

Simplified Speech #199 – Bike lanes

Episode description

Are you a cyclist? Do you get frustrated with cyclists on the road when you're trying to drive? How about cyclists on the sidewalk when you're trying to walk? If you have an opinion on bike manners and bike lanes in cities, then this is the episode for you! This time, Andrew and Suzanne discuss the topic of bike lanes, sharing their personal experiences and opinions on cycling infrastructure.

Fun fact

In Copenhagen, Denmark, bicycles outnumber cars! The city is famous for its extensive and well-designed bicycle lanes, making it one of the most bike-friendly cities in the world. In fact, roughly 50% of Copenhagen's residents commute to work or school by bike every day.

Expressions included in the study guide

- You gotta do what you gotta do
- Don't get me started
- To push one's luck
- Not all [noun] are created equal
- To hog
- A me thing



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 199, "Bike Lanes." Featuring Andrew and Suzanne. Our main topic of conversation for this episode is bike lanes. And I'm joined by my co-host Suzanne to talk about this subject. Hello, Suzanne. How's it going?

Suzanne: Hi, Andrew. I'm well. How are you?

Andrew: I'm great, Suzanne. And this is a topic that is near and dear to my heart, bike lanes, because I am, I guess I would say I'm a cyclist. I'm someone who really enjoys riding my bike. And it's also like, I think, a topic that people have very, very strong feelings about. People either love bike lanes, or they hate bike lanes. And there's not too many people, at least in Canada, that are very sort of neutral and don't care about them. So, I think everybody has an opinion about this topic, interestingly enough. So, I'm excited to get into it with you here in more detail, Suzanne. Maybe the first thing I'll ask you is, are you a cyclist?

Suzanne: I would say not really. I have a bike, and I like riding it once in a while, have a cool basket. But I don't really use it very often. I think now I'm at a point where I feel confident using it. But for, I would say the last few years, I didn't really use it because of health issues. So, I just didn't feel comfortable to get on a bike. But I would say, maybe I can be an aspiring cyclist.

Andrew: An aspiring cyclist. I like that. And maybe the term cyclist, we should define. Because actually, when I think about it now, a cyclist, to me, is somebody who really rides their bike often, and maybe does it not only for commuting and transportation, but also for exercise. And so, with that definition in mind, I want to step back and say maybe I am not really too much of a cyclist. Because although I do love riding bikes, these days, I just

don't do it too often, unfortunately. So, I would say maybe I'm more of a hobbyist than a cyclist. Like I enjoy riding my bike for fun, and sometimes to commute, but mostly just yeah, for fun. I'm not really too hardcore. Sounds like we're kind of similar in that way.

Suzanne: Like, but you're not serious, serious cyclist.

Andrew: Yeah, but you know, I do have all the spandex and stuff. And I do have a fast bicycle, but I just don't ride it too often.

Suzanne: You're like a semi-cyclist.

Andrew: Yeah, semi-cyclist.

Suzanne: Yeah.

Andrew: So, we should define what a bike lane is as well, because that's what we're going to talk about. So, could you just tell our listeners in your own words, what a bike lane is?

Suzanne: Yeah, in North America, we have a small lane next to cars, or sometimes next to parked cars that are designated specifically for bikes. So, there are different kinds of bike lanes in different streets, in different states or provinces, but mostly they are the designated area where a bike can move or stand around.

Andrew: Hopefully move.

Suzanne: Yeah.

Andrew: Yeah, but that's correct. It's like an area that's not the sidewalk, and it's not the road. It's in the middle, and it's exclusive for bikes to travel.

Suzanne: Exclusive. That's it. Yes.

Andrew: And now some people love bike lanes because they feel like they're safer than riding on the road. And they also feel like it gives an opportunity for pedestrians to walk safely on the sidewalk without having to worry about bikes whizzing back and forth. And so, I think in theory, they're a good idea, right? But they're also really controversial, and many people hate them because of some of the things that happen in bike lanes and because of how cars have to navigate around bike lanes. And we'll maybe talk about some of these pros and cons in just a moment. But we should say, Suzanne, that you are based in Montreal right now. And in my opinion, I haven't cycled in every city in Canada, but in my opinion, Montreal probably has the best cycling infrastructure in Canada. Maybe Vancouver and Victoria are also quite high up there. I would say Toronto has this other problem. They have street cars.

