

## Simplified Speech #126 – Do you know your family history?

### Episode description

Have you ever wondered more about your family history? In this Simplified Speech episode, Andrew and Kassy talk about their family trees and different ways to learn more about your family history. They also discuss DNA test kits and their effects on society.

This Simplified Speech episode is perfect for intermediate English learners looking to hear natural English conversations at a slightly slower pace. Tune in to hear this interesting conversation about genealogy.

### Fun fact

The six degrees of separation theory states that everyone on the planet is connected to one another by six or fewer social connections. This does not mean that you are genetically related to someone by six degrees of separation, but you could be the friend of a friend of a friend of a friend of a person who lives halfway across the planet from yourself. Pretty cool to think about, right?

### Expressions included in the study guide

- Family tree
- A good chunk of [something]
- Little did I know
- Way back when
- [One's] roots
- The other side of the coin



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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.

Hey there, 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. Today, I am joined by my co-host Kassy. Hey Kassy. What's up?

**Kassy:** Hey, Andrew, I'm doing well. OK, listeners. Today we are going to talk about genealogy, which is, you know, your **family tree** and where your ancestors come from.

**Andrew:** Yeah, very interesting topic that you suggested Kassy, and I can't wait to get into this topic. I think it's gonna be really interesting. But before we talk about it, I just want to let everyone know about the transcript and study guide for this episode. Listeners, you can download the study guide if you sign up and become a Culips member on our website, Culips.com. So when you're a Culips member, you'll get access to actually all of our study guides for each episode that we make. So that's a ton of amazing study content for you to learn English with. And you'll also get some great bonuses, like invitations to our monthly live streams, as well as access to our members only series, which is called the Fluency Files. So to sign up and become a member, just visit our website Culips.com.

**Kassy:** We also wanted to give a shout-out to our listener Nunataks from Russia, who left us a nice comment and a five-star review on Apple Podcasts. Nunataks wrote, "Dear Culips team, thank you for such an awesome podcast. I love listening to it on a daily basis. The topics are really helpful. I sometimes write down the whole phrases that you say. Thank you."

**Andrew:** Awesome, Nunataks. Thank you so much for that great review. If you would like to receive a shout-out at the start of an upcoming Culips episode, then all you have to do is leave us a five-star rating and a nice review on Apple Podcasts or whichever platform you use to listen to Culips. And this really supports us in many ways and helps English learners from around the world find us and learn English with us.

All right, so with that said, it's time to talk about our topic today. So Kassy, let's dig in and talk about genealogy, genealogy. First, we should break down this word because I think it's a very instructive word because it's got two parts, right? Gene-ology. And now "gene-" here is not talking about, like, one of those magical creatures that lives in a lamp, right?

**Kassy:** Ah man.

**Andrew:** That could be a fun episode for a different time, maybe. But for now, what does it mean? What does the "gene-" part of this word mean?

**Kassy:** Genes are the traits that parents pass down to their children. For example, my parents have blue eyes. I have blue eyes. My parents had blondish-brown hair. I have blondish-brown hair. Those are your genes.

**Andrew:** That's right, Kassy. So in this word gene just means genetic information. Genes, right? And what about "-ology"? What does "-ology" mean when we see it in a word because there are many words that have this ending, right? Biology, physiology, geology, etc., etc. What is "-ology" mean?

**Kassy:** "-ology" means the study of something. So genealogy, the study of genes or genetics. Biology, the study of life.

**Andrew:** Exactly, exactly. So, of course, we are not scientists, Kassy, and we're not going to go deep into, you know, genetic science or anything like that in this episode, but we're just going to talk about what we know about our genetic backgrounds. That could be a really interesting conversation, I think. So I guess maybe I'll kick things off by asking you this question, Kassy, and that is, how much do you know about your family history?

**Kassy:** So, I've never taken one of those boxed DNA tests, you know, that are really famous these days, but I do know that **a good chunk of my genes**, my family members, like ancestors, came from Germany. And then another chunk came from the Slavic area, like Yugoslavia or Slovenia.

