

Simplified Speech #194 – Double birthday bash (Ad free)

Episode description

Andrew and Kassy have some big **milestone** birthdays coming up. This year, Kassy is turning 30 and Andrew is turning 40! Join them in a casual conversation about how they like to celebrate their birthdays, common birthday traditions in the U.S. and Canada, and the traditional food eaten on one's birthday in South Korea.

Fun fact

Have you ever heard of a “goodie bag” or a “party favor”? In the U.S. and Canada, it's common for guests of young children's birthday parties to receive a small gift bag of candy, toys and stickers to take home at the end of the party. We call them “goodie bags” or “party favors.” This goodie bag tradition has even made its way to weddings – it's not uncommon for wedding guests to receive one in their hotel room or at the end of the wedding reception!

Expressions included in the study guide

- Milestone
- To fly the coop / to leave the nest
- To grab (food, drink)
- Whatever floats your boat
- To step [something] up
- Rip-off



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 194, "Double birthday bash", featuring Andrew and Kassy. Hello friends, welcome back to Simplified Speech. Today, helping me co-host this episode is Kassy. Hello Kassy, how's it going?

Kassy: I'm doing excellently, Andrew. How about you?

Andrew: I'm doing good as well, Kassy. You told me you just got back from swimming.

Kassy: Yes, my hair is wet.

Andrew: That is an interesting piece of behind-the-scenes trivia, I suppose, or an interesting fact is that often when we record Simplified Speech, Kassy has wet hair 'cause she just gets straight out of the swimming pool and into the recording studio. So that's kind of funny and probably something that no one would ever imagine, but that's the truth.

So anyways, guys, we'll get started with our episode today. We have a fun, celebratory episode, Kassy, because you and I both have birthdays in the spring. We're both spring babies, and we both have **milestone** birthdays coming up. Maybe we should explain what that means. What does it mean, a milestone birthday?

Kassy: It means like one of the big ones, and it usually represents a decade of you being on the planet. So, for example, for me, I am turning 30 this year, and Andrew is turning 40.

Andrew: Yeah, you're probably really happy, and I'm depressed about it, but it's true. I don't know, Kassy, what would you say the big milestone birthdays are? Probably for parents, you know, if you have a new baby, the first birthday is probably a big milestone.

Kassy: Yeah, it depends on the culture. Like in Spain, the Quinceañera, 15th birthday, and in America, 21, when you're like legally allowed to drink alcohol, that's a big one.

Andrew: Well, what about sweet 16 in the States? Is that a big birthday celebration? Correct me if I'm wrong, because we do have this concept of sweet 16 in Canada, I think, but it's mostly borrowed from the States. But to my recollection, and now going back thinking to when I was a teenager is a long time ago, so it's tough, it's foggy.

But to my recollection, that was more of a big birthday celebration for the ladies, for women turning 16. Is that what it's like? Like a big celebration if you're a girl turning 16, but if you're a guy, it's not so special.

Kassy: Yeah, I think it depends on how rich your family is. That's also when you're allowed to drive in the US. So, a lot of teenagers might get their first car on their 16th birthday. I did as well, but it was a junker car. We were not rich, but I still loved my old car.

Andrew: Nice, yeah, that's cool. So, I guess the ones that you mentioned, in Canada, it's 19. 19 is the legal drinking age and the age when, for me, it was important 'cause I loved music, and I could finally get into like a nightclub to watch a band or a concert. So that was important for me. And after that, I suppose it's just the decades, right? Maybe 20, 30, 40, 50, something like that. So anyways, we both have these two milestone birthdays coming up soon, and that is what we will talk about today.

And with that being said, Kassy, let's jump in and get started with our main topic of conversation for today about our double birthday bash coming up here soon. Kassy, why don't we start with you turning 30? So, I guess, first of all, I should ask, maybe you could sum up your 20s for us. How were your 20s different than any other decade in your life? I guess you don't have too many to choose from, but like how were your 20s in general? Was it a good decade for you?

Kassy: Yeah, definitely. I think your 20s are definitely a learning decade, a growing decade, and kind of a transition decade, that period in your life when you're no longer a kid, you've left your parents' home, you've flown the coop.

Andrew: Flown the coop and left the nest.