Suzanne: Yeah, it's scary. It's scary. I, in fact, was just in St. Catharines, which is just outside of Toronto for a conference, a voice and speech conference. And it's right near Niagara Falls. So, I'm sure a lot of listeners will know Niagara Falls. And when I visited Toronto after the conference for a few days to visit a friend of mine, it was borderline, death-defying scary watching some of the bike cyclists or bikers in the street with the trolley cars, with these crazy small streets and no bike lanes. It was really bike unfriendly, let's say, compared to Montreal.

Andrew: My perspective may have been skewed a little bit because when I lived in Canada, I would say I was a hardcore bike rider, and I used my bicycle to commute everywhere. And so those things at that time when I was younger and more reckless, I think didn't really bother me too much. But yeah, in retrospect, it is pretty dangerous. And those street cars, the problem is, is that the tracks are embedded in the road. They're actually placed in the road. And so, you have this groove, this rut running down the middle of the road, which is the perfect size for your bicycle wheel to fall into.

Suzanne: Exactly. And I watched that happen to some people. It was not OK. It was scary as a driver because I was there on a road trip of sorts. I had driven from Montreal to the conference. And oh, my goodness, I was very scared for the cyclists as a driver.

Andrew: OK, so we're going to say Toronto, not such great infrastructure. I would also say my hometown, Kelowna, is a representative of more of a medium-sized city in Canada. And also, the bike infrastructure, not so great in a place like that. I feel like maybe in some of the larger cities, there's more investment and more planning that goes into how are we going to have bike cyclists in our city? And how are they going to navigate through the city? But in some of the smaller cities, that doesn't really take place. That conversation at Kelowna is a great example of that. So, it varies from terrible and non-existent to actually pretty good in Canada, I think, with Montreal being one of the best examples. Here in Asia, I can't speak for all Asian countries, but I can speak for Seoul. And Seoul has a lot of infrastructure for riding bikes. They have a great series of trails that I've talked about lots on Culips, but they don't have great infrastructure for riding in the city itself. There are some bike lanes, but most of the bike riding trails are beside a stream or in a park or beside a river, but it's not within the city itself.

And so, because of this, there are a lot of cyclists, many people riding bikes every day, from hardcore riders to casual riders. But most of the riding, I think, is just for fun. And it's not for transportation, or it's not for commuting. And I think that's a major difference between cycling maybe in Europe and cycling in North America, where people actually cycle maybe to go to school or to go to work. I know when I lived in Canada, that's what I would do. I would cycle to school every day. I would cycle to my job every day. But here, I think, I mean, I don't want to say never, because I'm sure there are some people who do it, but 95% of the people that you'll see riding a bike here in Seoul are just doing it maybe for exercise or for fun. And it's not really a method of transportation. That being said, we have amazing public transportation here. So maybe it's not as necessary as in North America,

where our public transportation system is not as great. But Montreal has a very good subway system. So, Montreal's maybe a unique case.

Suzanne: Yeah, it has a good bus system as well. So, I think in the summer, you know, in the fall and in the spring, people will bike a bit more. Although they do plow the snow off of the bike lanes here. And my husband has winter tires on his bike for going back and forth on his bike to work, for errands, things like that. So, he is a year-round cyclist. He has all of the winter equipment. He wears his snowboarding helmet and goggles in the winter, big gloves, and a full-body plastic suit to keep the snow off of him. And he definitely looks like he's maybe part of that band Daft Punk.

Andrew: OK.

Suzanne: Do you guys know that band? They wear like helmets and stuff. He definitely looks like that when he's going to work in the winter. And yeah, he cycles everywhere, even to soccer games or maybe this grocery store. So, for him, it's definitely a major mode of transportation. And he actually worked for the city in building some of the infrastructure for the bike lanes here in Montreal. And he was part of a big project to bring one of the neighborhoods up to a gold standard. Or actually, I think it was platinum. But anyway, he got an award for these bike lanes because they're so safe. Anyway, we can talk about that, what makes bike lanes safe and what makes them not so safe maybe. But it is pretty cool to go and see Olivier's bike lanes. People use them all the time. So, I think the more bike lanes you build, the more people are inspired to use their bike as a major form of transportation.

