

Bonus episode #083 - New year, new you

Episode description

In this episode, Andrew talks about his New Year's experiences. He shares stories about the holidays, a big snowfall, and fun moments with his wife. Andrew also describes their New Year's Eve celebration at home with music and dancing. Listen to this episode to enjoy a holiday story and improve your English fluency!

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Note: The transcript has been edited for clarity.

Andrew: Hello and happy new year! Welcome to the first bonus episode of 2024. How's it going? My name is Andrew, and I will be your English study buddy for the day. And it's great to be here with you for another year at the Culips English Podcast. I hope you all had a wonderful holiday time. I know I had a wonderful holiday time and I'm going to tell you a little bit about what I got up to during the new year. New Year's Eve and New Year's Day. It was pretty eventful, it was pretty fun, and I'll tell you all about it in just a moment.

But before we do, I want to quickly introduce Culips and tell new listeners what the bonus episode series is all about. Because around this time of the year, around the new year, many people make a new year's resolution. A new year's resolution is a goal for the new year. And so, I know many people have the new year's resolution of "I want to improve my English", "I want to upgrade my English", "I want to become fluent in English in 2024". So, I think because of that, we may have some new listeners. So, if you are a new listener out there, welcome. I'm happy that you found Culips, and I think that if you study with Culips throughout 2024, then you can definitely achieve your new year's resolution and improve your English skills.

Now in the bonus episode series, which is what you're listening to right now, I just tell you some stories about my everyday life as a Canadian living abroad in South Korea. And the goal is that by listening to these stories, you'll be able to improve your English listening skills and build your English vocabulary and your knowledge of the culture of English-speaking people as well. And then of course, we also have a Discord server that you can join for free where you can practice your English output. You can write messages in response to what you hear in this episode today. And you can also join voice chat rooms where you can practice your English speaking. So, you really get to practice all of your English communication skills with Culips. So that's what the bonus series is all about. And there's also an interactive transcript and a vocabulary glossary that you can get for free

just by clicking the link in the description for this episode. And if you're a Culips member, then I will include a quiz as well that you can get on the member-only channel on our Discord. So, check that out for the quiz, Culips members.

And I should also mention that we are having a sale right now to welcome the new year and to help everybody who wants to improve their English in 2024. We have a 25% discount. Even though the year now is 2024, we're offering a 25% discount. So, it really makes the price of a yearly Culips membership quite affordable. And I highly recommend that if you've been thinking about signing up and becoming a Culips member, that you do it while we have our sales period, which is happening until January the 15th. So just for the first two weeks of the year, and really guys, it's the cheapest that our Culips memberships will ever be. We've only been doing a sale once a year since I can remember. We usually only put the membership on sale once a year. And that's because we try to make it as affordable as we can right from the start. So, we don't do sales very often. This is **a once-a-year type of thing**. So, if you are interested in getting access to our full study guide library, plus many other benefits like interactive transcripts for all of our episodes, and quizzes, and invitations to our live streams, and so many other bonuses, then I'm going to put a link in the description for this episode to a website, which will explain everything that you get when you're a Culips member in detail. So, if you're interested in becoming a Culips member and studying with us in 2024, then just check out that link in the description. See all of the benefits that you get and also read the testimonials from other members, just so you can see how helpful our learning materials really are and how you can build your English skills with Culips.

OK, so I think now I am ready to tell you all about my New Year's. How I spent New Year's Eve, which is the day before New Year's, right? We have December 31st, which we called New Year's Eve, and then we have New Year's Day, January 1st. So, let's get into it. I'll tell you those stories right now. Here we go.

So, one of the awesome things about this past Christmas and this past New Year's was the days of the week that the holidays fell on. I don't know about you, and I know everybody has a different working schedule. So, this could be advantageous to you and be a good thing for your schedule, or maybe not. It depends on your work schedule. But for my wife and I, this worked out to our advantage, the way that **the two holidays worked out** this year, because Christmas and New Year's Day were both on a Monday, right? Christmas was on a Monday. So, for people like me who work Monday to Friday, then that was awesome because it means we got two long weekends, two weeks in a row, and it really doesn't get much better than that, does it?

