

Simplified Speech #171 – What's your house like?

AD-FREE

Episode description

What's unique about your home? In this Simplified Speech episode, Andrew and Suzanne take Culips listeners on an audio tour of their homes. They discuss size, rooms, amenities, renovations, and memories. How do you think a Korean apartment in the middle of Seoul will compare to a duplex in Montreal? Listen and find out!

Fun fact

If you want to buy an apartment in Seoul, the average cost in 2023 is over one billion won (or over \$750,000). Interestingly, the average cost of a detached home is about \$25,000 less than that!

Expressions included in the study guide

- To flex
- Man cave
- In retrospect
- To air out
- Game changer
- Nothing/not anything to write home about





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: Simplified Speech episode 170. What's your house like? Featuring Andrew and Suzanne.

So, Suzanne, as I think you know, and probably many of our listeners know this as well, because I've talked about it a lot on Culips over the last few months, my wife and I are getting ready to move to a new house and a new neighbourhood pretty soon. And to be honest, probably by the time this episode's out, we might have already moved to our new house and our new neighbourhood. So lately, I've just been all about houses and their designs, it's been on my mind nearly 24/7. And since it's on my mind so much, I thought it could be cool if we chat about our homes and what they're like and how we enjoy spending our time in them in this episode today. What do you think about that idea?

Suzanne: I love that idea. That is a great topic. I'm always curious to hear about people's homes and how they make them their own, how they decorate and design their homes. I love watching renovation shows, let me tell ya.

Andrew: Suzanne, do you remember that show Cribs? MTV Cribs?

Suzanne: Oh my gosh.

Andrew: It's got to be about 20 years old. But I always loved that show. For our listeners who don't know, MTV Cribs was this show where MTV is like the hip music channel back in the day on TV. And they would do house tours of celebrities, but celebrities that you probably wouldn't expect. And they did a lot of, like, athletes and hip-hop artists and stuff like that. So it was always really fun to get their house tours in that show.

Suzanne: Yeah, cribs is another name in this case for your house, right? Your crib is your apartment or house where you live, because when you were little, you maybe slept in a crib, right? So that's where that term comes from.

Andrew: Yeah, exactly. So, I guess, Suzanne, we're going to give an audio tour of our cribs today. Of course, we have no video cameras here. We can't do a house tour TV show, but we can do an audio tour. And I thought that would be fun to do in this episode. So why don't we get into our main topic for today, which is like you mentioned earlier, about our cribs, our humble abodes, our houses, right? These are all nicknames for houses. The places, I think, where we probably spend more time in than any other place. At least for me, I spend more time at home than I do anywhere else.

Suzanne: Me too.

Andrew: And Suzanne, I've actually visited your house a few times in the past. And even way back in the day when we first started the Simplified Speech series, I think some of those early episodes were recorded in your dining room.

Suzanne: That's true, you were over here a few times. And I think it was also when you first met my dog, Skoshi.

Andrew: Yeah, Skoshi was just a puppy back then. But our listeners probably have no idea about the kind of house that you live in. So maybe we could start with you. Could you give us an audio tour of your house?

Suzanne: We still live in the same place that you remember, as our main house or main home. We live in an apartment. So it's like a condo in that it's kind of like a two-family home, meaning we live on the upstairs and there's a downstairs apartment as well. But it's like one house that was divided into two apartments. And we have the upstairs apartment.

And in the front of the house, you'll see if you know those typical Montreal stairs, right? Those typical spiral staircases that go up to the house that are a little bit steep and a little bit precarious or maybe dangerous when there's a lot of snow or ice on them. So you have

to be careful. We do have that, and it leads up to kind of a big entrance porch, like a big front porch or terrace.

And then it's a pretty open layout, our house. I don't know if you've seen our kitchen renovation because when we got Skoshi we had not yet renovated the kitchen, but now it's all open. So when you walk into the front door, you'll actually see all of the main living space all at once. You kind of get the open concept view of the house. You see the living room, the dining room, and straight through to the kitchen, and then the bathroom is right after the kitchen. So, it's kind of this very big open space. And then the two bedrooms are off to your right side with the main bedroom at the front, and then the office and guest room in the back.

And then we have a little back porch. It's small, but we have another spiral staircase that connects from the back porch all the way up to the roof. And then we have a huge roof terrace that is almost the whole surface area of the apartment, but on the roof. So it's a wooden platform terrace on top of the roof. And it's so nice in spring and summer and fall to be able to have an outdoor living space, a place to have barbecues and read a book and relax when the weather is nice. So that's a plus, for sure.