Andrew: Yeah, that's so cool. That's like a dream job. I think if I had to have a different career in an alternate universe, a bike lane designer and city infrastructure planner, that's amazing. That's a really cool job. So yeah, kudos to him for all of that work that he did in bringing the bike lane infrastructure to Montreal. It's so awesome.

Suzanne: Yeah, yeah.

Andrew: Suzanne, you just hinted at something that's really interesting and let's get into it in more detail. You talked about how more infrastructure, more bike lanes in a city encourages more people to ride. Have you noticed that in Montreal? Have you noticed more people out and about riding their bikes now that there are more bike lanes in the city?

Suzanne: Yeah, especially in the summer. And I actually notice a lot of families, so kids riding bikes with their parents because it's safe. Before, if they were just riding in the street, maybe they would have their kids on the back of their bike so that they could, you know, feel safer. But in this case, when there's bike lanes, it's a little bit more protected. Those lanes are more protected. And families, like maybe two kids on their own separate bikes, and then the mom and the dad or whatever, are riding all together. And this is really exciting because that also influences younger people to start to become cyclists as well.

Andrew: Throw them right in there. Get them riding in the bike lane from a young age.

Suzanne: With helmets.

Andrew: Suzanne, let's talk about our perspective on bike lanes. Because I think, you know from my perspective as an experienced cyclist, I guess I could say, I love and hate bike lanes. And I also love and hate bike lanes when I'm driving a car. And I think my perspective on them really changes moment to moment, day to day. Because if I'm in a bike lane and the flow of traffic is good, then I think they're wonderful and they can be amazing. But if you're in a bike lane and suddenly, maybe you have one of those young families that you mentioned earlier, and they are taking up all of the space and it's unsafe to pass them, then you get kind of a traffic jam in the bike lane. And then I feel stuck. And to me, the point of riding a bike is that, A, I have some freedom. And B, it should be a quick mode of transportation, right? Usually cycling allows you to avoid traffic jams and

that kind of thing. So, if I get stuck in a traffic jam or in an unsafe situation in a bike lane, then that really annoys me. And then also, I think, "Hmm, well, should I just ride on the sidewalk to pass these people? Should I ride on the road to get around these people?" It makes for an unsafe situation in that context. Have you ever had that happen to you before?

Suzanne: I do not ride a bike to go super-fast, actually. I've never had an issue slowing down, going kind of slower. I'm pretty medium with my speed. I'm not annoying where it's like, "Oh my gosh, come on, go!" But I'm also not speedy like some people. And so, I'm kind of in the middle of the pack, and I just sort of wait to pass people if I need to. So, I'm not a good person to ask because I'm a little bit more leisurely with my bike riding. I would say, though, I do a lot more walking in the city, and I walk my dog. And when people bike ride on the sidewalk, I get very angry because it's unsafe for people with babies or dogs or animals. I mean, some people walk their cats now, so I don't know. But I find it's unsafe because it's very difficult to control. Like if I'm by myself, I can move quickly out of the way. But if I have an animal or say a woman, I see a woman with a baby carriage, it's difficult to make a quick move out of the way. And the bike is going a lot faster. So, it can be a little precarious or dangerous, right? When I am on my bike, I do try to stick to the bike lane roads. And you can, usually a city will have a map with the bike lanes. Or if you go on Google Maps or Waze or something, an app or something that you use for, you know, directions. If you say you're on a bike, it will show you the bike lanes, like the way to go on the bike. And that is so much safer than, you know, trying to go on a sidewalk, for example. Sometimes you live on that street, so you're like, "I'm gonna go on that sidewalk for a second till I get to my house." Me personally, the moment I hit the sidewalk, I jumped off the bike so that I am walking the bike. But you know what? **You got to do what you got to do.**

Andrew: I'm 100% with you that people, at least where there is this kind of infrastructure in Montreal, should avoid riding on the sidewalk. It drives me crazy. It's one of my pet peeves here in Seoul as well, is you'll occasionally have people riding their bike on the

sidewalk. But even worse than that is, I'm going to sound like an old senior citizen just yelling at the sky.

Suzanne: Do it. I'm older than you. I probably feel the same way. Are you talking about the electric bikes?

