

A fixer-upper

Episode description

In this bonus episode, Andrew talks about some exciting news! Plus in the vocabulary lesson, he teaches you a useful English expression: **a fixer-upper**.

Support Culips and take your English to the next level by becoming a Culips Member. To sign up, visit Culips.com.



Note: The transcript has been edited for clarity.

Andrew: Welcome to bonus episode number 25 of the Culips English Podcast. I'm your host and your study buddy, Andrew, and it's great to have you join me for some English practice today. Here at Culips, we start each week with a bonus episode, where I share some stories about what's going on in my life, update you about what's going on behind the scenes here at Culips, and also teach you a useful English expression that you can add to your vocabulary and use to improve your English fluency. Each bonus episode comes with a totally free transcript that's clickable and completely interactive. You can get it just by visiting the link in the description for this episode, or by going to our website, which is Culips.com. Of course, there's also a PDF version of the transcript too for those of you who would rather study with it that way.

So today is Halloween, and usually Halloween is one of my favorite days of the year. But unfortunately, I can't say that about this year's Halloween. As you probably know, I'm Canadian, but I live in Seoul, South Korea. And over the weekend on Saturday night, there was a really tragic accident where over 100 young people, mostly in their late teens and early 20s, passed away. There's a neighborhood in Seoul called Itaewon. And each Halloween young people go there to show off their costumes and have some fun and go to Halloween parties. And I've even been there myself on Halloween. It's been a while, I think the last time that I visited Itaewon on Halloween was in 2015 or 2016. But the Halloween vibe and atmosphere is always alive in Itaewon on Halloween, so it's a fun place to visit. Well, as you may have heard on the news over the weekend, on Saturday night, there was a horrible, horrible accident, called crowd crush. Crowd crush. And according to what I've heard on the news, there were over 100,000 people who went to that neighborhood to celebrate Halloween in Itaewon, which is just unreal to think about. That's almost the size of my whole hometown gathered into just one small little neighborhood. And the accident occurred on a side street where there were just too many people jam packed together, and as a result, this horrible accident occurred. Now I don't want to say too much more about it at this point because I don't really know all of the details yet. And I don't want to say anything that's untrue or spread any false information. However, as a resident of Seoul, I really want to express my deepest condolences to the families and the loved ones of the victims, may they rest in peace.

There's been something in my personal life that's been going on in the background for the last several months. And today finally, I can share this information with you. And in my world, it's good news, this is happy news for me and my family, and I at long last can share it with you guys. It's a really long story, but to keep things short, and to cut to the chase, my wife and I bought a house! We bought a house. I think maybe some of you were expecting for me to announce that we are expecting a baby. But no, that is not the case, but we did buy a house. So, it's something that we're really excited about. It's located in a cute little neighborhood here in Seoul and we're both super happy about this major life goal that we've accomplished. My whole adult life I've been a renter, and so has my wife so it feels great to now be a homeowner and not a renter.

Now when I say house, I do mean house. Some of our Korean listeners might get confused with the terminology because living in a house is actually very rare in Seoul. Most people, and I'm pulling this statistic out of thin air right now, which means I'm creating it this is not an official statistic. This is just going with how I feel and what it seems like, but I would say over 90% of people here in Seoul live in apartments or condos. But my wife and I, we have purchased a house. It's a very little house, but it's a house, and it has a yard and everything. The house is what we would call a fixer-upper. It's old, it was actually built in the 1960s, and it's not in great condition. I don't want to say that it's unlivable, because there was a family living there before we bought it, and they were living fine, but the house is in very rough shape, and it needs a lot of TLC.

Oh, that's a good expression, TLC. TLC means tender loving care. And yeah, this house does need some TLC, it needs some tender loving care. It's also very small. Compared to a house in Canada, this one is so much smaller. I've been in some houses in Canada, where the living room is bigger than our entire house here in Korea. It's only around 47 square meters. So, it's pretty tiny. I can't say at all that it's spacey. But my wife and I, we see a lot of potential in it. And we're about to start a huge project now of fixing the house, remodeling the house, rebuilding the house, all of these things. So hopefully, we can turn it into the house of our dreams in the near future. The house is located in a nice residential neighborhood in Seoul, it's close to a lot of great amenities. And it's only around a 30-minute commute to the office for my wife and to the university where I work for me. And best of all, we're just a very short walk away from a subway station. So, getting around should be easier than it is for us right now. At the moment, I have to walk around 10

minutes or so to get to a subway station from my house. To be honest with you, that's not so bad, walking 10 minutes to the subway is totally fine. However, walking only one minute to the subway station does seem more appealing and is better, I think.

