

Simplified Speech #185 – Nintendo power

AD-FREE

Episode description

In this fun episode, Kassy and Andrew share their love of video games with each other. They mostly talk about games from the Nintendo franchise, which is famous for characters like Mario and Pikachu. Kassy chats about the cooperative game she has been playing with her husband on her Nintendo Switch recently and Andrew mentions his desire to buy a Switch himself. If you have nostalgia for classic Nintendo games, then this is the episode for you!

Fun fact

Nintendo did not start out as a video game company – in fact, it was founded in 1889 as a producer of playing cards. Its first at-home console was called the Color TV-Game and it was first released in 1977.

Expressions included in the study guide

- toss-up
- to mull something over
- to drop the ball
- one's jam
- to trash talk / trash talker
- in one's wheelhouse



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 185, "Nintendo power." Featuring Andrew and Kassy. Hey there Kassy, what's up?

Kassy: Hey Andrew, hey listeners, I'm doing well and it's great to be here today.

Andrew: So, Kassy, today we're going to talk about one of the best toys, dare I say, ever. Best toys ever. Because we're going to talk about Nintendo, and I guess more specifically, the Nintendo Switch. You know, there's lots of different versions and lots of different kinds of Nintendo consoles, but today we'll try and talk about the Switch. And Kassy, I have a quick question for you right off the bat. Do you agree with my statement that Nintendo is one of the best toys ever?

Kassy: Yeah, it's one of the most innovative and exciting and it's always constantly changing, which I think is pretty cool.

Andrew: Kassy, what was your favorite toy as a kid when you were growing up?

Kassy: Honestly, probably my Game Boy Advance, which was one of the earlier iterations of Nintendo.

Andrew: I loved my Nintendo. I had an original Nintendo Entertainment System, Super Nintendo, Nintendo 64, Game Boy. I was big into Nintendo, but I would probably say that Lego was my favorite toy. Anyways, it's **a toss-up**. I loved both of them, Nintendo and Lego. But today, we're going to focus on Nintendo. Kassy, you brought this topic up to me. You suggested it because you've been playing a little Nintendo Switch lately. Is that correct?

Kassy: Yeah, I've been meaning to bite the bullet and buy the Nintendo Switch for at least two years, but I kept going back and forth. Will I really use it? Is it worth the money? I'm not a big gamer. Should I buy it? Should I not? And finally, I did.

Andrew: It's so funny and I'm laughing over here because I am exactly the same way. I guess I haven't bitten the bullet yet. I haven't made the decision to buy a Nintendo Switch, but I've **been mulling it over** here for probably the same amount of time as you have, Kassy, for at least two years. And even recently, I was at a big-box store here in Korea, and I went to their electronic section, and I was looking at the Nintendo Switches and all the games that are displayed behind the glass. And it really reminded me of when I was a kid, because I would do the same thing when I was a kid. I would go and look at the Nintendo games, and I was just like, "Oh, I want to buy one so bad." And there were some Nintendo Switch catalogs at the store that you could take home with you, and they were beautiful, like big, glossy catalogs. And there was one that was Mario-themed and one which was *Zelda*-themed. And so, I took them home, and I put them on my kitchen table, and for like maybe the last two or three weeks. This is just a recent story, by the way. And like, for the last two or three weeks, I've been paging through them every time I'm sitting at the kitchen table, and I just noticed, now that I'm thinking about it, that they've disappeared off the table. I think my wife maybe put them away or threw them out, because she was probably tired of me talking about buying a Nintendo Switch. Literally every time we sat down to have a meal together. So, yeah, I know where you're coming from because I'm kind of in that situation now. But let's get back to your story. You bit the bullet, and you finally bought the Switch.