Andrew: The electric scooters, the electric bikes that are going very, very quickly.

Suzanne: **Don't even get me started. Don't even get me started.**

Andrew: I wonder if you have this in Montreal. I feel like probably not as much. But here in Korea, in general, there's a really amazing delivery infrastructure. So, you could order food, you could order groceries, and it will be delivered very quickly. But most of the delivery drivers ride a motor scooter. And so, they'll also sometimes hop onto the sidewalk because they have to deliver their package very quickly, right? And there's traffic jams, and they can technically fit on the sidewalk. But it does cause a lot of annoyance because-

Suzanne: That's scary.

Andrew: Yeah, you'll have a motor scooter beside you. Now, I do have to say that I actually prefer them to the electric scooters because they make a loud noise so you can hear them coming. And also, usually they're going pretty slow. It is annoying that you have this big vehicle behind you, and you have to move over so you can let the vehicle pass when you are on the sidewalk, right? Which in the Korean language, they actually call the "people road." So, I'm like, "This is for the walkers. This is for the people, not the vehicles." But yeah, so those are my main complaints. But yeah, even in the bike lanes, the electric scooters, and the electric bikes, they go so fast that it can be really dangerous. And yeah, it causes some problems.

Suzanne: It's scary because there's not like a speed limit, right, for the bike lane. There is a speed limit for the drivers, but not in the bike lane. And when someone is going on an electric scooter or something like that, they can kind of push that speed limit a little bit maybe. I mean, there isn't a speed limit, but they can kind of push the envelope, right? Like they're a little bit **pushing their luck**. I do though want to just say, I think it's important because **not all bike lanes are created equal**, right? Some of them are not very safe. Some of them are almost between like the parked cars and the driving cars. And they're really small. And sometimes cars park on top of them. And they're really almost like just a drawing on the street, you know, a line that doesn't really help those bikers. And sometimes they're really great. Sometimes you'll see in Montreal, we have a lot of bike lanes that are separated by a median or like a piece of cement. And they're two-way, right? Like just like the road is going two-way for the car, there will be two-way bike lanes. And there's also this little buffer zone. So, whenever the bike lane is up against the parked cars, you have a little buffer zone. So, when the car opens their door, it doesn't impede on or move into the bike lane. It stays within that buffer zone. And that really protects the cyclists a lot, I think.

Andrew: Yeah, that's an excellent point, Suzanne. There's something that's called "dooring" or "getting doored."

Suzanne: Oh, OK. I didn't know that's what it was called, getting doored. Oh, no.

Andrew: Yeah. I've had friends who have got doored and actually have been seriously, seriously injured and have required surgery and long rehabilitation periods. So, it's a nasty, nasty thing to get in an accident like that. But to explain it to our listeners, what getting doored means is you're riding your bicycle and then some parked car on the side will open their door without shoulder checking. So maybe somebody has just parallel parked on the street and they're going to exit their vehicle. But before exiting their vehicle, they didn't shoulder check to see if there were any bicycles coming. And then there's a bike riding in the bike lane or along the shoulder of the road. And the "shoulder" is what we call the side,

the extreme side part of the road. And so, yeah, it's just bad timing. The person exiting their vehicle opens their door at exactly the same time that the bike is going past. And then you can imagine the result is quite nasty.

Suzanne: You just smack right into that door, right?

Andrew: Into the door or maybe even worse is if it catches you in the side and then puts you into the traffic, right? That can happen as well. It's a really serious problem. And when I ride my bike, it's something that's always, always, always in my mind. It's like the number one thing riding in traffic is that I have to be far enough away so that if somebody does open their door, it's not going to hit me. So, when I ride on the road and there are parked cars on the street, I'm always near the center of the lane, usually not near the side because it's just a very, very dangerous situation.

Suzanne: Right. And then that's not safe either, right? And then that can be unsafe because then the car is going very, very slow to be behind you because you're scared too, which makes sense. And then the traffic, and then what I saw today was somebody was doing that because this street did not have a bike lane. And so, there was a bike in the middle of the street and the car in front of me had to go into the oncoming traffic to go around the bike. And they almost hit head on the other oncoming car. So that is also a little bit unsafe. So yeah, we need good bike lanes with lots of space.