**Andrew:** OK, so you are from a strong European background.

**Kassy:** That's right.

**Andrew:** OK. So let's back up just a moment, because you mentioned something really interesting. And it's funny that you brought this up, because last night, I was watching YouTube, and I watched a comparison video, a review and comparison video of the top five home gene testing kits that are available. So like you mentioned, Kassy is really trendy these days in North America to do these kind of DNA ancestry tests. So if you sign up and buy one on the website of one of these companies, they send you a little kit. And you usually have to swab the inside of your cheek with a cotton swab. And then you put it in a little test tube, and send it back to the company where they'll do an analysis of your

sample in the lab. And then after a month or so they will send you the results. You can log in to their website and check the results. And it's really fascinating all the information they give you. They tell you so many things about your family history, about where your family came from, like even way back, like when we came out of Africa, when humans migrated out of Africa, you can see the path that your ancestors took. I mean, I don't know if this is precise and 100% accurate information. But these companies are developing huge databases of samples. And they're using all of the information together to coordinate all the information that they show you. So I think you know, it's getting stronger and more accurate with every sample they receive. You'll also see a lot of information about your health, and what kind of maybe diseases you are susceptible to. You know, if you maybe have a family history of heart disease or a family history of diabetes, then you can find if you are at risk for getting these kinds of diseases or not. So it's pretty fascinating. And Kassy, you haven't taken one of these tests, but you still know that you are from kind of German and Slavic areas of Europe.

**Kassy:** Yes, because my last name is White, which comes from Weik, which is a very German name. And then my great-great-grandfather came over from either Yugoslavia or Czechoslovakia. My dad always changes the story depending on his mood, so. But his last name was Pavlesich. Maybe a listener can tell me which country that's from.

**Andrew:** OK, interesting.

**Kassy:** Yes.

**Andrew:** You know, one of the really fascinating things about these home DNA tests is, like I mentioned, there are so many people who are doing them these days. And when you do the tests, you can register in their database of users. And if a relative of yours has also done one of these tests, it will show you like, oh, this person has a link to you. And you can see how you are related. Maybe you are third cousins, or fifth cousins, or something like that. And the review video that I watched, the guy who made the video actually found a first cousin that way. He found a cousin he didn't know that he had just through this website. But they had to warn you, like, you might find that you have a half brother or a half sister or that your dad is not your real dad or something. That's like an experience that many people have had from doing these DNA tests. So that's pretty funny.

**Kassy:** That actually happened to my aunt, her best friend. She took the test and she found out that she had a real life half sister somewhere else on the planet. And she always wanted one growing up, and **little did she know** that her father had an affair **way back when**. And yeah, she really did have a sister floating around that she never knew about.

**Andrew:** Wow, it's wild. What a wild world. So, you know, I'm not really super, super curious about my family history personally. But I would really like to take one of these DNA tests, to see the health information and to learn more about you know, **my roots**. And I think I know quite a bit about my mom's side of the family. The family members on my mom's side of the family seem to know quite a bit about, you know, my grandparents and

great-grandparents. And they're mainly from Scotland. Everybody is from Scotland. So I think, definitely, we go back generations and generations from, you know, the UK and from Scotland. But on my dad's side, nobody really knows anything. My dad only has one sister, and I guess they kind of are like me, like, they're not super into family histories and stuff. And they don't talk about it too much. You know, occasionally they'll talk about like, some cousin or something at a family gathering, but I don't know too much on my father's side about our family history. So I think that could be pretty cool to find out. One thing that they do say, Kassy, which is maybe where we have a connection is that my dad's side of the family, when they talk about our ancestors, they sometimes talk about being Pennsylvanian Dutch. And I know you're from Pennsylvania. Do you have any connection at all to being Pennsylvanian Dutch?

**Kassy:** Not that I know of. But I think that on my mother's side, her mom, my grandmother, maternal grandmother, had some relatives that were Pennsylvania Dutch, because she says some words kind of funny. She says human like human, which is a pretty strong marker for a Pennsylvania Dutch person.

**Andrew:** And actually, I don't know too much about Pennsylvania Dutch, maybe you know more than I do, because of where you grew up. But my understanding is that maybe they were German people. I think German people, or maybe even Dutch people. But I think German mostly that settled in America, maybe due to like religious persecution, and they kind of kept their religion and their way of life with them, even though they live in the USA. And there's still a community of them that speak German, or speak their dialect of German, and kind of live in a very traditional way. Maybe without too many modern conveniences, kind of an old fashioned lifestyle, is that right?

**Kassy:** Yeah. The Amish in Pennsylvania are very famous. They're in Canada and Ohio and a couple other places too. Yeah, they speak a mixture of German and English, which is Pennsylvania Dutch. And it's kind of like a pidgin language, like they formed it from two or more and kind of adopted it. So you'll hear English words, and you'll hear German words. But you know, when you make them tie them into a sentence, it's not, you know, only German or only English. It's a mixture. And some words are completely made up all together.