Kassy: Exactly, and you're out on your own, and you're trying to figure out what you want in life, but you have no money and not a lot of options. But I think I made a pretty good pathway. I went to college, did an internship, moved to Korea, had so much fun there for a bunch of years, and made it into the international school scene and came to Thailand. It's a... it's been a pretty jam-packed 20s.

Andrew: Yeah, I think you really took advantage of it. It's really wild to think that you did all of that only in your 20s, because I feel like you are a decade ahead of me in life. You also got married in your 20s. So yeah, you did all of that where I was more doing those things in my 30s. So that's really cool that you were right to it, very ambitious right from the start. So, then what about for your upcoming birthday? Do you have any special plans for celebrating? Are you gonna have a party or anything like that?

Kassy: I totally should. I'm kind of boring. I mentioned this on the previous episode. Spring is just so busy with school, and I get into this kind of slump and burnout. You know that feeling? You're just tired all the time. So yeah, I totally wanna hang out with my friends, but I don't even wanna think about planning anything. Yeah, I think I'm just gonna message my friends like a week or so before and say, "Hey, you wanna **grab** dinner to celebrate?" Nothing, you know, big, kind of a low-key thing, which is not usually what you do for your milestone birthdays, but it's just a busy time of the year.

Andrew: In general, are you a birthday person? Like some people really love celebrating their birthday, right? It's like, "It's my birthday week, it's my birthday month." And they go all out and really feel like their birthday is a special time for them. Personally, I've never really

felt like I connected with that idea too much, but what about you? Are you like a birthday month, birthday week kind of person?

Kassy: I'm the same as you, Andrew. I'm like, "Yeah, it's every other day." But I have a coworker who, she's so sweet, but she is definitely a birthday month kind of girl. And it was so funny 'cause she turned 31 this year, but I thought she turned 30 because she had so many events. One weekend, I saw her going to like a club with some friends, and then a few days later, there was a brunch to celebrate her birthday. And then the next weekend they did something else, and I was like, "What is going on?" But no, I think she just, she loves birthdays.

Andrew: Yeah, yeah, some people do really love their birthday. And yeah, I've never been able to get too excited about my birthday, but yeah, **whatever floats your boat**, right? Whatever works for you is cool. And I think sometimes people have different celebrations for different groups of friends, right? Like I could say that in my life, sometimes I've had multiple birthday parties too, because you have one birthday party with your family. Maybe you'll have like a birthday dinner with your family, and then one with your girlfriend or wife or something, and then one maybe with some of your other friends. So, it can happen, and yeah, it's nice when that does happen, you get a lot of cake and a lot of delicious food, nothing wrong with that.

Kassy: I think my biggest milestone birthday, Andrew, was probably my 16th birthday. My mom, who is not like a huge birthday person, but she really **steps it up** on occasion. And on my 16th birthday, my best friend had moved away like a year or two before. So, my mom threw a surprise party for me where my new current really good friends were there, and then they had a giant present box in the center of the room, and I opened it up, and it was my best friend that had moved away inside the box.

Andrew: Nice, wow, it must've been a real surprise.

Kassy: Oh, it was so cool. And I was so lazy that day, I was a teenager, you know, and I didn't wanna wash my hair. Like, I was like, "Mom, where are we going? Do I have to wash my hair?" And she's like, "Well, I would if I were you." And then thank God I did, I would have been so smelly.

Andrew: Were you like, "What is in the box?" Like, it must've been a big box if a person could fit inside of it.

Kassy: Yeah, I had no idea. I was like, "Maybe it's party supplies, I'll open it up and it's just like a bunch of balloons." Or like, you know that gimmick where it's a box inside of a box, inside of a box, inside of a box, you keep opening until it's a little gift.

Andrew: Yeah, yeah, yeah.

Kassy: But no, it was my friend.

Andrew: Nice. I like that expression that you used just a moment ago. Maybe we could circle back and talk about it for a sec. You talked about your mom stepping up. She really stepped it up. What does that mean if you "step up" your effort into doing something?

Kassy: Yeah, it means you take it to the next level. Maybe you usually are kind of a low-key, you don't do too much for birthdays, but sometimes you really step it up and you go over the top for a birthday. You go all out, spend lots of money, or plan something really exciting.