Andrew: Yeah, absolutely. And I remember that outdoor space, I've seen that as well. And I always thought, "Wow, that looks lovely." And must be great for, you know, most times of the year, except for the winter. But, yeah, like you said the other three seasons, that you can use it and it's great to have that option.

Suzanne, I think a lot of our listeners, of course, I'm here located in Korea so, I'm thinking from a Korean perspective, but we want to know about the total size. Like just an estimate, how many square feet? I guess that's how we count them in Canada and the USA is square feet, right?

Suzanne: Yeah, square feet. Yeah, I think without the terrace upstairs and without the front porch, I guess it's just under, like, just at 1000 square feet, or like just under, maybe like 995 or something like that. It's not very big for Montreal apartment standards. It's a

good size for two people and a dog. Even if we had a child, I think it would be OK. But after that, I would say that it would get a little bit tight. We're kind of at the limit as far as storage and space. So total living space indoors without the terrace would be about 1000, a little under 1000 square feet.

Andrew: I think that's a good size for two people and a dog, like you said, not too small, not too big. And you know, it was funny, I was talking with some of my students recently about Canadian houses. And they said, "Wow, Canadian houses are so big. That's amazing." Because here in Korea, we do tend to live on the small side. And I said, "Well, that's not always a good thing." Like if you have a big house, a couple thousand square feet or larger even, that's a lot of upkeep and a lot of cleaning and maintenance for the yard and garden that you have to do. So it's all about trying to find that balance between, you know, you don't want to feel cramped or like you have too little space but you also don't want to have too much space, I think. I mean, some people might like **to flex** and just have a big home. And that's fine, but not me, not really.

Suzanne: Yeah, a lot of friends of mine and women friends will say that about handbags. Like if you get a big handbag, you're gonna fill it with lots of stuff. So it's just going to be heavy on your back, right? If you have the space, you're going to fill it with stuff. So sometimes it's nice to have a pared down, maybe smaller space so that you can make it more minimal in your living.

Andrew: I like that analogy. I've never heard that one about the handbag before. But that makes a lot of sense. I like that. To be honest, though, I am a little bit jealous because your house sounds like exactly the right size that I would love to live in, because where my wife and I are living now, I don't know exactly, but I think this is around 650, maybe 700 square feet. So not too much smaller than yours, but just a little. And when we do move to our new house soon, it's going to be just slightly even smaller than that. So I have more small living in my future.

But I'll give you the little audio tour of where I'm living right now in my apartment. So, in English when I'm speaking, I call it an apartment but in Korea, we wouldn't call it that. It's

not really an apartment in the Korean language. They call it a villa. And so the difference between an apartment and a villa here is that an apartment is usually in a bigger complex and a villa or they say villa is in a smaller building.

So the building that we're in now has, I don't know how many units, does it have? Probably about 12 units. I think there are five stories and some of the stories have two units, and some have three. We're on the fourth floor of the five-story building. And we have no elevator, which means that we have to walk up four flights of stairs just to come to our house, which personally I actually like, because it gets a lot of steps into my daily walking routine. But I think some of my neighbours don't like it, because I can kind of hear them huffing and puffing as they're walking past our door. So, it's an older building and that's why it doesn't have an elevator. I think most newer villas these days probably have elevators in them, but ours doesn't, which is good for me, but maybe bad for some people.

But yeah, when you get to our unit itself, you can come in the front door and immediately you are facing the Culips studio. So, this little room that I'm recording in right now, I nicknamed the Culips studio, and my wife nicknamed the **man cave**, because it's kind of my zone. So, it's half computer room and half closet. Like, Suzanne, you can see behind me right now, unfortunately, our listeners can't. But behind me is my coat closet. And I always have my coat closet open when I record because if I don't, then this little room, the Culips studio, is too echoey and the sound and the audio is not very good. So when I first moved into this apartment, originally, I was really worried. I thought, "Oh no, how can I record Culips, it's too echoey." But then I realized that if I open the closet, then my voice will be muffled a little bit by the coats and that seems to fix the problem.

So this is my little zone. It's a very, very small room, probably only about 2 metres by 2 metres, or maybe even smaller than that. But it's where I do all of my work. So I have my desk in here, I have my computer in here, I have my recording equipment in here. And I think it's meant to be a closet. Like the people who were using the apartment before us, they had it set up as their closet. But it's my little workspace now.