**Andrew:** Right. Yeah, it's very interesting linguistically. I have no idea if I actually have a connection to those people or not. But I have heard that before, from my father's side of the family. So maybe I could find out if I do one of these home DNA tests some time.

**Kassy:** Yeah. However, Andrew, I have heard that these DNA tests have a negative aspect to them as well.

**Andrew:** OK, what's that?

**Kassy:** There was a really interesting TED talk that I listened to, I can't remember the name of the speaker, but she was saying that these DNA tests are actually a huge breach of our privacy.

**Andrew:** That's what I'm afraid of. I was thinking about that as well. You're sending all of your precious genetic information to a company. And I usually don't trust big companies. They want to profit off your data, right? Data is so valuable. Is this what that TED talk was about?

**Kassy:** It's not just data, but it's also, I mean, if you are a criminal, you probably deserve to go to jail. But she said that they can actually, like, track, you know, where you live. So maybe you are in a protection program or you're trying to hide from someone who abused you in the past, they can track you down, even if you're not on social media or anything, through all of your family members and through all of the like through a third cousin, a second cousin, and jumping through all of the DNA tests to finding where people live and calling those people and then finding where you are. And anybody can do it because this data, you know, is owned by big companies that a lot of times sell information to the highest bidder.

**Andrew:** Yeah, that is definitely **the other side of the coin**, right? And you'd have to think very carefully before submitting your information to one of these companies. Yeah, it's also scary to think like what happens, Kassy, if somebody like just plucked one of your hairs from your head when you weren't looking, and then submitted that and got all of your genetic information behind your back without you knowing, right? They could, somebody could do something like that, too. It's scary. So as much as the information would be fascinating to see, there's always a downside with these kind of new technological advances, which really sucks. I wish that it was just all benefits and positives.

**Kassy:** Puppies and rainbows.

**Andrew:** Yeah, there's always something that brings it down, unfortunately.

**Kassy:** Listeners, we're curious to hear if you have had experience taking these tests, or finding out some sort of shocking information after taking one of these tests. Have you ever found a lost relative, or, you know, found out that your ancestors were from a country that you never even knew about?

**Andrew:** Or listeners, do you know your family history? I know my wife's parents were shocked when they learned that my family didn't have a genealogical record of our family, because all Korean families have pretty good family records. And they know where they come from. And they know all of their family members very, very well. There's very accurate records of these things here in Korea, but in Canada, where I'm from, there's no records at all. We have no like Government Department of Family History or anything like that. It's just every person for themselves. And if you want to keep track of it, you can, and some people do. My family didn't, so we don't really know. But listeners if you have a good



family record, or if you don't, if you're like me and Kassy, then send us a message, let us know we'd love to hear your story. So you can get in touch with us through our email address, [contact@Culips.com](mailto:contact@Culips.com). We'd certainly love to hear from you. Or else you can follow us on social media. We are on Instagram and YouTube. And you could also leave a comment or message us that way as well.

All right, everyone. Well, that's it for this episode. Thank you for listening. We hope that you learned a lot with us here today. And I hope that you found this conversation interesting. Our website is [Culips.com](http://Culips.com). And if you want to get the study guide, including the transcript and practice exercises for this episode, then just visit the website and you can download it.

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

**Andrew:** We'll be back soon with another brand new episode and we'll talk to you then. Goodbye.

**Kassy:** See ya.

## Detailed Explanations

### Family Tree

Noun

A **family tree** is a diagram of a family showing the relationships between family members through several generations. This diagram is called a **family tree** because it starts with a single couple at the top and branches out from there with children, spouses of children, children's children and so on, all the way down the line as more and more generations are born and added to the **family tree**.

Here are a couple more examples with **family tree**:

**Gina:** Hey, is this your **family tree**?

**Max:** Yep. That's the Kassinsky **family tree** alright.

**Gina:** What's with the burn mark over here?

**Max:** Oh, that was Grandpa Charles. Grandma burned him off the **family tree** after she caught him cheating on her with the maid and divorced him.

**Gina:** Wow, that's pretty intense.

**Max:** Yeah, my grandma is a fiery lady. My grandpa's lucky she only burned him off the **family tree**. She could have done a lot worse to him.

