in Tokyo, which is a kind of speed rock climbing. It's almost like a race. And it's really exciting to watch. And I'm in awe of those athletes. They are incredible. They can climb up the face of a wall probably faster than I could run the same distance. It is remarkable.

**Suzanne:** It is remarkable. And when you watch them, I don't know if you feel this way. But for me, I feel like I'm watching a Spider Man, like a real life Spider Man climb the wall. And it's really quite impressive how fast they go up the wall. One thing that's interesting about the speed climbing event is that they have what's called a standard wall. So the grips and the holds for the hands are in a set formation. So they can practice this standard wall over and over and over again, which helps them to be faster. And, you know, really break records and speed for that rock climbing event, which is cool.

**Andrew:** We'll have to keep our eyes open for the speed climbing events. I'm sure that will be an exciting one to watch. Now, Suzanne, thinking back on Olympic history, do you have like a favourite Olympic memory from the past that you could share with us? You're lucky that you are an American, because there are so many great American olympians. You got so many moments to choose from.

**Suzanne:** You're right. I do have to say, I mean, I think the American teams are usually very privileged, right? Because there's a lot of money that's poured into their support. And there are many countries that have extremely talented athletes that do not get the funding and **backing** that many Americans do get. And so I want to acknowledge that because that's why I think a lot of medals go to the US in the Summer Olympics, because I think that they have more resources.

**Andrew:** Yeah, I think so. I think the States is perfectly positioned like you guys have a lot of things going for you. You have a big population, you have a country that really loves sports, you have an amazing college athletic system, and you have big athletic companies, you're a prosperous country, you have lots of money to spend on sponsoring amateur athletes. So yeah, compared to some other countries. I mean, a lot of that is similar in Canada as well. But we have a much smaller population, right? So we can't compete on that level.

**Suzanne:** Yeah, it's true.

**Andrew:** One of my favourite Olympic memories was from 1996. And I was telling my wife about this just the other day, there was a Canadian runner named Donovan Bailey, who won the Olympic gold medal and broke the Olympic record and the world record in the 100-meter dash. And in my opinion, that is always the **crème de la crème**, the height of the Olympic Summer Games is the 100-meter dash. And I remember watching that as a kid, and just being so enthralled. We actually went on to win the 4x100-meter race in track and field as well. So that was just a really exciting Olympic memory for me. Unfortunately, Donovan Bailey's record got broken later, when Usain Bolt came onto the scene and just blew all of the records out of the water. He was such an amazing athlete. So that was maybe the peak of Canadian Summer Olympic performance. And it's a sporting moment that I'll never forget at least, and hopefully one day Canada can top the podium for the 100-meter dash sometime in the future.

**Suzanne:** It's funny that you say 1996, because I remember when the US women's gymnastics team won the gold in 1996 as a team for the first time in a while. And some of my friends at the time were on that team. Like I had mentioned earlier, I was friends with some of the members. So that was really, really special. And I felt like they were really not just representing the US, but also my city, right? The city of Houston, Texas. So we were all cheering them on. And I was hanging out with a few other mutual friends of the team. And we were just so proud. We had a **personal investment** in their success. So that was really something.

**Andrew:** Yeah, that's amazing to be so close to the athletes like that and to know some of them personally, that is a really, really special experience that must have been so electrifying to be a part of that back in 1996. And also those Olympics were in the US, right? They were in Atlanta, Georgia.

**Suzanne:** Oh, I forgot. Yes.

**Andrew:** The atmosphere must have been incredible.

**Suzanne:** That is totally right. I forgot all about that. Yes.

**Andrew:** Suzanne, we're gonna wrap it up here in just a moment. But before we do I have a question for you. I know, Suzanne, that you have a close connection to several countries, to the USA, obviously where you're from, to Canada, where you live and also your fiancé's country, he is from France. So you have a connection to France as well. So let's do a little thought experiment here. Let's say that Canada and the USA are competing for the gold medal in the women's gymnastics or the gymnastics competition, who do you cheer for? Who do you cheer for?

**Suzanne:** Well, I have to be honest, like, because Simone Biles, who I adore, I mean, she's just fierce. An incredible athlete and an incredible human being, I would really just root for her on whichever team she was on. So I would have to say, since she's on the US team, I would root for the US team in the women's gymnastics. How about you, Andrew, you also represent different countries. So what would you do in that case? If you have, maybe South Korea against Canada, what would you do?

**Andrew:** Yeah, thankfully, the two countries don't really compete in the same events like, Korea is really strong in archery and ping pong, and badminton. And those sports aren't really popular in Canada, and we don't really play them very much. So we don't have strong athletes in those sports. So it's great. I can cheer for the Koreans when they're doing their thing. And I can cheer for the Canadians, when the Canadians are doing their things and I don't really have to be divided like that. Except in the Winter Olympics, I have some problems because Canada and South Korea are both very strong, short track speed skating nations, and they do compete against each other in the Winter Olympics. So I have to be careful who I cheer for, you know, really, I said I'm competitive and I do like to win, but at the end of the day, I'm just happy when the best wins and you know, whoever earns the win, then that's fine with me. So I'm just happy to see some good competition, some good athleticism, and just enjoy the events.