Andrew: Yeah, exactly. And we can use it to talk about tons of different activities whenever you put in extra effort to do a really good job. Maybe you could step it up at the office and you work some overtime to finish the report or put some extra special details in the report or something. Or maybe if you play a team sport like soccer or something and

your team is losing, you're down in the second half with not too many minutes left on the clock, then the coach could call a timeout and say, "OK, team, we need to step it up."

Kassy: I could totally imagine that. It's gotta be in a bunch of movies already.

Andrew: Yeah. We need to put in some extra effort. So yeah, very good expression. Kassy, one thing I was thinking about when preparing this episode today or getting ready for this episode, I was remembering some childhood birthday parties and some of the games that we would play at childhood birthday parties. I don't know, did you ever play any games? Like I was thinking about Pin the Tail on the Donkey. Did you ever play that one?

Kassy: I'm sure I have. I don't know. Girls usually play games more like Truth or Dare or let's gossip about blah, blah, blah. I don't know.

Andrew: I'm thinking this is like maybe when I was like six or seven years old, it's just this funny game. And I wonder if in other cultures they do this as well. It feels like this might be one of those global games with a slight variation, like in different countries, maybe it's, I don't know, Pin the Tail on the Elephant or something, who knows. But in Canada, it's Pin the Tail on the Donkey and you have to blindfold one kid and then you spin them around so they're a little dizzy and disoriented. And then they have to try and find a picture of a donkey, a little poster on the wall. And they're holding a little paper tail in their hand, and they have to pin it. And the student or the kid, I guess, who gets the closest to pinning the tail in the correct location wins. And I remember playing that when I was a kid at some of my friends' birthday parties and it always being fun. And that memory just came up today while I was thinking about this episode.

Kassy: Yeah, totally. I definitely played Pin the Tail on the Donkey, but it's been so many years, I don't really remember. However, segueing, we talked about my 30th birthday and

how I'm kind of low-key about it, but I'm curious, Andrew, are you the same or are you doing something special for your 40th birthday coming up?

Andrew: So, my birthday is still a little ways away, but it's coming closer. And yeah, usually the last few years, I don't think I've done anything special to celebrate my birthday at all, ever. Like probably my wife and I will have a little party together or something. We've done that the last few years, but never anything more than that. I've never had a gathering with friends or something like that. And I think, yeah, as we get older and busier, and especially in South Korea, life is really busy, and all of my friends are married and have families and stuff. So, it's really hard to get everybody together. So that's fine. But this year feels a little bit different with turning 40. I remember even when my dad turned 40, so I was probably around seven or eight years old when my dad turned 40. And I remember my family making a big fuss about it. So, my aunt, my dad's sister, and my older cousin, I have a cousin who is significantly older than me, maybe 20 years older than me or something. I remember they came over to my house really early in the morning to like wake my dad up and celebrate. And they hired some company. I don't know if this is a thing anymore, if this was just a fad in the early '90s. Kassy, maybe you can chime in and tell me, but I remember they rented or they bought pink flamingos and they put them on our front lawn. So, there were 40 pink flamingos on the front lawn.

Kassy: I have never heard of this trend, but that sounds awesome.

Andrew: Yeah, so you look out in the lawn and there were all these pink flamingos, 40 of them. And it was a way to say like, hey, hey, you're 40. And everybody in the neighborhood knows.

Kassy: Are they alive or are they like plastic pink flamingos?

Andrew: No, they're like plastic pink flamingos.

Kassy: I just imagine a bunch of real ones like honking in the yard.

Andrew: That would be awesome. No, of course they're not alive. They were just props. But yeah, I remember that. And I remember my aunt, I think, like kind of singing some little song or making some joke that was like, "Lordy, Lordy, look who's 40!" something like that. Which is incredible that I remember this all those years ago. So, I think it must've been a special time. So, I guess I grew up with that idea that your 40th birthday is kind of a unique birthday and something to celebrate. It's typically the midlife marker, right? Although I hope I live to be older than 80 years old, it's still traditionally the separator between being young and being middle-aged. So yeah, I think this year I would be happy to do something, but it really depends on my schedule as I get closer to my birthday. If I'm too busy, I'll just skip it. Also depends on maybe my friends and what my wife has in mind as well. So, we'll see. I don't know if we have any special plans to celebrate quite yet, but I would be open to it this year. But in past years, I usually just don't do anything too special for my birthday.