**Rachel:** So what's the meaning behind your name?

**Dongik:** Well, in Korean "dong" means east and "ik" means wing, so my name kind of means to rise in the east.

**Rachel:** Wow, that's really interesting!

**Dongik:** Yeah, that's not the only thing interesting about my name either. Traditionally, the men in a family share a syllable in each generation of the **family tree**. So my cousins, my brother, and I all have the syllable "dong" in our name.

**Rachel:** Really? That must get confusing at a family reunion.



## A good chunk of [something]

Phrase, informal

**A good chunk of [something]** is a large amount of something. The word chunk means a piece or portion of something and good in this phrase means big or large. Good can be interchanged with big or large in this phrase. So you can say **a large chunk of [something]** or **a big chunk of [something]** as well.

In this episode, Kassy says **a good chunk of her ancestors** come from Germany. In other words, a large portion of her family tree is made up of Germans.

Here are a couple more examples with **a good chunk of [something]**:

**Sari:** What did you do today?

**Diana:** I actually spent **a good chunk of my day** at the swimming pool. I try to spend as much time there as possible in the summer.

**Sari:** Nice! Were there a lot of people today?

**Diana:** Surprisingly, there wasn't. I think it's because it rained in the morning. It was sunny and nice while I was there, but maybe the rain put people off from going in the afternoon.

**Hector:** Wow, your car looks amazing! You've finally finished it.

**Frankie:** Yeah, **a large chunk of my time and money** went into this thing, but I've finally finished refurbishing my dad's old Mustang.

**Hector:** Well, it's incredible. You've done an amazing job.

**Frankie:** Thanks, man. Want to take it for a spin?

**Hector:** Why are you even asking? Of course I do!

## Little did I know

### Phrase

**Little did I know** is phrase to show how you were unable to predict how a situation was going to turn out in the future. It is a way of reflecting on your past choices and how you couldn't have realized back then how your actions might have influenced the present.

You can use this phrase with a different subject as well when talking about someone else, like **little did he know** or **little did they know**. For example, a woman buys a used car, but **little does she know** the guy that sold it to her wasn't a good person and he sold her a faulty car that breaks down within a month of buying it. In this situation, the woman was unable to predict that her car would break down a month after she bought it.

Here are a couple more examples with **little did I know**:

**Laura:** Do you want to hear a funny story?

**Fred:** Totally.

**Laura:** OK, so I've got this friend. Her and her boyfriend decided to adopt a puppy from a shelter. One guy working at the shelter helped them pick out a dog that was a mutt, but he thought it was a mix between a terrier and a poodle. They thought it would be the perfect pet. Cute, not too big, and not liable to shed.

**Fred:** I'm guessing that didn't go as planned.

**Laura:** Nope! **Little did they know**, but the dog was part Great Dane instead of terrier. He was a cute puppy, but he quickly started growing and never stopped. He weighs close to 60 kilos now and looks like a horse.

**Fred:** Dude, that is funny. They sure got a lot more than what they bargained for.

**Zeb:** How'd the blind date go yesterday?

**Ryan:** Well, the date started off great. Sally was absolutely gorgeous and funny, and we had great conversation.

**Zeb:** Sounds like it went perfectly. Are you going to see her again?

**Ryan:** Umm, no. After dinner she suggested we go for drinks at this one bar she loves. **Little did I know** it was where my crazy ex Becky works. Becky saw us together and chased her out of the bar. It was absolutely insane!

## Way back when Phrase

**Way back when** is just another way of saying a long time ago or back in the day. **Way back when** can be used to refer to something just a few decades ago or even hundreds of years ago depending on the context. For example, you can say **way back when** people used to drive in a horse and buggy instead of cars. In other words, a long time ago, people used horses to get around instead of automobiles. The phrase **way back when** does not refer to a specific time in the past, but a general expression of long ago.

Here are a couple more examples with **way back when**:

**Grandpa:** Did you know that **way back when** ice cream only cost 5 cents?

**Jon:** Wow, awesome! Then, did you eat a lot of ice cream?

**Grandpa:** Not exactly. That was considered a lot more money than it is now. Also, I had a friend who ate too much ice cream and his teeth were full of cavities.