All right, listeners. Well, that brings us to the end of today's episode. Thank you so much for listening. And I know Suzanne that we have listeners from all over the world tuning in right now. So everyone, I just have to say good luck during this year's Summer Olympics, to your team and to your athletes, I hope everyone has a great time participating in this year's Olympics. And for our Japanese listeners, I'm sorry that these Olympics don't get to be the Olympics that you probably dreamed of. But don't worry, everyone around the world will still be tuning in. And we are supporting all of the athletes because we know it's a very unique time and a very interesting and different Summer Olympic Games this year.

If you enjoyed this episode, and if you enjoy listening to Culips in general, and find us helpful for improving your English, then we would really appreciate it if you could support us and there are many ways that you can do that. The best way is by signing up and



becoming a Culips member on our website Culips.com. But that's not the only way, you can also tell your friends who are learning English to check us out, follow us on social media - we're most active on Instagram and YouTube these days - and finally, you could leave us a five-star rating and a positive review on your favourite podcast app.

**Suzanne:** And if you want to get in contact with us, if you have any questions or maybe some great ideas for new episodes, feel free to contact us directly by email at [contact@culips.com](mailto:contact@culips.com). We love to hear from you. So don't be shy.

**Andrew:** That's it for us today but we'll be back soon with another brand new Culips episode and we'll talk to you then. Take care everyone and goodbye.

**Suzanne:** Bye, guys.

## Detailed Explanations

### [Someone] do their thing Phrase

At the beginning of this episode, Suzanne talks about how much she loves to watch **people do their thing**. In this case, she's talking about athletes and their thing is the sport in which they compete. If someone talks about your thing, that means it is something you enjoy or are really good at, just like high-level athletes, talented musicians, or even your own hobby.

Near the end of this episode, Andrew uses this expression again, saying how he cheers for both Korean and Canadian athletes when **they're doing their thing**. That means he cheers for both countries when they are performing and competing.

Here are a couple more examples with **[someone] do their thing**:

**Sally:** Do you know Breakdown? It's a musical group.

**Erin:** I think so. Aren't they that group that has twin background dancers?

**Sally:** Indeed.

**Erin:** OK. I know them. They're amazing. I especially like the dancers. I love it when **they do their thing**.

**Sally:** I agree. They totally add to the show when they play live.

**Terry:** Did you paint that?

**Mona:** Yes, I did.

**Terry:** That's incredible. It's really different from other people's work.

**Mona:** You know me. **I'm always just doing my thing**.

**Terry:** Well, keep it up. I think it's great.



## A [something] background

Compound noun

In this episode, Suzanne talks about her love for gymnastics. She says the artistry of gymnastics appeals to her because she has **a dance background**. In this sense, your background is the experience you have acquired throughout your life.

When you say you have a background in something, it's usually in the context of linking your background to something else. For example, if you have **a karate background**, you might also be good at boxing, even if you have never tried it. In this situation, you are linking your background to something similar, just as Suzanne linked her **dance background** to gymnastics.

You can also say you have **a French background**, for example. That means your ancestors came from France. If you say you have **a French-language background**, that means you either know the French language or studied it.

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

**Ed:** Do you have any skills in website building? I need help.

**Chuck:** I do have **a coding background**. I'm your man.

**Ed:** Oh, I didn't know you could code programs. Sweet. I guess I asked the right person for help.

**Chuck:** Great. So what's the problem?

**Belle:** Hey, we're going to a quiz night. Do you want to come?

**Nate:** Oh, I'm not really good with trivia questions.

**Belle:** Actually, it's a medical quiz night. All of the questions are medical questions. And since you have **a dentistry background**, I figured you'd be a good addition to our team.

**Nate:** Yeah. I should be pretty good at that. I'd love to go!

## To give credit Phrase

When talking about synchronized swimmers, Suzanne says that people don't **give them enough credit** for how challenging their sport is. In this situation, credit means acknowledgement. Think of the credits at the end of the movie. It is a list of names **giving people credit** for the work they've done on the movie.

Native English speakers usually use **to give credit** in the sense of congratulating someone. You can say you want **to give someone credit** for doing a good job. Another common variation is to ask for credit, such as saying **give me some credit**. That means you want someone else to acknowledge that you did well.

Here are a couple more examples with **to give credit**:

**Cal:** Did you see the sculpture Charles just finished?

**Vera:** I did. It's super nice.

**Cal:** You have **to give credit** where credit is due. He is talented.

**Vera:** He really is. I was thinking of buying one of his works. Do you know how much they go for?

**Theo:** I was thinking of having Sandra drive us to Vermont.

**Paddy:** Why can't I drive?

**Theo:** Don't you remember the last time we drove together? We got into a pretty bad accident.

**Paddy:** That was a long time ago.

**Theo:** I'm still a little unsure about your driving.

**Paddy:** Come on. **Give me some credit**. I haven't had an accident since then. That was 10 years ago.

**Theo:** Fine. I'll call Sandra to cancel.

## Backing

Noun

When talking about the money that American athletes receive, our hosts agree that many other countries do not receive the same amount of funding and **backing**. In this sense, backing means that a person or an organization is supporting you financially.