Andrew: I agree. And I really love the two-way lanes that you mentioned before, because that also provides a passing opportunity for the riders who want to go a little bit faster. And some of the people who want to take things a little bit slower. I mean, it's great. It's fine. As long as everybody is mindful. I think this is really important just in general, no matter if you're riding a car or walking or biking is just be aware of your surroundings and be mindful. You know, if you are cycling with a young family, just be aware that, hey, you know, there's other people in the world to not just your family, and some people are going to need to pass. So don't **hog** the whole lane. If you are parking your car...

Suzanne: Some people have to get to work, you know?

Andrew: Yeah! And if you're parking your car, be mindful that there might be someone riding their bike, and you should shoulder check before opening your door.

Suzanne: Of course, I always check my mirror before I open, I look through the mirror, you know, just lean over, check the mirror, nobody's coming at all, open the door quick, get out, go.

Andrew: Yeah, one of the best things that I heard for that is that when you're exiting your car on the driver's side, don't use your left hand to open the door, you should actually use your right hand so that you're forced, your body is forced to turn over to open the car door. And you can kind of shoulder check at the same time.

Suzanne: Yeah, no, it's good. That's a good idea.

Andrew: Suzanne, maybe we'll wrap things up here in a sec. But I want to leave with just asking you this question. Because I feel I don't know if this is just because I'm a grumpy guy, or if this is something that a lot of people share this opinion. But I find when I'm walking, then I often find myself annoyed at like the scooters or the cyclists or the cars. If I'm cycling, then I'm the same way. I'm a little bit annoyed at the pedestrians and the cars. If I'm driving, then I'm annoyed at the cyclists, and sometimes the pedestrians as well. And of course, the other cars sometimes as well.

Suzanne: Yeah, of course.

Andrew: I consider myself to be a walker, a cyclist, and a driver from time to time. But I don't have too much empathy when I'm in the other role, you know, like, when I'm riding my bike, and I'm with the other cyclists, I'm on their team. But as soon as I switch, then I'm

kind of like, "Oh, these cyclists! Ugh these drivers! Ugh these pedestrians!" Is that just a **me thing**? Or do you think that's something that you can agree with?

Suzanne: That's a we thing. I totally have that too.

Andrew: OK.

Suzanne: So, absolutely. And today is a great example. I was walking from the park crossing the street with Skoshi, my dog. And this electric scooter flew by us going in the opposite direction of traffic. So, it's a one-way street. So, I turned to look and make sure over my left shoulder that there were no bikes or people or cars coming. And he zipped by my face, maybe like three inches by my face, like I could have pushed him over. He could have knocked us over going in the opposite direction of traffic.

Andrew: Yeah.

Suzanne: Like so fast. And I yelled at him. I go... and I was so mad. And it was funny because I said some funny things to him. And there were these construction workers in a truck across the way, and they saw me, and they heard me, and they started laughing. And I was like, "Well, I'm mad!" And they're like, "Yeah." So, it was quite funny. But oh my gosh, so annoying. Yeah. I'm the same. If I'm walking, I hate all the other things. If I'm driving, I hate all the other things. Same thing. Bicycle. I'm here.

Andrew: Yeah, yeah. Well, I'm glad I'm not the only grumpy person out there. I think that's just a maybe a natural reaction. Because maybe we can wrap up with this thought. I think the reason why people get so angry about this and why it brings out so much passion is that there are real consequences, right? Getting into an accident on your bicycle is not pleasant. Getting into a car accident is not pleasant. These can be really dangerous things. And so, because there are high stakes, then people get very passionate about that as well. And I think, yeah, maybe that's just like something that's always in the back of our

minds, even if we're not thinking of it consciously, is that there is a lot of danger to navigating our bodies through cities. And because of this, we are, yeah, we really care about trying to do it safely. But even despite that fact, we're still like having this conversation. Like, we haven't figured it out yet, right? There's still a lot of work to do.

Suzanne: We haven't figured it out. Yeah.

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

Detailed Explanations

You gotta do what you gotta do

Expression

Suzanne talks about how she tries to ride in bike lanes when she bikes in Montreal, but sometimes she has to ride on the sidewalk to get to her house. She says she tries to walk her bike when she gets to the sidewalk, but she also says, "You know what? **You gotta do what you gotta do.**"

You gotta do what you gotta do is an expression used to explain why you did something necessary, even if it's not the best option. It means that sometimes, even if it's not ideal, you must do something because there is no other choice.