Suzanne: I feel like so many closets have become studios these days. So, that tracks.

Andrew: And then beside this little room, actually what you see next when you come in from the main entrance way, is our kitchen/dining room. So it's the biggest room in the house. And it's got our dining room table. It's got all of our kitchen stuff in it. And, yeah, it's just like a kitchen/dining room. Nothing really too exciting in that room. Although I will say that that's probably where we spend most of our time together. So if my wife and I are hanging out together, that's our little hangout zone. The bathroom, unfortunately, is very poorly placed right beside the kitchen. It's kind of just stuck in the corner. And **in retrospect**, I think it's not a very good place to put a bathroom. Do you agree with that?

Suzanne: Same, we have the same situation and totally agree.

Andrew: Yeah. And another thing that's unfortunate about our bathroom is it has no window. So there's no way to ventilate the space at all, which is really unfortunate because, you know, I didn't know this moving in, we couldn't tell moving in, but now that we've lived in this apartment for a few years, is that occasionally there will be some smells from either upstairs or downstairs that kind of waft into our bathroom through the pipes.

And sometimes you just want to air it out, but there's no window there **to air it out**. So that is unfortunate. That's probably the biggest minus of this house, I would say, is the bathroom space. It's also very small. And like I said to my wife recently, it's like, "Thank god that we don't really hang out in the bathroom, you know?" It's just sort of there for showering and one other task. And that's kind of it because otherwise it could be pretty uncomfortable. But since we don't use it that much, just for the necessities, I think it's all right.

So there's the little bathroom in the corner off of the kitchen, and then the only other room we have is our main bedroom, it's a one-bedroom place. And that is also where my wife has her home office set up, so it's kind of bedroom/home office. And, yeah, she spends her time working in there. I spend my time working in here and we meet in the middle in the dining room to hang out.

And then we have a veranda as well, which is nice. And my wife's got all of her plants out there. It's also our kind of laundry room area. We've got our washer and dryer out there. And it's also a storage space.

But, yeah, so it's good. It works. But I do wish that we had like that little bit of extra space, you know, maybe for a living room would be nice. We don't have any outdoor space like you do. But, thankfully, in our new house that we're going to be moving to, although technically, our house space is decreasing a little bit, we are getting a yard. So, we'll have a lot more outside space. So, I think that'll even things out. And, yeah, make it much, much more open and better overall, I think, yeah.

Suzanne: That's a **game changer** when you have outdoor space. It definitely changes the morale, just being able to step outside and be in nature for a minute, even if it's just the backyard.

Andrew: Yeah, absolutely. I'm looking forward to that yard a lot. That's like the biggest thing that I'm looking forward to.

So, Suzanne, I told you something bad about my place, and that is the bathroom and the no window in the bathroom and the poor location of the bathroom. But I don't want to go into negatives, let's not be negative. Let's think about positives. What do you think is the best thing about your house? What is your favourite thing?

Suzanne: Well, we did renovate our kitchen in 2017. And I'll tell ya, it's great. We got to design it, we got to work with the designer and the contractor. And that was really great. So that for sure is something wonderful in the house. I also would say that the terrace upstairs. Like, I think renovating the kitchen and the terrace upstairs both add a lot of value to our apartment, as well, for resale purposes. And we fixed up the terrace, we've actually redone it over the last couple years. And now we have like lights up there, we have like new furniture. So, it's like really an oasis up there. Yeah, I would say those two are the top things.

I would also say that maybe the location where we live, our neighbourhood is a really great neighbourhood. It has been up and coming for a while. And now it's really like a desired place. Like it's hard to find apartments. It's easy to sell an apartment in our area, because people are just gobbling them up. It's very much like a desired place. And what's great about that, too, is that so many stores and fun things have been popping up around, great restaurants. So it's fun to live in this neighbourhood.

Andrew: It was always a nice neighbourhood. But maybe it wasn't that kind of up-and-coming neighbourhood, or I don't know exactly what to say. Maybe it wasn't that kind of "it" neighbourhood when you first moved there. But then you get to see it build and see it grow and become like this kind of hot place, right? That's what people in Korea say when a neighbourhood is really happening. They say, "Oh, it's a hot place." And I agree, you can see that develop, is kind of cool to be there all along.