Kassy: Yeah. I really love the new tradition that I have since meeting my husband and you probably do that too, is the tradition of eating Korean seaweed soup. Do you eat that on your birthday? Does your wife make it for you?

Andrew: Yeah, she does. And it is a nice tradition. I even make it for her as well. Do you make it for your husband?

Kassy: Yeah, I make it for my husband. He has not made it for me yet, but he says he really wants to this year. I know.

Andrew: Oh, he's got to do it. I guess because you're living out of the country, you can get a pass.

Kassy: Usually, his mother does it for me.

Andrew: Right. It's not the easiest food to cook. And for listeners who aren't familiar with it, it's called *miyeokguk*, this soup. And it's seaweed with some beef as well. And it's a breakfast food. So, you usually eat this for breakfast on your birthday to start your day. And it's really delicious. At first, it's kind of an acquired taste for Westerners, I think, because the seaweed is a little bit slippery. But to be honest, it has a pretty mild flavor. And so as soon as you can get the texture down and you acclimatize to the texture, then it's OK. And now I think it's really delicious. And it's a nice way to start the birthday. You like start with a birthday meal, and then maybe later in the day, you can have a birthday dinner and then cake. So, it's pretty good. It's a full day of eating on your birthday in Korea.

Kassy: Exactly. So yeah, even if I don't have a party, I'm planning to have my husband make me some delicious seaweed soup. And then maybe we'll get a Dairy Queen ice cream cake because that's a tradition I used to have back in the US. They have Dairy Queen here, which is very exciting.

Andrew: Oh, nice. That's really funny that you say that because also when I was a kid and growing up in Canada, Dairy Queen ice cream cakes, that was like the birthday cake. That was the go-to.

Kassy: I know, right?

Andrew: Yeah. And we don't have that in Korea. So, I don't think I can have a Dairy Queen ice cream cake. Dairy Queen, for listeners who don't know, is a fast-food restaurant chain, but they're famous for having hot eats and cool treats. And the cool treats are like their line of ice cream. And they're famous for ice cream cake. So, wow, that's awesome. An ice cream cake. I'm jealous. I gotta say.

Kassy: I think they have a branch in Itaewon in Seoul, Andrew. You might be able to go digging for it, maybe.

Andrew: OK. I'm gonna have to get on the subway, go over to Itaewon and check it out. That could be cool. Well, Kassy, I think we should wrap up here pretty soon. But before we do, I have one final question for you. And that is about surprise birthday parties. Now, you said earlier when you were younger, your mom kind of threw you a big surprise. But what happens if it were now? How would you feel these days if you came home from work, and you went into your apartment to find that your husband had thrown you a surprise party with all of your friends? Would you feel awesome about that? Or would you be like, "Why didn't you tell me about this so we could have planned it out together?"

Kassy: Honestly, I think I would have been fine with it. I'm not like against surprises, but I would be more shocked. I feel like it's common to have surprises for kids because you know how special it would be for them. But for adults, I'm like, "Wow, you put in a lot of effort for me. I can't believe you kept it from me."

Andrew: Yeah, I think I would probably be stressed out if some event just like totally changed my schedule without me knowing about it. I'd be like, "Oh my, I didn't schedule for this. I didn't plan for this. I can't take tonight off!" No, but I kind of feel my wife has never thrown me a surprise birthday party before. But it feels like sometime in my future, I've got it coming. It feels like that is the kind of thing that she'd be able to do really well and hide it really well. Yeah, I don't know. I don't know about this year or not, but I feel like some year in the future, one day I will be surprised and probably not this year because if it came this year, I probably wouldn't be too surprised because it would be the year, I would expect it. So, it would probably be like when I turned 43 or something. Who knows, some random year when you least expect it. But I feel like she would be good at doing the planning and organizing and secret keeping required to throw a legit surprise party.

Kassy: Yeah, you're lucky. You have a wife. I feel like the wives are usually better at the surprises than the husbands. The husbands are also just as sweet, but in different ways.

Andrew: We get really excited. And so, it's hard to keep a secret. You know, if I were to try and throw my wife a surprise party, I'd probably spill the beans early or something.

Kassy: You'd wanna tell her, "Guess what I did?"