Anyway, we only took possession of the house last Wednesday. So, it's only been a few days since we've had the key and can go inside and look at it and all of these things. But we're already getting the ball rolling with the renovations and the remodeling. To get the ball rolling. To get the ball rolling, this is a nice expression, which means to get something started. So, even though we've only had the house for a few days, we want to get started with the renovations and the remodeling as soon as we can. We're going to try and do some of this work ourselves as much as we can ourselves, but we still have to be realistic and know our limits. My wife is very crafty, and she's good with her hands. But me on the other hand, not so much. That is not really my skill set in life. On top of that, we both have busy careers and no building experience. So, we're going to do as much as we can, but we'll also work with some professionals, especially when it comes to handling the heavy lifting.

Handling the heavy lifting. Wow, there are a lot of great expressions in this episode today. To handle the heavy lifting means to do the tough, and the difficult work that other people can't do or don't want to do. So, you know, some building stuff I can't do on my own. So, I'm going to need to hire a professional to handle the heavy lifting for me, to do that work that I can't do myself. So, we've already made a lot of appointments to meet with designers and builders. And we'll be meeting those people starting next week. We also visited a home expo over the weekend, and that was actually really fun to attend. I wasn't expecting it to be that good of a time, but it was pretty interesting and fun to walk through all of the different booths and displays and see all of these different kinds of things that vendors were selling related to home building products like bricks and fireplaces, sliding doors, hardwood floors, all of these things. One of my favorite displays was from this company that makes wooden saunas, and it got the wheels in my head turning. It made me start thinking and dreaming. Like, oh, could we have a sauna in our new house? Would this be possible? I don't know. And it's probably not a priority, but it's fun to daydream. And going to events like this, make it really easy to daydream about having a really cool house in the future.

So guys, that's the big news. I'm going to try not to bore you with every detail of the house updates over the next several months as we go through this. We're hoping that we can get the new place ready by the end of next spring, because that's when our housing lease contract expires on the apartment that we're living in right now. And if all goes according to plan, and of course, I'm expecting there to be many obstacles and problems and issues that we need to solve as we go through this process. But if all goes according to plan, and I'm really hoping that it does, we should be able to move into the new house by the end of next spring.

Since this is the last day of October, it also means that this is the last day of my Sober October challenge. Even though I failed part of the challenge, which was the exercise every day, part of the challenge, the not drinking alcohol part of the challenge was great, for my mental health and for my physical health too. I was only very lightly teased and peer pressured for not drinking only once during the whole month, and it wasn't even a big deal at all. So, that was great as well. Now, because it's the end of the month, that also means that it's time for our monthly live stream for Culips Members. And that will be happening tomorrow, Tuesday, November 1st at 7:30pm Korean Standard Time. Kassy and I are going to be hosting the live stream together. And all Culips Members are invited to join us to hang out and practice English together. Now, the live streams are always really fun. And personally, they're a highlight of my month. So, if you're a Culips Member, you can join the stream just by logging into your Culips account and clicking the link on the dashboard, and I really hope you can make it, I would love to see you there. And if you're not a Culips Member yet, but you would like to learn about all of the awesome benefits you get when you're a member, you can do that just by visiting our website Culips.com.

Now speaking of Culips Members, guys, I'm also hard at work on the next Fluency Files episode, which is our series only for Culips Members. It's Member exclusive. It's almost ready to go, I'm just putting the finishing touches on the transcript and the study guide, and it should be ready for upload real soon.

And now it's time for this week's vocabulary lesson.