Suzanne: Yeah. So I think to sum of the main three things that I love about this apartment are the terrace, the renovated, cool kitchen, and our location.

Andrew: Yeah, they always say when you're talking about real estate, location, location, location, right? It doesn't really matter what kind of home you own. Doesn't matter what condition it's in, if the location is good, then the home is good. And I think there's a lot to that.

For me, what would I say is the best? Well, I don't want to be too negative. But I **don't think my home is like anything to write home about**. It's not fantastic. But I would say what I like is like this is the first place where my wife and I have lived together in. This is like our first home after getting married. So it really reflects both of our tastes, which is cool. Before getting married I lived alone for so many years and I really lived kind of like a bachelor, right? And now this was the first time where we decorated the house together. We spent not a lot of money but a little bit of money to like make it look nice, and we bought new appliances after we got married. So, you know, the fridge is new, the washer and dryer are new. So I like how everything inside the apartment really works well. And it's just such a nice convenience to have after not having those things for so long.

I think I would have to say my favourite part of the apartment is this little Culips studio that I'm in. Like, I like how I have a zone of my own and it's not like I don't like spending time with my wife. It's nothing like that at all. But it's nice to have like this little area where I can come in and relax and kick my feet up and just do some work or watch some YouTube or something like that. I think that's my favourite part of the place.

Suzanne: It's really important to have your own zone.

Andrew: Exactly. So, Sue, I'm gonna put you on the spot here. And if you don't have a good answer that comes to mind right away, that is OK. But I think I just kind of gave away the answer to this question that I'm going to ask you in my previous answer, because I wanted to ask you if you had like a good memory, something that you've experienced in your home that you could share with us? And I guess for me, that answer would be, like, moving into this place together with my wife for the first time after getting married and kind of turning this apartment into a place of our own. That's like a really good memory that I'll always have. What about you? Do you have something that's, like, similar in your apartment?

Suzanne: Also, this is the first place that we lived together.

Andrew: Wow. That's wild, you've only lived in the one place in Montreal?

Suzanne: Me? Yeah. So, Olivier's lived in two other places, which I would visit when we were long distance. But then he bought this apartment.

Andrew: I moved around so much in Montreal. I lived in, like, four different places in 5 years. So that's awesome that you've been so stable.

Suzanne: Yeah. I think when you're renting, too, I don't know, if you owned here, but when he was renting, it was definitely like moving around more. But then when we bought this place, you know, we really put down roots, wanted to renovate, you know? We've had so many celebrations here, too, and really gone through some hard stuff, but like really come out the other side. You know, like a lot of life events happened in this apartment. So

yeah, and I think this year, it will be 11 years that Olivier is in this house and 10 years that I'm in this house. So, it's a big milestone.

Andrew: Yeah, that's awesome. Congratulations to the both of you. That's really mind-blowing to me that you've been in that same location the whole time that you were in Montreal, I didn't realize that. But that's great. I guess over all of that time, you would really set down some roots, right? That's, yeah, that's amazing.

Suzanne: For sure. And see the neighbourhood change, right?

Andrew: All right, Suzanne, it's time for our members-only bonus content. And we're gonna keep this conversation going just for like 5 more minutes, because I think we've already been talking for pretty long in this episode, Sue. So, we've got some rapid-fire questions here, OK? Let's keep our answers quick. Keep them flowing. And we'll have some fun here in the bonus section.

So, Suzanne, you already talked about doing your kitchen reno. But I'm curious, just for fun, let's say you had an unlimited budget, and you could upgrade only one room in your home. Which one would you choose and what would you change?

Suzanne: So, we actually have this idea, but it wouldn't be one room.

Andrew: Well, you've already broken the rules of the question.

Suzanne: I broke the rules, Andrew! Maybe the bathroom. Yeah, we would redo the bathroom. Yeah, for sure. The thing is, though, can I tell you about our big idea?

Andrew: Yeah, yeah, yeah, go for it. I want to know. Sorry, I was being rude. But I do want to hear this idea.

Suzanne: OK, so the easy answer is the bathroom for sure. We'll probably do that because we need to, like we'll probably do that in the next few years. I'm assuming that's on the plan. One of the things that we would love to do, but this would be a kind of a project, would be to take the terrace down upstairs and build another floor with a bedroom

and a bathroom and like a little studio. So, like a master bedroom and a little like studio up there. And that would be my office, woman cave, maybe, she-shed, as they say. We'd have to create a staircase. You know, it would be like knocking down walls and like building walls and things but that is the idea. We would probably make, either do half a floor, the bedroom and studio would look out onto a smaller terrace, or we would build a whole other floor and then just have another roof terrace on top of that.