Andrew: Yeah, yeah. Yeah, something like that, for sure. All right, and Kassy, let's keep the tape rolling a little while longer with some bonus content for our lovely members who support us. It's the least we can do really is to keep it going for a little while longer. So, we have three bonus questions as always here. And I guess I already spoiled the first one. Talking about surprise parties. So, let's cut it down. We have two bonus questions here, Kassy. What was the most memorable birthday party that you went to? It doesn't have to be your birthday party. I'm sure that surprise 16th party that you had when you were a teenager was very memorable, but have you been to any other memorable parties?

Kassy: Yeah, I have two actually. Quickly, the first one wasn't necessarily a party, but an event. My aunt turned 50. It's been quite a while now, but back then my uncle decided to really celebrate, you know, her, what do you call that, bicentennial? Like half of a century of birthdays by getting her 50 presents that he gave to her one a day, 50 days before her birthday. And you know, like not every day was an expensive present. One day it might've been a stuffed animal of her favorite animal, like a little giraffe or something. And then as she got closer to her birthday, they were slightly bigger presents, like maybe a bracelet or a new iPhone, which is pretty big. But yeah, they started really small, worked their way up. And I think she felt so pampered and overwhelmed by the end of it. But I found that amazing that he planned that whole thing.

Andrew: Yeah, that's incredible. That takes a lot of work to do that. So, hats off to him.

Kassy: Yes, and then the other party was my grandmother's, I can't remember, I think it was her 70th birthday. So, another milestone. And we had a surprise party for her. So, we

invited all of our family and even my aunt who lived abroad came and her friends. And then she's really into geocaching.

Andrew: Wow, OK. You'll have to explain what that is to our listeners.

Kassy: It's like you use your phone's GPS to look for little hidden treasures all over the planet. It's probably where you live too. It's everywhere guys. So, look up geocaching.com. Anyway, she was really into it at the time. So, we got her a custom-made geocaching cake.

Andrew: Wow. That's such a specific, nerdy cake, I love it. What did it look like?

Kassy: You know, I don't remember. I think it might've been her 60th birthday. It was a long time ago and 70 wasn't that long ago. But so yeah, a while. So, I can't remember the details, but it was a really cool cake. And I remember it tasting good too.

Andrew: Nice, that's awesome. I'm trying to think about the most memorable parties that I've been to. Yeah, I just remember when I was a kid, I loved going to other people's birthday parties. Some of my friends would have really fun birthday parties, especially, you know, I guess up until you're probably about 13 or 14 years old, you do like these really fun birthday parties. I remember going to McDonald's for a McDonald's party, which...

Kassy: Just McDonald's? Oh, like, 'cause they had the playgrounds, right?

Andrew: They had the play... yeah. Like back in the day, they had playgrounds, and you get like special toys and the meals were really good. So, I always loved a McDonald's birthday party. Chuck E. Cheese.

Kassy: I was gonna ask if they had Chuck E. Cheese in Canada.

Andrew: Yeah, yeah, we had one near Vancouver. So, I grew up there until I was about 10 years old. And so, after 10 years old, then I had to go to Scandia. That was the place in Kelowna that I'd go to, but it was like a Chuck E. Cheese **rip-off**. And yeah, super fun. They have lots of video games. For listeners who don't know what Chuck E. Cheese is. It's like an arcade for kids and they serve pizza and have video games and different activities you can do. Mini golf, really fun.

Kassy: I think it's crazy for adults, but for kids, it's a blast.

Andrew: It's the best. Yeah, it was the best. I remember going to go-karting birthday parties as well. So, lots of fun birthday parties. Yeah, and you know what? I'm looking back on it with a lot of nostalgia right now. I'm kind of thinking that it would be fun to do one of those birthday parties again. Like have all my friends go to a video arcade or go go-karting or something, and even go to McDonald's. That would be pretty good.

Kassy: For my friend's 30th birthday last year, we, all of us, you know, in our late 20s, early 30s, went laser tagging together. It was so fun, Andrew.

Andrew: Yeah, my brother had a great laser tag birthday when he was younger too. That's awesome. Yeah, that's a great idea. I love it. OK, Kassy, we have the final question here for us. And I think I know the answer, what you're going to answer and maybe me as well. The question is, if you could only eat one type of birthday cake for the rest of your life, what kind would it be?

Kassy: Yeah, OK. Obvious answer is a Dairy Queen ice cream cake. But if I'm not allowed to pick that since we already talked about it, it would be a chocolate cake with peanut butter icing.