Kassy: Yeah, one reason why we decided to do it now is that my husband and I, when we hang out, you know, we love to play sports together, and we used to watch TV shows and movies together, but I don't know if it's just a lack of options on Netflix or if we just have different tastes, but we don't really like watching TV shows together anymore. We'll watch our own shows. So, we needed a new thing that we could do, and we also wanted

something that was one cooperative and two that we could use in either language. Sometimes it's fun for us to do something in English together, and sometimes it's fun for us to do something in Korean together. And the Switch is really cool, because it's one of those video game consoles that is not locked to a specific country. Listeners who are big gamers probably know, but a lot of consoles, their games are locked to a specific region, so that means that if you buy a game in Japan, you can really only play it there, and you can't play it in the US. But Switch games are unlocked, so they are compatible all around the world, and you can switch the languages super easily, so sometimes we'll play games in English, and I'll get super frustrated, or no, my husband will get super frustrated, and then sometimes we'll play games in Korean, and I'll get a little flustered, but we have so much fun.

Andrew: That's awesome. So, what game have you been playing?

Kassy: I really love this game called *Overcooked*.

Andrew: *Overcooked*, OK. Sounds intriguing, and I have to say, I'm not too familiar with the Switch catalog, so you might have to break this game down for me and for some of our listeners.

Kassy: *Overcooked* is a co-op game, which stands for cooperative, meaning you have to work together to play it. And you pick your own little character and they're chefs, and then you get placed in this virtual kitchen, and you have to prepare some food in a chaotic, crazy environment with things flying at you and fire, popping up in random places in the kitchen, in a certain time limit. It's hilarious and super frustrating.

Andrew: Super frustrating? How is it frustrating? Like, it's just difficult to complete the level in the amount of time, or something like that?

Kassy: It is, but you really have to delegate roles properly if you want to get things smoothly running in the kitchen, so you might be trying to make something, and you're telling your partner, "No, don't do that, go put this in the oven, or get it out of there before it burns!" And, ah, it's so funny.

Andrew: That could be frustrating because it's a co-op game, right? So, you're working together with a partner, in this case, I'm assuming your husband, and, you know, if your partner is **dropping the ball**, sometimes that can be frustrating, right? And dropping the ball just means not doing the job properly, or as well as he should be doing.

Kassy: Yeah, I feel like this kind of game could destroy relationships, but it could also really help you grow and work through conflicts together.

Andrew: I also played Switch recently. It's kind of funny. I don't know, maybe these two things are connected that I've been wanting to buy a Switch, and that I also had an opportunity to play a Switch recently. But, yeah, this is kind of funny story. So, one of my friends got married, and, you know, when people in Korea get married before the wedding, they often invite you out to, like, have a lunch or a dinner together, and just to hang out before the wedding happens. And so, because my friend was getting married, she invited me out for lunch, and she brought her fiancé around. I mean, they're married now, so now it's her husband, but at the time, he was the fiancé. And we also went with a couple of other friends, and I didn't bring my wife. My wife was traveling at the time, so I was solo. And I guess the fiancé, I had never met him before, and I don't really know, but I think maybe in the back of his mind, he thought, "Oh, this might be a little bit awkward meeting a foreigner." You know, like, a lot of Korean people in this situation maybe get a little bit nervous. They're not really sure if I can speak Korean, they're not really confident in their own English-speaking abilities. And so, for whatever reason, I'm not sure, he brought his Nintendo Switch along. So almost, you know, like, a couple of minutes after I met him for the first time, he was like, "I brought my Nintendo Switch." And I was like, dope, that's awesome, like, "We should play later!" But I was kind of like, you know, just joking, I'm like,

we're not really gonna end up playing Nintendo Switch after our lunch today, are we? But, you know, I said that because I am a Nintendo fan, and he was really stoked and pumped up. As soon as he heard that, he was like, "Yeah, we got to play Nintendo!" So, we ate lunch, and then afterwards, he was like, "Let's play Nintendo, let's do it." And so, one of my other friends said, "OK, let's go back to our apartment, and we can play Nintendo there." So, the five of us, we all went back to our other friends' apartment, and we hooked up the Nintendo, and we ended up playing, like, all afternoon. We played Nintendo for, like, probably three hours.