For example, if you're struggling to pay your bills with your current salary, you may need to find a second job. It's not an ideal situation, but **you gotta do what you gotta do.**

This expression is often used to show understanding and empathy towards someone's situation. It can also convey a sense of resilience or determination to get through difficult times. For example, if your friend tells you, "Physics is so tough this semester. I had to pull an all-nighter to study for the test," and you want to encourage them to continue to study hard, you might say, "Well, **you gotta do what you gotta do.** Keep at it!"

Similar expressions include "necessity knows no law," "do what you have to do," "by any means necessary," and "when push comes to shove."

Here are a few more examples with **you gotta do what you gotta do**:

Jess: I had to skip my friend's birthday party last night to finish a project for work. I feel so guilty.

George: That's a difficult decision, Jess. But **you gotta do what you gotta do.**

Jess: I hope she understands. Work has been crazy lately.

Heather: How is your semester going, Tony?

Tony: So-so. I had to drop one of my classes this semester because I just couldn't keep up with the workload.

Heather: Oh, that's too bad. But I think you did the right thing. **You gotta do what you gotta do** to keep your grades up.

Don't get me started

Expression

Andrew brings up the incredibly fast electric scooters that people have been starting to use on the sidewalk in Seoul, and Suzanne tells him, “**Don't even get me started.**”

The expression **don't get me started** is used when you want to communicate that if you start talking about a topic, you will have a lot to say, often because it is something that irritates or annoys you. It suggests that you have strong opinions or experiences related to the topic and that discussing it might lead to a long and possibly heated conversation.

For example, let's say you have a lot of problems with your boss and everything he does irritates you. If you're at a coworker happy hour and someone asks what you think about the boss, you might say, “**Don't get me started.**”

Although we usually use this for things you have a lot of negative complaints about, you can also use it for topics you feel positively about. For instance, if your friend asks you, “What do you think about Sabrina Carpenter's new album?” and you absolutely loved it, you could say, “**Don't even get me started.** I'm obsessed with her.”

Similar expressions include “don't even mention it,” “don't bring it up,” and “let's not go there.” However, these similar expressions usually mean that you don't want to talk about the topic at all. If you say “**Don't get me started,**” it can be considered a warning that you have a lot of things to say, but you are willing to talk about it.

Here are a couple more examples with **don't get me started**:

Bruce: The weather has been disgusting this week. I'm so sick of the summer heat.

Cynthia: **Don't even get me started.** I've had to take three showers a day because I'm sweating so much.

Kate: We had a meeting with the new manager today, and it was a disaster. She seems so disorganized. I don't know how we're going to manage.

Rudy: **Don't get me started** on the new management. Ever since they took over, everything has been a mess. Projects are delayed, communication is poor, and morale is at an all-time low.

Kate: I've noticed that too. It's like nobody knows what they're doing anymore.

To push one's luck

Idiomatic verb

Suzanne talks about people riding electric scooters and how they sometimes go way too fast in the bike lane. She says they are "**pushing their luck**."

To push one's luck means to take a risk or try to get more than what is safe or reasonable. It suggests that you have already had some good fortune, but if you try to get even more, you might lose everything. You usually use this expression when someone is taking unnecessary risks.

For example, if someone has gotten away with something risky a few times and then tries it again, you might say they are **pushing their luck**. Another example would be a student who frequently turns in assignments late without penalty. If the student continues to do so, they are **pushing their luck** because the teacher might eventually enforce the rules and give them a lower grade.

The origin of this phrase comes from the idea of luck as something that can be stretched or pushed, but if you push too hard, it breaks or runs out. To remember this expression, think of a balloon filled with air. You can keep adding more air to see how big you can get it, but if you push the air pump too much, the balloon will end up bursting.

Similar expressions include "to tempt fate," "to press one's luck," and "take a gamble."

Here are a few more examples with **to push one's luck**:

Mother: You've already had one cookie, sweetie. No more until after dinner.

Son: But I want another one!

Mother: **Don't push your luck.** If you keep asking, you might not get any dessert at all.