You can also get **backing** in a non-financial way. For example, if you want to propose a great idea at work and your entire team supports your idea, you have the **backing** of your team. They support and approve of your idea.

This is similar to the idea that someone has your back. When someone has your back, they are looking out for you. They are supporting you.

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

**Larry:** Why haven't you launched the Anderson Project?

**Mari:** We don't have the funding yet.

**Larry:** When do you expect the money to come?

**Mari:** I'm thinking we have to wait until next month.

**Larry:** OK. Please advise me once you get the financial **backing**. I have some ideas about how to distribute the money.

**Joon:** I'm thinking of presenting our new plan for the next year to the boss.

**Lara:** When were you thinking of doing that?

**Joon:** At the meeting this afternoon. Can I count on your **backing**?

**Lara:** For sure. I think we have a great plan.

## The crème de la crème Idiom

When talking about the Olympics, Andrew says that the 100-metre dash is **the crème de la crème** of all the sports. **The crème de la crème** means it is the best of the best. By that, Andrew thinks the 100-metre dash is the best and most exciting sport at the Olympics.

In French, the **crème de la crème** literally means cream of the cream. Although the words are French, every native English speaker will know this expression. It is simply another way of saying the very best. A restaurant, an athlete, a song, a novel, or a car can all be **the crème de la crème** in your opinion. You can even use it to describe non-physical things, such as a theory or an emotion.

Here are a couple more examples with **the crème de la crème**:

**Manny:** Hey, I just bought this wine. You really need to try it.

**Rita:** I don't know if I trust you. You always buy terrible cheap wines.

**Manny:** Actually, the woman at the store recommended it. She said it was **the crème de la crème** of affordable wines.

**Rita:** Sure. I'll try some, but only because it comes recommended by anyone but you.

**Harriet:** What are you reading?

**Vinny:** It's called *Between Days*. It's the first novel from a young up-and-coming writer.

**Harriet:** Is it any good?

**Vinny:** I'm not sure. I just started. But I hope so. They say this book is **the crème de la crème** for 2021.

**Harriet:** Cool. If you say it's pretty good, do you mind if I borrow it after?

## A [something] investment

Compound noun

When talking about the 1996 Olympics, Suzanne says she had **a personal investment** in the gymnastics competition because she personally knew some of the athletes. In this sense, she wanted the gymnasts to win not because they were American like her, but because she knew them personally. Since Suzanne had a relationship with the athletes, she really wanted to see them be successful and win the gold medal.

There are different kinds of investments. **A financial investment** is when you invest money with the hope that you make more money later on. **An emotional investment** is similar. You invest your emotions into something, like the main character in a drama. In the end, you hope there is a payoff where everything turns out well for that character. Parents are often very emotionally invested when they watch their children play sports.

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

**Cole:** Why are you still watching that drama?

**Sang:** Yup.

**Cole:** Last week you told me that it was garbage.

**Sang:** I know. But I can't stop now. I've put in too much of **an emotional investment** to stop now.

**Flo:** I heard Peter is going to the building site on Friday.

**Nancy:** Yeah. I heard that too.

**Flo:** Does he know that he doesn't need to visit the site?

**Nancy:** I'm sure he does. You need to understand that he not only has **a financial investment** in the building but also a personal one. We're rebuilding his grandfather's old house. It's a big deal.

## Quiz

**1. If someone is doing their thing, what are they doing?**

- a) something they hate
- b) something for the first time
- c) something they are good at
- d) something for the last time

**2. What does the crème de la crème mean?**

- a) it's OK
- b) it's creamy
- c) it's sweet
- d) it's the best

**3. If someone is backing you, what are they doing?**

- a) they support you
- b) they want to date you
- c) they have their back against the wall
- d) they want their money back

**4. What does it mean when someone gives you credit?**

- a) they give you money
- b) they give you a credit card
- c) they give you praise for a job well done
- d) they give you no chance to do it again

**5. Choose the best answer. If you have a German background, you \_\_\_\_\_.**

- a) have heard of Germany
- b) have German ancestors
- c) have never been to Germany
- d) listen to German music in the background

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## Writing and Discussion Questions

1. Which event do you like most at the Olympics?
2. If you could be a super athlete, which event would you like to compete in and why?
3. Do you have more than one country you cheer for? Even if you don't, how you do think you would manage cheering for more than one country in the same event?
4. What is the greatest Olympic moment in your home country's history?
5. How do you feel about the Tokyo Olympics? Should they have been cancelled or not? Do you think we are risking the health of athletes and citizens by hosting the Olympic Games during a still on-going pandemic?



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## Quiz Answers

1. c   2. d   3. a   4. c   5. b

### Episode credits

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