So, last Sunday, then, was New Year's Eve, and I don't know about you. I don't know if this is **just a me thing** or if everybody feels this way, but the way that I perceive things, New Year's Eve, and New Year's Day both have a very specific vibe, a very unique feeling, and they just feel different than every other day of the year. There's like this really cool energy on New Year's Eve. Everybody seems to feel really excited, and I feel really excited, and I have a lot of anticipation about the upcoming New Year. So, for that reason, New Year's Eve is one of my favorite days of the year, and then New Year's Day is like the opposite. It feels really calm and quiet and more relaxed, and just a day to kind of really gently ease into the New Year. So, for those reasons, I really love both of the days, and yeah, you can let me know on our Discord server what you think. If you agree with me that New Year's Eve is a really exciting day filled with this great vibe and lots of energy, and if New Year's Day feels more calm and chill and relaxed to you, but that's my perception of things anyways. And so, because of that, I usually like to go out on New Year's Eve. I like to **be in the mix**, and to be in the mix just means to go outside and to see the atmosphere and the hustle and the bustle, right? So, I like to be in the mix a little bit on New Year's Eve.

So, my wife and I decided to go out for a little bit, and it was perfect timing because a little while ago, my mother-in-law gave my wife some gift certificates. They weren't specifically gift certificates for one certain restaurant. There were several different franchises that you

could use the gift certificates at, some bakeries and restaurants and some fast-food restaurants, but there's a specific hamburger restaurant which you can use that gift certificate at, which just has really delicious hamburgers in my opinion, and my wife thinks so too. So, we wanted to use those gift certificates because they actually expired on January 1st, 2024. So it was like the last possible day that we could use those gift certificates, so we had to make sure that we use them up because otherwise it would be a huge waste, right? So, when my wife reminded me like, "Hey, we have to use these gift certificates today." It was the very last day. I was pretty happy. I was like, "Oh, awesome. OK, let's do it." So, we went downtown, and we went to that hamburger restaurant, and we enjoyed a nice meal. We took a picture, and we sent it to my mother-in-law to show her that we were enjoying the meal and we said, "Thank you for the gift certificates." And it was just a nice lunch, our last lunch of 2023.

And after that, we walked around downtown for a little while and really just enjoyed walking for a bit. I don't know if you guys saw on the news recently, but I think it was just after Christmas, like December probably 28th or 29th, one of those days in between Christmas and New Year's where things are a little bit of a blur and it's hard to remember exactly when it happened, but there was a huge snowfall here in Seoul. It was, I saw on the news, the biggest snowfall in 40 years. So, it was just this massive snowfall. It was actually pretty fun because it was the first snowfall that we've had since we moved into our new house. And for those of you who don't know, my wife and I moved into a new house in June. So, this was the first big snowfall that we had since that happened.

And yeah, it was cool because we have a little yard in the front of our house and the snow was perfect snow for making a snowman or making a snowball. In Canada, we call it "packing snow." So, packing snow is like that really wet snow that is very heavy, and it packs together really well. So, you can make a snowball really well with it or like I said, a snowman or back when I was a kid, we used to make snow forts and igloos and have snowball fights. Oh my gosh, it was really fun back when I was a kid playing in the snow. And for those kinds of activities, it was perfect, that heavy, wet snow. Of course, if you like

doing things like tobogganing or snowboarding or skiing, then this snow is terrible because it's too heavy and too wet and it turns to slash and ice really quickly. So, for those activities, snowboarding, skiing, tobogganing, those activities, you want powder snow. And powder snow usually falls when the temperature is colder. But anyways, we had no powder in Korea, no pow pow. Sometimes people call it "pow pow." No pow pow. OK, we just had the heavy packing snow, but that was perfect for making a snowman. So, I took advantage of the snow and made a snowman, and my wife bought this little **contraption**, this little machine that you can buy at the dollar store. A dollar store is a kind of store that sells items for really cheap. We call that "the dollar store." So, my wife just went to the dollar store near our house and bought this little contraption, this little machine that when you load it with snow, makes a duck shape. So, she was busy making these little snow ducks and I'll see if she has a photo of it. And if she does, I'll post it on our Discord and Instagram so you can see what these little snow ducks look like. And I was busy making a snowman and we also did some snow shoveling because we had to clear out our yard with all the snow.