Kassy: Oh, that's so fun. What kind of games did you guys play?

Andrew: Yeah, so some unique games, like ones that I had never played before. For example, the first game we played was this kind of drumming game, and Kassy, you know those games, like, here in Korea, it's called *Pump*, and in Canada, North America, there's a similar game called *Dance Dance Revolution*.

Kassy: Yeah, I don't know *Pump*, but I know *Dance Dance Revolution*.

Andrew: OK, so like the idea of the game, it's like a rhythm matching game. You have to dance to the colored squares that are going across the screen, and you have to hit the dance movement in rhythm with graphics on the screen. Well, this game is the same idea, but instead of dancing, you're holding the two parts of the switch controller, and you actually have to drum. You have to hit a drum in rhythm with what's shown on the screen. So that was fun, and it was competitive. Like, everybody would be drumming to the same song, but your score would be different depending on how accurate you were. So, it was kind of funny. We kind of looked crazy, I think, drumming. Fake drum sets. Fake drumming. Yeah, it wasn't even a drum set. It was like, I want to say it was a Japanese-style drum. It's kind of like some Asian-style drum. It wasn't Korean style, so I have a feeling it was a Japanese game with a Japanese drum, but really cool. And, you know, I thought, oh, I'm going to be good at this because I play drums and I like music, and I think

that I have a good sense of rhythm, but it was harder than I was anticipating. But, yeah, it was still fun. And after that, we played *Mario Kart*, which was a blast. I hadn't played *Mario Kart* in so, so long, but the amazing thing about *Mario Kart* for the switch is that the controller configuration is exactly the same as it's always been. So, I used to play *Mario Kart* way back in the day on Super Nintendo and Nintendo 64, and I don't even want to guess about how many hours I've logged playing that game.

Kassy: Did you still have all the skills, or did you win a lot?

Andrew: Yeah, that's the amazing thing. I beat everybody. I was so good at *Mario Kart* right from the start because everything was exactly the same. And, Kassy, we call this muscle memory, right? It's like when your body can remember how to do something, my hands just remembered exactly how to move the controller to play really, really well. So that was fun.

Kassy: Andrew, I have the same way. We also have *Mario Kart*. And my husband always asks me he's like, "How are you so good at this game?" And I was like, "You don't understand. Since we've been together. I haven't played this much. But when I was young, this was **my jam**. I played it all the time."

Andrew: I love that. This was my jam. Yeah, *Mario Kart* was also my jam. And Kassy, like you said, it's been a good language exercise for you and your husband to kind of switch between English and Korean in the games. When I was playing with my friends, I was the only English speaker there, so we just played in Korean. But I noticed that like, when you're playing games in that kind of situation, it's a really good language exercise language practice because I was speaking in a way that I don't really in other parts of my life, and I was also getting exposed to the kinds of expressions and kinds of things people say when they play video games with each other in a fun way that I just haven't experienced in my life. So, I have a kind of reputation for being **a trash talker** when I play games. It's like a bad thing, probably, but I love to kind of rub it in people's faces a little bit

and to brag, like, "Ah I'm the winner. Hahaha!" But I've never tried doing that in Korean before, so it was kind of fun to experiment and to try it out. I don't know if I was too accurate, but I seem to be annoying enough. So, I think it worked.

Kassy: Yeah, I've noticed that with some of my students, you know, they're high schoolers, they love video games, and I have a couple of students who are E.L.L, which stands for English Language Learners, which means their English level is lower than a lot of their classmates, but sometimes they pull out these super slangy, natural phrases, and I go, "Dude, where'd you learn that?" And they go "Ahh playing *Roblox*." Or some other video game, and I was like, "Huh, yeah, it's a good way to learn."