**Jon:** Yuck. I hate cavities.

**Grandpa:** Then you better watch out. Don't eat too much ice cream and be sure to brush your teeth!

**Frieda:** Grammy, is it true you used to be a really good tennis player?

**Grandma:** Sure. I don't want to brag too much, but **way back when**, I was the captain of my school's tennis team.

**Frieda:** Really?

**Grandma:** Really. I was hoping to play professionally, but I got married and had your mommy instead.

**Frieda:** Are you sad you didn't get to do that?

**Grandma:** Heavens no. I've had an amazing life. I wouldn't change it for anything.

## [One's] roots

### Phrase

**[One's] roots** is the relationship between a person and that person or family's place of origin. For example, an Indian family that emigrates to Canada might stay connected to their Indian **roots** by following Indian traditions and holidays even while living in Canada. In other words, they want to keep a relationship with the culture and traditions of India even when living far away from the country they were born in.

This word is related to the word family tree. The people in a family tree are like the branches of a tree, and the place where a family comes from forms the **roots** of the tree, the place where the family was born and cultivated.

Here are a couple more examples with **one's roots**:

**Simon:** Daddy, where was this picture taken?

**Dad:** Ah, that was taken in Montreal. Our family lived there for generations.

**Simon:** Really? Then why do we live here?

**Dad:** Well, I got a job here, so we had to move when you were really little. But don't worry. We'll visit Montreal when you're a little older so you can get in touch with **your roots**.

**Jenny:** Hey Dad, who invented football?

**Dad:** There are a lot of theories on that actually, but most people agree its historical **roots** are back in England.

**Jenny:** Ah, that's why they love football so much, right?

**Dad:** Yes, that's right. And perhaps that's why the sport spread in popularity to such a large part of the globe.

## The other side of the coin

Idiom

**The other side of a coin** refers to another way of thinking about a situation or subject. For example, you might be really excited about going on vacation, but on **the other side of the coin** you're nervous about all the work you have to make up when you get back. On the one hand, you look at your vacation as an exciting new experience you are about to have, but on the other hand, it is a distraction from work and it might be stressful when you get back. When talking about **the other side of the coin** you either talk about something that is better or worse than the original subject or situation you were thinking about.

Here are a couple more examples with **the other side of the coin**:

**Lanny:** I think we should take the highway to get to the beach. It's the fastest way.

**Trisha:** Yeah, but on **the other side of the coin** we have to pay more tolls going that way. I say we take the freeway and avoid most of the heavy tolls.

**Lanny:** But the freeway is usually packed on the weekend. We might be OK, but we might also have bumper to bumper traffic for hours. Are you willing to take that risk?

**Trisha:** That is a good point. Honestly, I'm willing to risk it if you are. I hate paying tolls. We can risk the traffic and use the money we save on tolls to buy something delicious when we get there.

**Heath:** So, what should we do tonight?

**Roger:** I don't know. Video games? Head downtown? Which sounds better?

**Heath:** Well, let's think about this. If we play video games we might beat the monster we've been leveling up to fight for the last week, but on **the other side of the coin** we're probably wasting our youth always staying in and playing video games. If we go downtown, we might be bored, but we might also have the chance to see good-looking girls. What do you think?

**Roger:** I think we should head downtown and if it's boring, we can leave after an hour or two, head home, and play video games.

**Heath:** Now we're thinking! Excellent plan.

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## Quiz

- 1. If someone says they want to get more in touch with their roots what can you assume about them?**
  - a) they want to garden more often
  - b) they want to live in a place with lots of nature
  - c) they want to live far away from the city
  - d) they want to learn more about where they come from
  
- 2. What do you call a diagram of someone's genealogy?**
  - a) a family circle
  - b) a family tree
  - c) a genstory
  - d) a geology
  
- 3. Which phrase is a synonym for way back when?**
  - a) a long time ago
  - b) on my way home
  - c) while leaving
  - d) get away
  
- 4. True or false? The phrase the other side of the coin refers to the hidden taxes and fees that come along with big purchases.**
  - a) true
  - b) false
  
- 5. Fill in the blank with the appropriate answer below. A workaholic is a person who spends \_\_\_\_\_ of their time working?**
  - a) a good chunk
  - b) a wee bit
  - c) some
  - d) giant

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## Writing and Discussion Questions

1. What are your family's roots? Where does your family come from?
2. Is there anything unique about your family tree? What is it?
3. Have you ever taken a DNA test or signed up to a site to learn more about your ancestry? How did it go? If not, why haven't you?
4. What do you spend a good chunk of your day doing?
5. What is something that happened to you recently that was totally unexpected? Describe it using the phrase little did I know.



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## Quiz Answers

1. d   2. b   3. a   4. b   5. a

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### Episode credits

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