Andrew: Yeah, I was gonna ask about what you would do with the terrace because it would be terrible to just get rid of it. But if you could put it somewhere else or on top of the addition, then, I'd say go for it, sounds like a great idea.

Suzanne: Yeah. So, that's an idea. That's definitely something to think about. And you, what about you?

Andrew: If I had an unlimited budget? Yeah, I guess I would fix the bathroom, because it's the worst room, it needs the most help. But I would feel so bad doing that, because it's not where I spend the most time, it's where I spend the least amount of time. Where I spend the most amount of time is the kitchen/dining room room. So, you know what? I probably would fix the kitchen/dining room and just leave the bad bathroom.

Suzanne: Well, maybe you could do the kitchen/dining room and then, you know, have a little budget to figure out a ventilation or something for the bathroom, like, fix the feature that's annoying for you in the bathroom.

Andrew: It's not as fun to talk about this question when it's a rental, you know? Like, I'm just renting my place. So, you know, I don't want to fix this place for free for the landlord per se. But if it were my own home, I would probably fix the bathroom because you've got to deal with the biggest problem first, right? It would just be an amazing bathroom by the end. An unlimited budget and go wild, go crazy.

Suzanne: I actually have just a quick question. Do you have a bathtub in your bathroom?

Andrew: No, no, no. So, it's like, bathtubs are not very common in Korea. It's very small, Suzanne. And what might shock you if you're not used to Korean bathrooms is that there's no like partition for the shower. So, when you shower, it's just like a tiled room and everything will get wet. So, the sink will get wet, the toilet will get wet. You know, it's like the whole room is waterproof.

Suzanne: Like a wet room?

Andrew: Yeah, it's just like a wet room. So I think that's why we get some odors from, I don't know if it's upstairs or downstairs or wherever. But it's an old building. And it gets a little funky sometimes. So, yes, that's one good thing about moving out of this place very soon is that I get to leave it behind.

Rapid-fire question #2, Suzanne. And I think we failed at being rapid for the first one. So let's see if we can do it for the second one. If your home had a secret room or a hidden feature, what kind of secret room or hidden feature would you like to have?

Suzanne: I think it would come back down to like a little studio. You already know I have like a tent that I put up and I, and then it becomes my little secret room.

Andrew: For listeners, just to explain, Suzanne's got this cool kind of recording tent that you can set up in your room to go into it and it acts as, like, a kind of soundproof recording studio, pop-up style.

Suzanne: Yeah, and I don't do it every day. Like I use it from time to time. But I would love it if it could like be, you know, like in a closet or something like a small space where I could just slip in and do my stuff.

Andrew: I'm thinking, like, there's a bookshelf. And there's a book on the bookshelf that you pull and opens a secret door, and you can go in.

For me, I'm gonna go with, now I'm contradicting myself a little bit here because I said one of the things that I like about my place is that I have to walk up the stairs. But I think I

would put in a little secret elevator just for my wife and the dog. I probably wouldn't use it too much, but just for them, because I think they would appreciate the elevator. So maybe the secret elevator that goes right to our apartment. Maybe the other people in our building don't know about it. It's very sneaky. Nah, I would share it with everybody. Come on, gotta share it.

Last question. Do you have an unusual or quirky feature of your home that you love, something unusual or quirky?

Suzanne: Yeah, I don't know if I love it. But there's a really cool, like, exposed beam in the middle, and it kind of like divides the living and dining room. But it's, you know, a support beam. And it's kind of, you know, it gives it a little character, gives it a little definition, if you will. So, yeah, I would say I like that. What about you, Andrew?

Andrew: So, I believe the building that I'm in was built in 1992. So it's quite, you know, it's getting up there. It's a little bit old. And there are some original features from when it was first built, including this kind of video telecom. So if somebody rings your doorbell, there's like this telephone that you can pick up to talk to the people at the front, like an intercom, but it's also got a little video camera in the telephone. And it just seems like a really outdated piece of technology. Like I'm positive that they don't make this anymore. And I'm also positive if it broke, it would be impossible to find a replacement. So I never use it because I don't want it to break because I think that we'd have to just buy another one. Also, the telecom to the front door is like one step. So, if somebody knocks on my door, I just open the front door. There's no real need to use the telecom. But I think it's kind of quirky. And as somebody who likes old and vintage things, especially technology related, it's kind of cool just to see, like, oh, yeah, that's how they used to live back in the day. Like, that's a kind of weird telephone-TV contraption. So I'm gonna go with that. Yeah.