Andrew: Yeah, it's fun. So, listeners out there, if you do have some friends who are English speakers, why don't you invite them to play video games with you? I think it could be a really fun and kind of, you know, relaxed place to practice your English speaking. I know that some online game environments can be, like, really toxic, actually. Maybe that's more for online gaming, but if you're hanging out with your buddies and just having fun, then, yeah, give it a chance. I think it could be really cool. Kassy, is there anything else you'd like to tell us about your Switch adventure?

Kassy: I can say, for anyone who's feeling like, one, it might be a waste of money, or two, it might take up too much of your time. I had both of those concerns, but after buying it, I can say, honestly, don't even remember the money leaving my wallet, so it's like I didn't even spend money, right, Andrew? And two, you know, I like playing these games, but again, I'm not a big gamer, so will I play this every day? No, but I play a couple of hours a week, and I feel like that's worth it, and we can use the Switch for years to come. So, even though it's a couple of years old, I read a bunch of articles that was saying that Nintendo is planning to keep this product and this Switch platform alive for like many years to come, so still a really cool investment.

Andrew: So, Kassy, I know you're a big reader, and one of the things that I'm worried about if I buy a Switch is that I'll sit in bed at night and play it before I go to bed, because that's the cool thing about Switch, actually, is that it can work as a console that you can connect to your TV, or you can use it as a handheld. So, have you had any nights where you're just lying in bed playing Switch instead of reading a book?

Kassy: Honestly, no, I love books more than the Switch, so that's not been an issue for me, but it might be an issue for others.

Andrew: Final question, Kassy, is are you playing any games that are longer games, like an RPG or an adventure game, or are you just kind of playing these fun, shorter, co-op games with your husband?

Kassy: That's a good question. Yeah, I haven't bought anything too big like *Zelda*, which I heard is a really amazing game, but I have bought one game called *Professor Layton*, something something, that's a series of games. And I played *Professor Layton* on Nintendo DS a few years ago, this is the newest version for Switch. Again, those of you who might not like super big, complicated games, *Professor Layton* is so cool. It's a super cutesy puzzle-story game that has little animations throughout the game, and you just go around talking to people and trying to solve a mystery by solving various logic puzzles. So, it's working my brain and letting me play a simple, fun game without high stakes or needing to push a million buttons at once.

Andrew: Button mashing.

Kassy: Yeah, I'm not good at those kind of games.

Andrew: So as just a way to say thanks to all of our members here, Kassy and I are going to keep our conversation going for a little bit, and we have three rapid fire questions, Kassy. So, let's get started. I guess question number one, and guys, by the way, these are

all going to be about the topic from today's episode, which is Nintendo. Kassy, question number one, what's your favorite Nintendo character and why?

Kassy: Easy. Hands down, Yoshi.

Andrew: Yoshi! OK, why Yoshi?

Kassy: Yoshi is just so cute. He's that little green dinosaur that has the little speckled eggs, and ever since I picked up *Mario Kart* years and years ago, he's just been my go-to. I feel like he's the fastest, the cutest, the kind of underdog character that you don't see coming, but he's just so great.

Andrew: OK, Yoshi. Yoshi is really cute, and I loved Yoshi from, I guess it was like *Super Mario World* for the Nintendo 64. It was fun to run around with Yoshi. But my favorite character, I'm a big fan of the *Zelda* series that you mentioned earlier, so I have to go with Link from *Zelda*, just an amazing character and really fun to play, and yeah, I'm going to go with Link.

Kassy: Yeah, that's a good choice too.

Andrew: Alright, question number two, which Nintendo game do you believe has the best replay value, and why?

Kassy: Honestly, I do think the *Mario Kart* series does. It's a game that you could play over and over and over and still love it. If it was a longer style of game, maybe one of the Mario role-playing games where you act as Mario and you have to go through all of the levels and beat the bosses and the castles and save Peach. I think those games you can sink a lot of time into, but there's so many easter eggs, little exciting secrets that you can unlock inside the game that makes it extra special.

Andrew: Kassy, I wonder, did you ever play a game called *Dr. Mario*?