Jake: I've already won \$100 at blackjack! I think I'll keep playing. I've got a great winning streak going.

Samantha: Be careful, Jake. You should quit while you're ahead. If you **push your luck**, you might lose everything you've won so far.

Jake: But I might be able to double it!

Samantha: That's what you're thinking now, but remember what happened last time?

Jake: Yeah...OK, you're right.

Not all [noun] are created equal

Expression

In the episode, Suzanne talks about bike lanes and how their quality can vary. She says, "**not all bike lanes are created equal.**" This means that some bike lanes are good and safe, while others are not very good or safe. They are different in quality.

The expression "**not all [noun] are created equal**" means that not everything of a certain type is the same. Some things are better, and some things are worse. For example, "**not all shoes are created equal**" means some shoes are more comfortable or last longer than others.

You use this expression to emphasize that there are differences in quality or effectiveness among similar items or people. It highlights that just because things belong to the same category, it doesn't mean they are all of the same quality. For instance, when you're looking for a new laptop, the electronics store worker might warn you, "**Not all laptops are created equal.**" This means that some laptops are faster, have better battery life, or are more reliable than others.

Similar expressions include "not all [noun] are the same" and "there are differences in [noun]."

Here are a couple more examples with **not all [noun] are created equal**:

Victor: I decided to buy a new brand of coffee at the store this week since I've been drinking the same blend for years. I just tried it this morning.

Rebecca: How was it?

Victor: Well, let's put it this way – today I learned that **not all coffee is created equal.** Even though this one was pretty expensive, it actually tasted terrible. It was bitter and acidic.

Rebecca: I guess you'd better go back to your usual brand!

Diana: I graded the essays from my English Literature class. There's a noticeable difference in quality among the students.

Jack: Really? But it's an honors class.

Diana: Yes, but **not all honors-student essays are created equal.** Some of them need more practice and guidance in their writing skills.

To hog Verb

Andrew complains to Suzanne about families cycling together and taking up all the space in the lane. He wishes these cyclists wouldn't "**hog** the whole lane."

The verb **to hog** means to take or use more than your fair share of something, not allowing others to have any or enough. For example, if you **hog** the TV, you keep the remote control and decide what to watch, not letting others choose. Another example could be someone **hogging all the cookies** – they're eating most or all of the food, leaving little or none for others.

You usually use this verb to show criticism for the selfish behavior of others, but you can also use it in apology or to describe your own behavior. For instance, let's say you've been playing Mario Kart all afternoon. If your brother has been waiting patiently for a chance to play the Nintendo Switch, you can give him the controller and say, "Sorry for **hogging** the Switch. You can play now!"

The origin of this phrase comes from the behavior of hogs (pigs), which tend to eat a lot and not share food with others. To remember this expression, think of a greedy pig taking all the food for itself, and you will remember that **to hog** means to take too much and not share.

Some similar verbs include "to monopolize" or "to hoard."

Here are a few more examples with **to hog**:

Mia: Hey, can I get a turn on the swing? You've been on it for a while.

Liam: Oh, sorry, I didn't mean **to hog** it. Here you go.

Mia: Thanks! It's my favorite part of the playground.

Liam: Mine too. I just lose track of time when I'm having fun.

Adam: You've been **hogging** the bathroom mirror for ages. Can I use it yet?!

Zoey: Five more minutes! I'm almost done with my makeup.

Adam: I hate sharing a bathroom with you. Mom, we need to move! I need my own bathroom already!

Zoey: Oh, quit complaining!

A me thing Expression

Andrew talks about feeling annoyed by different types of people when he is in different roles moving around the city (walking, cycling, driving). He wonders if this feeling is just “**a me thing**” or if others feel the same way. Suzanne confirms that it's not just him, but something she also experiences.

The expression “**a me thing**” means something that is specific to the person speaking, a personal feeling or habit. It is used to question if an experience or feeling is unique to oneself or shared by others.

For example, if you really like dipping fries in ice cream and wonder if others do too, you might ask, “Is this just **a me thing**?” You use this expression to check if what you're experiencing is unique to you or if others feel the same way. It's often used in casual conversations to express personal quirks or opinions.