Well, everyone, I think that will bring us to the end of today's episode. Thanks for listening, and great job on completing an English study session here with Suzanne and me today.

Suzanne: And now we'd like to throw things over to you. You've heard what Andrew and I have had to say about our homes, but we'd like to know what you think. So share your opinion with us and the Culips community by leaving a comment on our website, Culips.com.

Andrew: Exactly. We'd love to know what you have to say. And we hope that you'll contribute to the conversation with a comment or a post on our forum. Take care, everyone, and we'll talk to you next time. Bye!

Suzanne: Bye, guys.

Andrew: That brings us to the end of this lesson. Talk to you next time. Bye!

Detailed Explanations

To flex

Verb (slang)

Towards the beginning of the episode, Andrew and Suzanne are comparing the sizes of their homes. Andrew remarks that Suzanne's 1000 square-foot apartment seems to be a good size for a couple and a dog. He says that bigger isn't always better and he thinks sometimes people with big homes are just trying **to flex**.

You may be familiar with the original meaning of the verb **to flex**, which is to bend your arm or leg and contract your muscles. If you're looking in a mirror and trying to see if you've built any muscle from working out, you might **flex** your biceps and take a look. Based on this idea of showing off your muscles, this African-American Vernacular English (AAVE) version of **to flex** means to show off.

You can **flex** your possessions, accomplishments, or appearance. **Flex** can be used as an intransitive verb (does not take a direct object) or a transitive verb (does take a direct object). For example, take a look at this intransitive sentence: "She's always **flexing**. It's a little annoying." You might post a photo of yourself on Instagram in a stylish new suit and use **flex** transitively: "Just wanted to **flex** my new threads for a sec."

If you want to specify who you're showing off to, you can turn **flex** into a phrasal verb and say **flex on [someone]**. For instance, you could say, "He got a promotion recently and he keeps **flexing on his coworkers** with his big new office."

Flexing can be a good thing in moderation but, just like showing off, it's often considered to be arrogant or self-centred behaviour.

Here are a couple more examples with **to flex**:

Jessica: Did you see Hailey's most recent posts on Instagram?

Greg: I did. The pictures from Miami, right?

Jessica: Yeah, she uploaded so many photos of her getting expensive cocktails and going to exclusive clubs. I'm glad she had fun, but I kind of feel like she's **flexing** too hard.

Anika: That dressing room is small ... OK, how's this outfit? Is the top too tight?

Leo: Oh my gosh, no, it's perfect! Yes, girl, **flex**!

Man cave

Noun

Andrew describes to Suzanne what it's like to go up the stairs and enter the front door of his apartment. As soon as you walk in the door, he says, you can see the Culips studio, his very small recording studio that was used as a closet area by the previous tenants. Andrew says he does all his work in that room and his wife has jokingly named it the **man cave**.

A **man cave** is a term for a room in a house where a man can escape his responsibilities and spend time enjoying traditionally masculine activities. The term has been around since the 90s but has gained more popularity in recent years. A spacious **man cave** might be furnished with a big TV, a pool table, video game consoles, a nice sound system, and so on. The decor and colors are also often more traditionally masculine, such as cool colors or wood features.

Some have criticized this term for perpetuating gender stereotypes and the idea that men wish to escape their wives and family. However, the term is also often used jokingly, ironically, or playfully. There are also female equivalents for the term, like woman cave or she-shed, as Suzanne mentions later in the episode. It's up to you whether you think there's a space in your home that could be called a **man cave**. If you'd like to avoid gendered language, you can call a **man cave** an entertainment room or a game room.

Here are a couple more examples with **man cave**:

Rick: Hey, babe. What would you think if I converted the basement to a sort of **man cave**? I could put a nice sofa and our spare TV down there so the guys and I can watch Monday Night Football without bothering you.

Nancy: That's not a bad idea! We hardly use the space, anyways.

Jonathan: Welcome to the new place!

Sarah: Wow, it's spacious in here. Lots of natural light, too! This is a great upgrade from your previous apartment.