Kassy: I have not, but I'd love to hear a little bit about it.

Andrew: It's kind of like a puzzle game, I guess maybe the best way to describe it would be that it's sort of like *Tetris*, kind of like *Tetris*. It's very different, but it's kind of like *Tetris*. And yeah, I think my answer to this question, I'm going to copy your answer and say *Mario Kart*. Super fun to play again and again and again. Another, I mean, it's not made by Nintendo, but it was a big Nintendo game on the Nintendo 64. Was *Golden Eye*, and that's really fun to play in multiplayer mode. It's kind of this like shoot-em-up game, and you go around shooting your friends who are all like James Bond characters from the different movies. Really fun, but also, yeah, *Tetris* and *Dr. Mario*, these kinds of puzzle games, you can play just again and again and again. So that's my answer to this question.

Kassy: I do have to say we cannot talk about Nintendo though without bringing up *Pokémon* at least once. I'm pretty sure *Mario* and *Pokémon* were the big reasons why Nintendo exploded. Of course, *Zelda*, we have to throw in there too, but *Pokémon* is a cult classic. There's kids these days who are still collecting paper *Pokémon* cards in the 21st century where nobody collects paper things.

Andrew: Yeah, my little nephews who are like in grade four and grade six love *Pokémon*, which is wild. It's had like this huge staying power, right? Unfortunately, you know, Kassy, maybe one of the reasons I haven't mentioned it is because I was a little bit too old when it first came out. It's probably like right **in your wheelhouse**, like right in your era. But for me, I was like, "That game's for kids." So, I wasn't really interested, but now that I'm a little bit older and because my nephews are into it, I've actually been going through and watching *Pokémon* episodes, the TV show on Netflix because it's all dubbed in Korean. So, I can like learn about this pop culture, nerd culture, gaming culture that I kind of missed when I was younger and also study Korean at the same time. So, it's been pretty cool, and I feel like one of these days I'll have to go and actually play the games also.

Kassy: Yeah, you'll have to do the Switch version. I heard, I haven't played that either yet, but I heard it's very different from the handheld *Pokémon* that I've played in the past.

Andrew: Yeah, there were so many. Remember like yellow, blue, red, gold, silver, all the different colors.

Kassy: I started in Emerald back in the day.

Andrew: Nice. OK, final question. If you could design a game, what kind of game would you like to create?

Kassy: That's such a tough question. I love puzzles and math and storytelling. So, I would probably create some sort of fun game that combined all three in some way.

Andrew: That's cool. I think for me, I would also take one of my passions, which is like learning Korean and teaching English and see if I could combine them into some kind of language learning game. Maybe it wouldn't need to be exclusive to Korean. Maybe it could work for all languages. And I'm sure there have been many people who have tried to do this, but to my knowledge, there really hasn't been a fun, successful, really effective language learning game. Other than just playing games that are made in English originally, I think that's really effective. But yeah, it could be cool to have some kind of language learning game that would maybe work on some of the things that we talked about earlier, just like hanging out with your buddies and playing games together and learning and building your second language skills at the same time. If there was some game that could facilitate that, that could be really fun, I think.

Kassy: That would be cool. A game that isn't just necessarily catered to kids and also a game that's not just language learning like Duolingo, where you're just practicing vocab and key phrases, like a story type game that also includes language learning goals. That would be cool.

Andrew: That could be fun. Hmm. Maybe we'll inspire a budding video game designer out there to run with our idea. Guys, you can have that one for free.

Kassy: But if you do end up doing it, give us a little credit somewhere in the bottom credit screen, like 50 pages down.

Andrew: Yes, you have to do that. Alright, well I think we'll wrap things up here for the bonus content, so thanks for listening everybody. Take care and we'll talk to you soon. Bye-bye.

Kassy: See ya.