Andrew: Ohhh chocolate peanut butter, an amazing combination. Now that I'm getting older, I like boring cakes. My favorite cake is carrot cake.

Kassy: That was my dad's favorite growing up. You've reached dad level.

Andrew: And in fact, for my birthday last year, I went to the other side of the city to go to this cafe where they sell a really, really good carrot cake. And I bought one piece for my birthday because my wife doesn't like cake, so.

Kassy: So, you had to eat it all alone?

Andrew: Well, she was there with me, but she just doesn't like to eat it. So, I ate it all alone, but yeah, I wasn't alone. And I think she ate something else, but yeah, it was delicious. So, I would go ice cream cake, first choice. But if that's off limits, then carrot cake for me. All right, well, everyone, we're gonna end things here. Thank you for listening as always and take care. We'll talk to you next time. Bye bye.

Kassy: See ya.

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

Detailed Explanations

Milestone

Noun

Kassy and Andrew explain that their upcoming birthdays – 30 years old and 40 years old, respectively – are **milestone** birthdays. This means they're important and symbolic birthdays in one's life.

In the U.S., common **milestone** birthdays include 18 (becoming a legal adult and getting the right to vote), 21 (being able to drink legally), and every multiple of ten years that comes next (30, 40, 50, etc.). In Mexican and Latin American culture, turning 15 is a **milestone** for girls as it symbolizes the passage into adulthood. In Jewish culture, turning 13 is a **milestone** for boys and turning 12 is one for girls for the same reason.

The word **milestone** can also mean an event or achievement that marks a notable point in your life. For instance, life events like graduating from university, getting married, having a baby, and buying your own home are often called **milestones**.

There are **milestone** years in marriage or work anniversaries as well. They are often associated with precious metals and therefore gifts are often related to these materials. For example, your 50th anniversary is your gold anniversary and your 60th is your diamond anniversary. If you celebrate 50 years at a company or 50 years of being married, don't be surprised if someone gives you something expensive made out of gold!

The term **milestone** comes from the ancient Roman practice of putting stones at the side of a road to indicate the distance traveled. In the same way, life milestones represent your experiences and progress as you live your life!

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

Jack: My parents have a **milestone** anniversary coming up. They will have been married for 50 years in July.

Deb: Wow, what a long time! Are they going to have an anniversary party?

Jack: No, they don't like to receive so much special attention. However, I'm definitely going to send them a big gift!

Lily: I'll be celebrating 20 years of employment at my company this year.

Noah: Congratulations! That's quite a **milestone**. I hope they throw you a party!



To fly the coop / to leave the nest

Idioms

Andrew and Kassy chat a little bit about what being in your 20s is like – you graduate from school, you meet new people and try new things, and you **fly the coop**. You **leave the nest** and find your own place to live.

To fly the coop and **to leave the nest** are both idiomatic expressions that mean moving out of your parents' home to live independently for the first time. A **coop** is an enclosed structure where birds like chickens live. A **nest** is the small bundle of sticks that birds often build in trees as a safe space to raise their babies. These idioms originate from the behavior of young birds leaving their **nest** or **coop** to explore the world on their own.

Parents whose children are about to leave for college often say, "Oh, my baby's finally **leaving the nest** in September!" or "My little girl is going to **fly the coop** soon."

While **fly the coop** and **leave the nest** are synonyms, **fly the coop** has one more very different usage that the other expression does not. You can also use fly the coop to describe a criminal or thief escaping in order not to be caught by the police. For example, "The police went to the suspects house to interrogate him, but no one was home. It seemed he **had flown the coop**."

The bird-related idioms don't stop there! "A nest egg" is what you call an asset or savings that you have saved for big events in the future, like emergencies or retirement. There are lots of animal-related idioms commonly used in English, so try adding a few to your active vocabulary!

Here are a couple more examples with **to fly the coop / to leave the nest**:

Fiona: It's official. I just got my acceptance letter. I'll be going to Boston University in the fall!

Shawn: Congratulations, darling! Wow, my little girl is all grown up and finally **leaving the nest**. It seems like just yesterday you were learning to walk. Oh, I'll miss you, honey.

Fiona: Stop getting all emotional, Dad! I'm 18 and it's time for me to be independent.