Jonathan: Yeah, Jennifer and I are thrilled. So let me give you a tour. Over here is our bathroom, and here's the master bedroom ... We were debating about whether to use this room over here as a guest room, but eventually we decided it would be nice for me to have a room for myself, like a little **man cave** where I can work from home or game.

Sarah: That sounds great.

In retrospect

Expression

As Andrew moves on from describing his man cave, he tells Suzanne about his kitchen and the only bathroom in the apartment, which can be found in the corner right next to the kitchen. **In retrospect**, he says, that's not a great place to put a bathroom.

In retrospect is a really useful expression you can use when you're reflecting on the past or things you wish had or hadn't happened. Basically, you can start a statement with **in retrospect** to mean "knowing what I know now" or "now that I have more experience."

In Andrew's example, although he wasn't the one who designed the apartment, having lived there for years he now understands that the location of the bathroom in his apartment is not ideal. **In retrospect**, he would have put the bathroom in a different place.

In retrospect is often used with part of the third conditional. The third conditional is formed by using the past perfect in the "if" statement ("If I had designed this apartment") and would + the present perfect in the outcome statement ("I would have put the bathroom somewhere else"). You can replace the "if" statement with **in retrospect** and use would + the present perfect for a past hypothetical choice. For example, "**In retrospect**, I would have declined the promotion. I have way too many job responsibilities now." This also works with other modals, like should, could, or might. For instance, "**In retrospect**, I should have listened to my mother."

There are lots of synonyms for **in retrospect**, such as **in hindsight**, **looking back**, **thinking back**, or **on re-examination**.

Here's one more example with **in retrospect**:

Rudy: Ugh ...

Wanda: What's wrong?

Rudy: My stomach hurts. I'm too full.

Wanda: How many pieces of pizza did you eat?

Rudy: Uh ... five.

Wanda: Are you serious?

Rudy: Yeah ... **In retrospect**, that was a terrible idea. I should have stopped at three.

Wanda: No kidding! **In retrospect**, you also should have saved a few more pieces for your wife! I only had two!

To air out

Phrasal verb

In addition to the poor location of the bathroom, Andrew is bothered by the fact that it has no windows. He says that sometimes smells from other apartments waft in through the pipes and it would be nice to be able to **air it out** once in a while, but he can't do that without a window.

To air something out means to expose something to fresh air so you can dry it or get rid of bad smells. This can be used with objects (for instance, running shoes) or spaces (for instance, the bathroom). For example, you could say, "I think we need to **air out** the garage for a couple hours. It's smelling a bit musty."

To air out is typically used transitively, but you can also use it intransitively. For instance, you could say, "As the old towels **aired out**, the strange smell began to disappear."

You can also use **air something out** in a figurative sense. When someone says, for example, "I'd like to **air out** my concerns about the contract," she means that she wants to openly expose and discuss some issues. Much like **airing out** an object in the fresh air, you can use **air out** to mean discussing something openly. You may have heard the idiom "**to air** one's grievances" before. This is very similar to **air out** and means to openly express or discuss one's frustrations.

Here are a couple more examples with **to air out**:

Kyle: What's that smell?

Ilana: I don't smell anything.

Kyle: There's definitely a strange smell in this room ... Oh, it's your hiking boots! Yuck. I'm gonna put these on the front porch **to air out**.

Ilana: Oh, sorry about that. Thank you!

Monica: I just read that ventilation in some apartment buildings can be so poor that it can have negative effects on your health.

Ben: I didn't know that. That's scary. Do you think our apartment is poorly ventilated?

Monica: It's hard to say without doing a carbon dioxide test, but I think we should try to open the windows and **air it out** once a week to be safe.



Game changer

Noun

Andrew tells Suzanne that the home he and his wife are moving into will have a yard, unlike his current apartment. Although he will be trading off some square footage inside, Suzanne thinks it will be worth it. She says being able to step outside and enjoy some outdoor space can be a real **game changer** for your home.

A **game changer** is an idiomatic noun that refers to anything that dramatically alters a situation, activity, or outcome. Something that changes the way a game is played must be pretty significant, so this term is only used to describe major changes. For example, the innovation of smartphones was a **game changer** for communication and access to information online.

When Suzanne says having an outdoor space is a **game changer**, she means that this one amenity can make an average home so much better. Similarly, when you move from an apartment with a tiny kitchen and no dishwasher, having an island and a dishwasher in your new place is a complete **game changer**. All the time you usually spend doing dishes can be cut in half, if not more.