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

Detailed Explanations

Toss-up Noun

Andrew reminisces about his favorite toys when he was a child and tells Kassy how much he loved his Nintendo games and Lego collection. He says it's a **toss-up** whether his number one favorite was Nintendo or Lego.

The expression **a toss-up** is used when it's hard to choose between two things because they are both good options. It's like when you can't decide what to eat for dinner because you like both pizza and pasta a lot. In this situation, you might say, "Choosing between pizza and pasta for dinner was a real toss-up, I couldn't decide."

Another situation we use this expression in is when talking about sports. If two teams are very good and it's hard to guess who will win, you can call it a toss-up.

A good way to remember 'a toss-up' is by thinking about flipping a coin. When you flip a coin, you toss it in the air, and it can land on either heads or tails. You don't know which side it will land on. So, a toss-up is like a situation where the choice or result is as uncertain as a coin flip.

Here are a few more examples with **toss-up**:

Jane: Both of my job interviews went really well this week. I think I'll be getting offers from both firms.

Michael: That's amazing! Where would you rather work if you pass both interviews?

Jane: I can't decide just yet. It's a real **toss-up**. Each company has wonderful benefits and interesting job descriptions.

Peter: I want to order some takeout. What should we get, Thai food or Indian food?

Laura: Hmm, it's a **toss-up**. I would be happy with either.

Peter: Me too... OK, let's just go with Thai food since they're close to our house and they don't have a delivery fee.

Laura: Works for me!

To mull something over

Phrasal verb

Kassy tells Andrew that she had been thinking about buying a Switch for a few years before she finally bought one recently. Andrew is in the same situation – he has been **mulling it over** for years, although he hasn't actually made the decision to purchase one yet.

The expression 'to mull something over' means to think very carefully about something before you decide. When you mull something over, you take a long time to consider and think about it. You do not make a fast decision. For example, if you say, "I need some time to mull over the job offer before I give them an answer," it means you want to think carefully about the job offer before deciding.

Have you ever heard of mulled wine? This is a type of wine that is heated up and mixed with spices. It's a drink people often enjoy in winter. To remember 'mull something over,' think about mulled wine. Just like mulled wine needs to be warmed with spices for a while, when you mull something over, you need to think about it for a while.

Some expressions that mean the opposite of 'mull something over' are 'to make a snap decision' and 'to decide on the spot.' These both mean to decide very quickly, without taking much time to think.

Here are a few more examples with **to mull something over**:

Rebecca: Kyle told me he wants to start a family together in the near future.

Travis: That's an exciting prospect. How do you feel about the idea, though?

Rebecca: I don't know yet. I think I want to have kids, but I don't know for sure. I told him that I'm going to have **to mull it over** for a while. Kyle reassured me that he doesn't want me to make a snap decision and that I can take as much time as I need to think things over.

Travis: That makes sense. I'm glad he isn't rushing you.

George: Alright, I think we've **been mulling it over** long enough. We have to make a decision already. Are we going to honeymoon in Europe or East Asia?

Nicole: It's such a toss-up... OK, let's go with East Asia. I've never been to Japan and I'm really excited to try some authentic cuisine.

George: Then it's settled! I'll buy the plane tickets tomorrow.

To drop the ball

Idiom

Kassy explains how the cooperative game *Overcooked* works to Andrew. It requires a lot of teamwork. You have to communicate effectively with your teammate and delegate tasks in order to beat each level. It's a lot of fun, but it can be a bit stressful and frustrating if your teammate is **dropping the ball**.

The expression 'to drop the ball' is an idiom that means you made a mistake or did not do something the right way. This saying comes from sports. In many sports, like baseball, if you literally drop the ball, it's usually a bad thing and can cause your team to lose points. Over time, people started using this expression in everyday life to talk about any kind of mistake.

You can use this phrase when someone forgets to do something. For example, if you were supposed to call your doctor for an appointment but forgot, you can say, "I dropped the ball."