And it was kind of funny because when we were shoveling the snow and we were outside, then for the first time, I think ever, I saw all of my neighbors outside at the same time. So that was kind of cool. We were able to say hello to them and we were all laughing. Like we never see each other. My street is very, very quiet that I live on now. So, I rarely see my neighbors, but the snow brought us all out. I guess it was too snowy for us to go anywhere. So we were at home, but we did have to clear the snow from our yards and driveways. So, everybody was outside doing that at the same time, and we were able to say hello. So, I don't know why I'm telling you this snow story.

Where was I going with this? Ah, yeah. So, because of the snow, I think we were inside for a few days during that time. And so, it was nice to get outside when the snow finally melted and walk around, stretch our legs for a little bit. Of course, I love running. That's my hobby. And even I couldn't run for a couple of days. There was too much snow, too much ice on the roads and on the trails. So, I was happy to get out and stretch my legs and walk

around for a little bit too on New Year's Eve. And that's what I did with my wife. So, we ate a hamburger. We had a nice meal. We walked around and then we headed to one of our favorite bakeries to **load up on** some goodies for New Year's Day. We wanted to get some nice bread.

Actually, I've really, really been craving a cinnamon bun recently. I don't know if you guys have ever tried a cinnamon bun, but they are delicious. It's like a bun filled with kind of cinnamon and nut filling. And then usually on top, there's some icing as well. They're definitely delicious. Also definitely unhealthy, not the healthiest food to eat, but so, so good, especially on a cold winter's day and especially when they come right out of the oven. I've never actually baked a cinnamon bun before, but I had this idea in my head that I wanted to bake a cinnamon bun during the holiday season here. However, when I looked online and saw how much effort and labor and how many ingredients go into making cinnamon buns, then I decided to quit and give up. Maybe one day in the future, maybe I'll try sometime soon. But at that time, I decided, hey, this is too much work, and I would have to buy too many ingredients that it would actually end up costing like \$15 for one cinnamon bun. So, I decided I'll do it a different time, but I still wanted to have some kind of baked treat.

I don't know. The Christmas time is a time where my mom would always do a lot of baking at my house. So, I associate the holidays with eating some kind of baked **goodie**. So, I wanted to eat something, even though I wasn't going to bake it myself. So, my wife and I went to our favorite bakery, and we loaded up. I got my favorite kind of sourdough bread, and I also got some fruit cake, which is a traditional Christmas cake. And my wife got some other kinds of bread that she enjoys. And so, we loaded up at the bakery and then we went to a nearby cafe that we really like as well. We had a cup of coffee and just chatted about our New Year's plans and what our New Year's resolutions are going to be, which I won't repeat now because I talked about my New Year's resolutions in the last Simplified Speech episode with Kassy. So, if you haven't heard that episode, then

definitely check that one out and you can learn all about Kassy's New Year's resolutions and also my New Year's resolutions as well. That was essentially our New Year's Eve.

And after we were finished at the cafe, we headed home. We got home in the early evening and then I went out for a run. I wanted to get in one final run for 2023. I don't know. There's something nice about ending the year with a run. I've done this many years in a row now where I go out for a long, slow run on New Year's Eve. I don't play any music. I don't take my headphones with me. I just am alone with my thoughts, and I look back on the last year and I look forward to the next year and do all of those **cheesy, sentimental things**. And it's a nice way to wrap things up. So, I was planning to run 24 kilometers for 2024. It was also Sunday. So, Sunday is usually where I do a longer run.

However, once I went out to start running, it was probably about 7 p.m. by this point. And all of that snow that I was talking about earlier had melted recently like the day before. So that means there was a lot of water on the ground as the snow melted, the sidewalk and the streets and the paths were all really, really wet, which is fine during the day when it was above zero. But when I went out to go run, the temperature dipped down just below zero, probably like minus 0.5 or minus one. Like it wasn't very cold at all. However, all of that water on the sidewalks and the paths froze over and there was black ice everywhere. And so, I was trying to do my best to run. And then I decided, this is stupid. I'm going to fall. I'm going to injure myself. And as I get older and older, as this year I'm going to be turning 40. So, **I'm feeling my age**. As I get older and older, something that I'm more afraid of or more paranoid about is actually injuring myself. And I was just thinking about, you know, if I were to stupidly and stubbornly proceed with my run and then slip and fall on some black ice. And by the way, "black ice" is the ice that's very difficult to see with your eye because the ice is translucent. It just blends in with the color of the ground. And so, you can't see it. And that's what makes it so dangerous. So, I thought if I were to stupidly fall over on this black ice and break my wrist or break my hip or who knows injure myself in some way, then that would be a terrible way to start 2024.