Sebastian: We've been investigating the robbery, and it seems like our suspect has fled the city.

Katrina: I was worried that he might **fly the coop**. I hope we can catch him before he gets too far.

To grab (food, drink)

Verb

Andrew asks Kassy if she's planning on having a party or celebration for her upcoming 30th birthday. She says that she's been really exhausted lately and doesn't even want to think about planning an event, so she will probably just text her friends and see if they want **to grab dinner** with her.

We often use the verb **to grab** with food or drink in two different scenarios. When we're in a hurry to go somewhere and don't have time to sit down for a meal, we often say, "I'm just going to **grab** a sandwich before I go" or "I'll **grab** a quick bite on the way to the office." This **grab** gives the image of quickly taking or seizing something with your hand, so we can use it to mean eating food quickly or taking something along to eat later.

Kassy uses **grab** for the other scenario. We often invite friends to dinner or to a bar by saying, "Do you want to **grab** lunch with me on Saturday?" or "Want to **grab** a drink at that new pub after work today?" Here, **grab** implies that the shared meal or drink will be casual and there is no rush or hurry at all. You could simply say "Let's have lunch" or "Let's get a drink," but by saying **grab**, you are also hinting at having an informal and low-pressure atmosphere.

For example, your boss would probably NOT say, "We're **grabbing** lunch with the shareholders on Friday." A shareholder meeting is usually a formal, well-planned event, so it makes more sense to say "having lunch."

Here are a few more examples with **to grab (food, drink)**:

Robert: Hey, want to **grab** dinner tonight at that new burger place downtown?

Sadie: Sounds great! I've heard their burgers are fantastic.

Robert: Me too! The reviews online are very good.

May: Hey, I'm late for a meeting, I've got to go. See you tonight!

Vince: Wait! You haven't even had breakfast!

May: Oh, I don't have enough time to sit and eat! OK, I'll just **grab** a banana and a granola bar to take with me. I'll have them in the car.

Vince: Alright, alright. See you later!

Whatever floats your boat Expression

Neither Andrew nor Kassy are particularly big birthday people – they don't like to fuss much over their birthdays. However, they know that some people are really into their birthdays and will even spend their whole birthday month celebrating. Andrew says, "**Whatever floats your boat!**"

The expression **whatever floats your boat** is an informal expression used to show a sense of approval or indifference towards someone's unique personal preferences. In other words, it means "whatever makes you happy" or "whatever you prefer." We usually use it when we do not share the same personal preferences or when we're giving someone permission to make a decision without our input.

For example, let's say your roommate's birthday is coming up. You ask her what she wants to do to celebrate. She says she wants to go on a hike in the mountains. You aren't into hiking at all, but you could say, "OK, **whatever floats your boat!**"

This expression can sound encouraging or critical depending on your tone of voice. For instance, if your friend tells you that his brother is really into *Lord of the Rings* and he's making a Gandalf costume to wear at an upcoming fantasy convention, you might say, "Alright, **whatever floats your boat.**" If you say this pleasantly or normally, it sounds like you mean "I can't relate to that, but if it makes him happy, that's great!" However, if you say it with a sarcastic tone of voice, it sounds like you mean "Wow, what a weird hobby. I think that sounds like a bad time, but whatever. He can do what he wants."

Since this expression can be misunderstood depending on your tone of voice and it is informal, it's best not to use it in professional or formal contexts. If your manager tells you that she's excited to get cocktails with her friends for her birthday this coming weekend, you should NOT tell her "**Whatever floats your boat!**"

Here are a few more examples with **whatever floats your boat**:

Richie: Hey, what should we have for dinner tonight?

Christina: **Whatever floats your boat.** I have no preferences.

Rebecca: My brother has been getting into skydiving recently. He's been on over ten jumps now.

Zachary: Skydiving?! That sounds like a horrible time. I would never try that. Well, as they say, **whatever floats your boat!**

To step [something] up

Phrasal verb

Kassy says her mom doesn't usually make a fuss about her birthday, but she **steps it up** on occasion and does something really big. As Andrew and Kassy explain, to **step [something] up** means to take it to the next level, put in extra effort, and do a good job.