You can use this expression by itself, like "Oops, I dropped the ball. Sorry." Or you can use it with 'on' to talk about what you made a mistake with. For example, "Tim really dropped the ball on that deadline. His report is three days late."

Here are a couple more examples with **to drop the ball**:

Martha: Have you called the plumber yet? The leak in the kitchen sink is much worse today than it was yesterday.

Howie: No, sorry. I completely forgot.

Martha: Please do it today!

Howie: I will, I will. Sorry for **dropping the ball on** that.

Frank: How did your presentation go?

Paula: Not very well. I prepared a little bit, but I should have prepared much more than I did. I also had a lot of typos in my PowerPoint slides. I kind of **dropped the ball** this time.

Frank: Sorry to hear that. Well, hopefully this will be an informative experience for your next presentation.

Paula: Definitely. Now I know that I need to spend a lot more time rehearsing, not to mention double-checking for typos!

One's jam

Slang

Kassy says she's really good at the classic Nintendo racing game *Mario Kart*. She tells her husband that it's because of muscle memory, as she played it a lot when she was a child. She goes on to say that she used to play the game all the time as a kid and that it was her jam.

The expression **one's jam** is slang that originally comes from music. There are many different slang expressions people use to talk about their favorite songs, like 'a bop,' 'a banger,' 'a classic,' and 'a jam.' The word 'jam' is one of the oldest of these slang terms. For example, there's a famous song from 1989 called 'Pump Up the Jam.' When you say something is your jam, it means you really love it, like a favorite song.

Now, people use 'jam' to talk about things other than music that they love. So, when Kassy says *Mario Kart* was her jam, she means it was one of her favorite games as a kid. You might also hear someone say something like, 'Sci-fi is my jam!' which means they love science fiction. Or, a friend who likes retro fashion might say, 'Vintage clothes are my jam!'

You can replace 'one's' with any subject to talk about what they love. For example, 'Kassy's jam' means what Kassy loves. If talking about yourself, you can say 'my jam.' Similarly, if talking about a friend, you can say 'Sam's jam' to talk about what Sam loves.

Here are a few more examples with **one's jam**:

Derrek: Wait, is that "Vogue" playing on the radio right now?

Mary: I think so.

Derrek: Turn it up! Madonna is **my jam**!

Mary: I didn't know you were such a big fan!

Nick: Hey, Veronica!

Veronica: It's funny seeing you here. I didn't know you were a member of this gym.

Nick: I just joined last week. I didn't know you went to the gym, either!

Veronica: Oh yeah. I go like four times a week. I really enjoy it. Honestly, lifting weights is **my jam**.

Nick: That's so cool. We should work out together sometime!

To trash talk / trash talker

Idiom

Andrew confesses to Kassy that he has a bad habit when he plays video games with other people. Sometimes he is a trash talker. He gets competitive and feels the urge to brag when he wins.

A **trash talker** is someone who **talks trash**. This means they boast or insult someone, especially in competitive situations like sports or video games. For example, in a game, a trash talker might tease another player who is not doing well by saying things like, "You're about to get crushed!" or "Prepare to lose!"

After winning, a trash talker might brag by saying, "Haha, better luck next time!" or "How does it feel to lose against the best? Don't worry, I'll take it easy on you next time."

Trash talking can make a game more exciting and competitive. But it's important to remember to not be too harsh. It's supposed to be fun, not mean. When you trash talk in a friendly way, it's just part of the game. But if you're too serious, it can be mean. So, if you want to try trash talking in English when playing a game with a friend, make sure you keep it light and fun. The way you say things (your tone) can make a big difference in whether it's seen as friendly or mean.

Here are a few more examples with **trash talker / to trash talk**:

Benjamin: Oh no!

Josie: Haha, looks like I win again. How does it feel to come in second place yet again?

Benjamin: Alright, alright. I admit it, you're good. But enough **trash talking** – let's play another round!

Cynthia: Want to come over and play *Super Smash Bros* at my place tonight? Sam and Alex are going to be there.