Before I wrap up this episode, I'd like to take a moment to teach you a useful English expression. It's one that I used a little earlier, when I was talking about my house, I said

the house is a fixer-upper. A fixer-upper is a house or an apartment or any kind of structure, I suppose, that's in bad condition, and it needs lots of work and repairs. However, because of the bad condition, fixer-uppers can usually be bought at a cheap price. This expression is a noun form of the phrasal verb to fix up, which means to repair something, you can fix up a house, you can fix up a car, you can fix up something it means to repair that thing. Did you hear when I called my house a fixer-upper in this episode? Let's rewind, go back, and listen to that part of the episode just a couple more times so we can hear it again.

The house is what we would call a fixer-upper. It's old, it was actually built in the 1960s, and it's not in great condition.

So originally, the expression a fixer-upper was used to talk about houses that could be bought for cheap but needed many repairs to get them back into good condition. But these days, a fixer-upper is used to talk about any kind of product that has potential, but maybe needs some repairs to get it back into shape. It could be a car, maybe a vintage piece of furniture, or a bike, or a boat, anything like that. I've even heard some women talk about their boyfriends by calling them fixer-uppers. Now I'm not sure that this is too nice of a thing to call a person, but what they're trying to communicate and trying to say is that their boyfriends are good people but they're just a little rough around the edges. They're not perfect people, but they have the potential to be perfect in the future. So, even people can be fixer-uppers in a kind of weird way. As always, I've prepared some example sentences for us to study with. So, let's take a listen to the first example sentence now. Here we go.

Example sentence number one

My cousin and her boyfriend just bought a new cabin near the lake. They got a great deal, but it's definitely a fixer-upper.

Let's break this example sentence down. In that sentence, we heard about the speaker's cousin and her boyfriend. They just bought a new cabin. A cabin is a small house in the woods, it's usually a place where people will spend a weekend away. It's kind of like camping, but inside instead of in a tent. Cabins are rough structures, they're like a very

basic house and usually pretty small. So, the cousin and her boyfriend, they bought this new cabin. New to them, though, why? Because it's a fixer-upper, which means that it's old and damaged and needs some repairs before they can start using it as their weekend vacation home.

Example sentence number two

My first car was a real fixer-upper. But thanks to that car, I learned how to fix and repair vehicles. And I haven't had to take my car to a mechanic in 20 years.

Let's break that example sentence down. In that sentence, the speaker was talking about his first car. He said his first car was a fixer-upper. So, we could imagine that maybe it was a vintage car or an old car that he bought for a cheap price. Why would he buy it for a cheap price? Well, because it needs a lot of work. But the speaker said that by working on that car, he was able to learn how to fix cars, how to repair cars, and as a result of that training, then he gained this new skill, and he hasn't had to take his car to a mechanic shop or a repair shop for the last 20 years. Amazing!

Example sentence number three

I found this wonderful coffee table at a garage sale last week. It's a fixer-upper, but if I sand it down and give it a new coat of stain, it'll be good as new.

Let's break this final example sentence down. So, in this example sentence, the speaker says that they bought a coffee table at a garage sale. A garage sale is a kind of private sale where people will sell items from their home that they don't need anymore. And they'll usually have this kind of sale on the weekend. Like they'll open their garage, and you can come and look at the products that they're selling, and they'll sell them for cheap. So, the speaker of that example sentence went to a garage sale. And at the garage sale, they found a coffee table and they thought ooh, this coffee table looks great. It has a lot of potential, but it needs some TLC, it needs some love, and needs to be sanded down with sandpaper. To sand down means to make a surface smooth by rubbing it with that rough paper that we call sandpaper and then the table needs to be restained and that is almost like paint. You know if you have something made of wood, you can stain it, you can rub

this varnish on it so that the wood is protected, and it comes out looking really beautiful as well. So, the speaker thought, "Ah, this table is a fixer-upper. If I sand it down and restain it then it will look very beautiful." So, they bought the fixer-upper coffee table and now they have this new project to work on.

That brings us to the end of this week's bonus episode. Thank you for being with me today and congratulations on completing another English study session with me. If you like what we're doing here at Culips and find us helpful for building your English language skills, please support us. You can do that by either telling your friends about Culips, following us on social media, or signing up and becoming a Culips Member. Take care everyone and I'll talk to you next time, goodbye.

Episode credits

Host: Andrew Bates
Music and sound effects: Unsplash.com
Thumbnail image: Pexels.com
Episode preparation/research: Andrew Bates
Operations: Tsuyoshi Kaneshima