Game changer is most commonly used in a positive way, but you may encounter it used in a negative way. For instance, a scandal surrounding a politician's behaviour could be a **game changer** for an election.

Here are a couple more examples with **game changer**:

Frederick: How are you enjoying your new apartment, Becca?

Becca: It might not sound like much of a difference, but upgrading from a studio to a two-bedroom apartment has been a real **game changer**. I used to eat, sleep, and work all in the same space. Now I can use one room for work and exit that space when I'm done to enjoy the rest of my night. It makes my work-life balance much easier.

Frederick: That's so good to hear.

Veronica: You look really well rested today.

Adam: I'm feeling great. You know how I was having some sleep issues because of my allergies? Ever since I got an air purifier for my bedroom, I've slept like a baby. It's a **game changer**, that's for sure.

Veronica: I'll have to get one for my husband. He has pretty bad allergies, too.

Nothing/not anything to write home about

Idiom

Andrew may have some complaints about his apartment, but he has some very positive feelings towards the space, too. Although the place **is nothing to write home about**, he says he likes it because it's the first apartment he's shared with his wife and the decor reflects both of their tastes and personalities.

If you live far from home and occasionally stay in touch with your family, you might send them letters or emails about major updates, life events, and exciting news. However, you probably won't bother sending details about mundane events or mediocre things in your life. In this way, **nothing to write home about** is an idiom that means not particularly special or interesting.

For example, after returning from an uneventful trip to a neighbouring city, you can tell your friends "I had an OK time, but it **wasn't anything to write home about**."

Don't forget the rules about double negatives: although you'll occasionally hear them in daily conversation, they are not technically grammatically correct in English. Unless you're using slang on purpose, you should avoid saying, "This restaurant isn't **nothing to write home about**" and instead choose either a positive verb + nothing (this restaurant is **nothing to write home about**) or a negative verb + anything (this restaurant **isn't anything to write home about**).

Here are a couple more examples with **nothing/not anything to write home about**:

Dana: Wow, that was such a great concert. I'm so glad I finally got to see them perform.

Trevor: You enjoyed it? I kind of thought the acoustics in the venue were bad. The singer also didn't sound as good as she does on the album. Personally, I **didn't think the show was anything to write home about**.

Dana: That may be true, but they're one of my favourite bands and I was thrilled that they played all of my favourite songs.

Trevor: Well, in any case, I'm happy you had fun!

Marcus: Have you tried that new coffee shop on Main Street yet?

Emily: Yeah, I went last week! To be honest, the coffee itself **was nothing to write home about**, but I ate an amazing cream cheese pastry while I was there.



Quiz

- 1. Which of the following means the opposite of the slang version of “to flex”?**
 - a) to show off
 - b) to be humble
 - c) to work out
 - d) to be lazy

- 2. If a friend starts a sentence with “in retrospect,” what will they probably talk about next?**
 - a) a plan for the weekend
 - b) a wish for the future
 - c) a fun fact they just learned
 - d) something that they wish had or hadn’t happened in the past

- 3. Your spouse tells you that the movie they just watched was “nothing to write home about.” What do they mean?**
 - a) it was mediocre
 - b) it was hard to describe
 - c) it was really exciting
 - d) it was too long

- 4. Your mother asks you to air out your gym shoes. What does she mean?**
 - a) put them outside in the fresh air
 - b) take them out of the closet
 - c) wave them around in the air
 - d) wash them

- 5. Which of the following is NOT a good synonym for game changer?**
 - a) breakthrough
 - b) innovation
 - c) transformation
 - d) adjustment

Writing and Discussion Questions

1. Please describe what your home is like. Is it an apartment or a single-family home? How many rooms are there? What do you like about it? What don't you like about it?
2. In retrospect, what would you change about the layout of your home? Why?
3. When you moved from your last home to your current home, were there game changers (for example, a dishwasher, a backyard, or more space)? Please describe. If not, what amenity or feature would be a game changer for your home?
4. Is it expensive to buy a home in your area? Do you know any homeowners? Could you see yourself buying a home in the future if you haven't already? Why or why not?
5. Please describe your dream home. Talk about the location, the exterior, and the interior. Do you prefer a modern or traditional home? How would you decorate it?

Quiz Answers

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

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