We often use **step it up** when we're trying to encourage someone to perform better while doing a difficult task. A personal trainer might tell his client, "Come on, keep it going! You can do it! **Step up** the pace, **step it up!**" Similarly, a sales manager might tell her staff, "Alright guys, can we beat last month's sales record? Let's **step it up** and call those customers! I want you to make five sales today!"

You can remember **step it up** by thinking of **stepping up** a flight of stairs. If you're **stepping up**, you're making progress in getting to the next level.

When we use step up WITHOUT an object like "it," it means to volunteer or take responsibility for something. For instance, let's say your father gets really sick and needs to be treated for a few months in the hospital. Your older brother takes time off of work to visit him, take care of his dog and house while he's in the hospital, and sort out his bills and expenses. Your brother really **stepped up** in this emergency family situation (= took responsibility).

Here are a couple more examples with **to step [something] up**:

Lucas: Alright team, we're halfway through our project timeline, but we're falling behind. We need to **step our efforts up** if we want to ace this assignment.

Beth: I agree. I think we should schedule more frequent meetings to practice our presentation.

Natalie: How am I doing, coach?

Edward: You're doing great! Your form is excellent. However, I have noticed that you don't seem to be tired or slow down when you're close to the end of the workout.

Natalie: I've noticed that, too.

Edward: That's a sign that you're getting stronger and we need to **step it up** and add more intensity to your workout. How about adding 5 more kilograms of weight to each of your exercises for next week?

Rip-off

Noun

As Andrew and Kassy are discussing memorable childhood birthday parties, Andrew brings up Chuck E. Cheese. This is a famous arcade and children's birthday party venue in the U.S. and Canada. Andrew says that he used to go to an arcade called Scandia, which was a Chuck E. Cheese **rip-off**.

Rip-off has two meanings: 1) something that costs far more than it's worth or 2) something that completely copies and steals the idea from something else. In this case, Andrew is using the second definition. He says that the arcade he used to go to for friends' birthday parties was a **rip-off** of Chuck E. Cheese, meaning it completely copied Chuck E. Cheese's business model and aesthetics. Scandia copied the more successful, more well-known arcade's style.

We also often use **rip-off** to talk about art, books, and music that copy other creative works. For instance, if a song sounds almost identical to another famous song but with slight changes, it might be labeled as a **rip-off**. Similarly, you might say, "I finally saw the movie 'Joker.' It was pretty good, but it was a total **rip-off** of 'The King of Comedy'!"

A **rip-off** is the noun version of the phrasal verb **to rip off**, which we can use with a similar meaning. You could say, "I don't buy from Company A. They **rip off** designs from independent artists, mass produce them, and sell them for cheaper."

Here are a couple more examples with **rip-off**:

Mike: I watched that new film everyone's been talking about last night.

Monica: Oh yeah? What did you think?

Mike: Honestly, I felt like it was a **rip-off** of another movie I saw a few years ago. There was nothing original about it.

Olivia: Turn up the radio! I love this song.

Tyler: Wow, is this a new song?

Olivia: Yes, it just came out a few weeks ago.

Tyler: This is totally **ripping off** a song from the 80s. It sounds like they just took the instrumentation and put new vocals on top.

Quiz

1. Your daughter says, “I’m ready to fly the coop.” What does she mean?

- a) She feels ready to buy a pet bird
- b) She feels excited about traveling by plane
- c) She feels prepared to leave home and live independently
- d) She feels interested in flying a kite

2. What does the expression "whatever floats your boat" mean?

- a) You should choose what makes you happy
- b) You should own a boat
- c) You should try new experiences
- d) You should have the same taste as everyone else

3. Which of the following is a good synonym for “grab a drink”?

- a) Have a drink
- b) Spill a drink
- c) Prepare a drink from scratch
- d) Decline an offer for a drink

4. Which of the following is NOT a milestone?

- a) Giving birth to a baby
- b) Visiting the library
- c) Moving to a new city
- d) Celebrating 20 years at your company

5. Which of the following does NOT describe a “rip-off”?

- a) Replica
- b) Plagiarized
- c) Imitated
- d) Original

Writing and Discussion Questions

1. What do you usually do to celebrate your birthday?
2. What's the most memorable birthday celebration you've ever attended?
3. What are some traditional birthday activities and birthday foods in your home country?
4. Has your relationship with your birthday changed as you've gotten older? How?
5. What's the next big **milestone** in your life that you're looking forward to?

Quiz Answers

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

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