Ryan: Alex, huh? Honestly, I think I'll pass. He takes gaming way too seriously. I don't like it when he **talks trash** when we're playing together.

Cynthia: You're right, sometimes his bragging gets really annoying. I can tell him that he has to stop with all the **trash talking** when he's playing at my house.

Ryan: OK, I'll come and play if he agrees to stop being so competitive.

Cynthia: Perfect!

In one's wheelhouse

Idiom

Andrew tells Kassy that he didn't get into *Pokémon* because he was too old when it first became popular. But he thinks *Pokémon* is right in Kassy's wheelhouse because she was the perfect age for it in the 90s.

The idiom **in one's wheelhouse** comes from baseball. In baseball, a batter's wheelhouse is the spot where they can hit the ball best. These days, this expression is used to talk about things a person knows a lot about or is very interested in. We often use the word 'right' to really emphasize it. For example, if someone loves natural history, a natural history museum is 'right in their wheelhouse.' Or, if someone teaches yoga, then Pilates might be 'right in their wheelhouse' too. This means these are things they are probably very interested in or know a lot about.

If you don't know much about something or don't like something, you can say it's 'not in my wheelhouse' or 'out of my wheelhouse.' For instance, if a friend asks you to help fix their car but you don't know anything about cars, you can say, 'Sorry, I'd like to help, but that's completely out of my wheelhouse.'"

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

Samantha: There's a new animal photography exhibition at the museum. Want to go together?

Carl: Sure, that sounds fun. Hey, we should invite Oliver, too. He studied photography in school! I bet it'll be **right in his wheelhouse**.

Samantha: That's a great idea. I'll text him now!

Carl: Perfect!

Adam: I just finished reading *East of Eden* by John Steinbeck. I absolutely loved it, but now I need another book to read

Beth: You should try the *Grapes of Wrath*. It's another classic by Steinbeck, and if you loved *East of Eden*, it should be **right in your wheelhouse**.

Adam: Oh, I've heard of that one! Okay, I'll get it from the library tomorrow. Thanks for the recommendation!

Beth: Anytime!

Quiz

1. What's a good synonym for "to trash talk"?

- a) To praise
- b) To complain
- c) To insult
- d) To whine

2. Your friend got a job offer at a new firm. She says she needs to mull it over. What does she mean by this?

- a) She needs to consider it for a while
- b) She needs to make an immediate decision
- c) She needs to relocate for the job
- d) She needs to work at both jobs

3. Your coworker says that "gardening is out of his wheelhouse." What does he mean by this?

- a) He does not have a garden in his backyard
- b) He has a garden in his backyard
- c) He is knowledgeable about and interested in gardening
- d) He is not knowledgeable about nor interested in gardening

4. Which of the following is a good example of "dropping the ball"?

- a) Forgetting to pick up your kids at school
- b) Winning a soccer game
- c) Submitting a report right before the deadline
- d) Passing your driver's test

5. Your sister turns up the radio and says, "This is my jam!" What does she mean?

- a) She wants to practice singing this song
- b) She loves this song
- c) She has never heard this song, but she likes it
- d) She hates this song

Writing and Discussion Questions

1. Are you a fan of video games? If so, what kinds of games do you enjoy playing? If not, why don't you like video games? Do you enjoy tabletop games or board games? Please describe.
2. When you are considering buying something, do you immediately buy it on impulse, or do you take some time and **mull it over** before you purchase it?
3. Are you a highly competitive person? Have you ever **trash talked** other people while playing a game or sport? If not, who is the most competitive person you know? Please describe.
4. Do you think that video games can sometimes have a negative impact on gamers? Do you see any benefit to playing video games? Share your opinions or concerns.
5. Andrew mentions that playing video games in English can be a fun way to practice your language skills. Have you ever tried this? Have you had success with it? What other creative resources do you use to practice your English skills (other than textbooks, podcasts, or worksheets)?

Quiz Answers

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

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