You may also hear “**That's a you thing**” when someone is identifying a habit or personality trait as unique to you. We don't usually use this with other pronouns like “we,” “they,” “he,” or “she,” but you may sometimes hear it with someone's name. For example, if your friend Tom is always wearing camouflage patterned clothes, you might refer to that as “That's such **a Tom thing**.”

Similar expressions include “Is it just me, or...” or “Am I the only one who...”

Here are a couple more examples with **a me thing**:

Nick: I love eating cold pizza for breakfast. Is that just **a me thing**?

Sophie: Nope, I do that too. Cold pizza is the best!

Nick: Really? I thought I was the only one.

Bonnie: I get really annoyed when people chew loudly. Is that **a me thing** or do you feel the same way?

Walter: Definitely not just **a you thing**. It bothers me too.

Bonnie: Good to know I'm not alone. I always feel bad because it irritates me so much, even if the person isn't trying to be loud.

Walter: Yeah. I usually try to focus on something else or move away if I can.

Quiz

1. If you "gotta do what you gotta do," what does it mean?

- a) You have a choice in the matter.
- b) You must do what is necessary, even if it's not ideal.
- c) You are avoiding responsibility.
- d) You are asking for advice.

2. To "push one's luck" means to:

- a) Be cautious about taking risks.
- b) Stop trying after a failure.
- c) Continue taking risks, possibly to the point of failure.
- d) Avoid any kind of risk.

3. If someone is "hogging" the snacks, they are:

- a) Taking more than their fair share.
- b) Sharing them generously.
- c) Avoiding eating them.
- d) Putting them away in the cupboard.

4. The expression "a me thing" refers to:

- a) Something that is true for everyone.
- b) A personal habit or preference that may not be shared by others.
- c) Something that you want to avoid .
- d) An activity that everyone enjoys.

5. Which situation best illustrates "not all [noun] are created equal"?

- a) Every apple in the basket tastes the same.
- b) All shoes in the store are the same size.
- c) Every restaurant serves the same quality of food.
- d) Some online courses are very effective, while others are not.

Listening-comprehension quiz

1. What does Andrew say about the bike infrastructure in Montreal compared to other cities in Canada?
2. Why do streetcars in Toronto make riding a bike feel dangerous?
3. What does Suzanne say about her husband's cycling habits in winter?
4. What safety feature does Suzanne highlight about the bike lanes in Montreal?
5. What does "getting doored" mean?

Writing and Discussion Questions

1. What method of transportation do you prefer for getting around town – walking, taking public transportation, biking, or driving? Why?
2. Are there bike lanes in your town or city? If there are, do you think they make things safer? If not, do you think they would improve safety on the road?
3. Describe a time when you felt unsafe while on the road (either as a cyclist, pedestrian, or driver). What happened? What did you do?
4. How do you deal with people **hogging** the road? Do you experience road rage or do you remain calm during frustrating traffic situations?
5. Reflecting on different cities you've visited or lived in, how true is Suzanne's statement "**Not all bike lanes are created equal**"? Which city had the best or worst road infrastructure and why?

Quiz Answers

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

Listening-comprehension answers

1. Andrew says that, in his opinion, Montreal probably has the best cycling infrastructure in Canada, and he compares it favorably to cities like Vancouver and Victoria.
2. The problem is that the streetcar tracks are embedded in the road, so there is a groove or rut running down the middle of the road which is the perfect size for your bicycle wheel to fall into.
3. Suzanne says her husband is a year-round cyclist who has winter tires on his bike and wears snowboarding helmet and goggles, big gloves, and a full-body plastic suit to keep the snow off him.
4. Suzanne highlights that some bike lanes in Montreal are separated by a median or a piece of cement, have two-way lanes, and include a buffer zone to protect cyclists from parked car doors.
5. "Getting doored" means a getting hit by a car door that opens unexpectedly in their path, often because the person in the car didn't check for cyclists or pedestrians before opening the door.

Episode credits

Hosts: Andrew Bates and Suzanne Cerreta
Music: *Something Elated* by Broke for Free
Episode preparation/research: Andrew Bates
Audio editor: Andrew Bates
Study guide writer: Indiana Brown
English editor: Andrew Bates
Operations: Tsuyoshi Kaneshima
Image: Ali Alcántara [pexels.com]