So, I quit on my run, which I usually hate doing, but I did it. And I slid back home and met up with my wife for dinner. I think we just ordered something in for our New Year's dinner. We were both a little bit too tired from our big day out to cook anything special. We had also cooked a big Christmas dinner just a week earlier. So, we decided just to eat something light, and we had a nice little dinner together. And then it was time for our New Year's Eve party. New Year's Eve party.

Actually, probably for the last five or six years. I don't know. I can't remember exactly. I'm pretty bad with dates and this kind of thing. But even before we were married, always on New Year's Eve, my wife and I have celebrated together. Just the two of us. We're not big like go out to a New Year's party kind of people. And even this last year, we were invited by a couple of friends to do a New Year's activity. But we said, "Nah, I think we'll pass because we have our own New Year's tradition." And so, I don't know, **maybe it sounds a little bit lame to you**, but I really enjoy this New Year's tradition that my wife and I have. We always buy ourselves just a little tiny bottle of sparkling wine. I know in many places around the world, it's tradition to **crack a bottle of champagne** at midnight and have a drink of champagne, right? But that's a little bit **too expensive for our blood**. And champagne is quite expensive here in Korea. So, we're sparkling wine people. We buy a little mini bottle of sparkling wine, and we do our own countdown at midnight. Five, four, three, two, one. Happy New Year! **You know the deal**. And then what we do is we dance. We dance.

We have a little dance party and we put on some tunes, and we just enjoy celebrating the New Year that way. And so, in the past when we've done this, we've always had to be really **conscious about the noise**, right? Because we lived in an apartment before. And of course, when you have neighbors beside you and above you and below you, you really can't be dancing for too long or too loudly. And you can't play your music very loud either because you'll drive your neighbors crazy. And I consider myself to be a very, very respectful person in this regard. I hate making other people feel uncomfortable because of my wishes, my demands. So, when we would do this in the past, we'd always play our

music just very quietly and we wouldn't really have a big dance party. We just kind of shuffle around to make sure that we weren't making too much noise and we'd only do it for, you know, five minutes or one song or something. And then the dance club closed, and the party was over.

But this year was a little bit different because now we live in our own house. We don't have any neighbors above us or below us. And although we do have some neighbors beside us, they live in houses too and we're not squished together exactly. And so that means that we can turn up the music a little bit. Like it's not like we're in a nightclub or anything, but, you know, we can play some music and we can dance around. And so that's what we did. We played some music. We danced around. I practiced my DJ skills a little bit with my curated playlist, and it was fun. I don't know. We turned off the lights and we turned our Christmas lights on. So, we made kind of fun, festive atmosphere in our living room and we welcomed the new year's with some dancing.

And it was actually pretty funny because the next day when I woke up, I looked at my watch and I saw that I had over 6,000 steps on my watch because I wear this running watch and it counts how many steps. It's got like a built-in step counter, right? So, I saw that I had over 6,000 steps. And at first, I was like, when did this, my watch must be broken. How do I have 6,000 steps? I just woke up and then I realized, oh, in that like 30 or 45 minutes that my wife and I were dancing between midnight and new year's. And when we went to sleep, when I was dancing around, I did over 6,000 steps. So that was pretty hilarious, but it was just a fun way to welcome in the new year. But I love that I can share this tradition with my wife and it's a good, fun, and silly way to start the new year. And I think we'll continue to keep the tradition alive next year as well. We'll see. We'll see what she says, but I always enjoy ringing in the new year that way.

And what else? Well, on New Year's Day, we just relaxed and really didn't get up to too much of anything on New Year's Day, which is perfect. That's the way I like it. As I mentioned earlier, it's just a nice way to **ease into the new year**. You don't want to get up

to too much. You don't want to overdo it right from day one. So that's what we did. We took it easy, and I forgot to mention on Culips.

So, I should tell you guys right now, but for Christmas, I received a Christmas gift of two *Zelda* games for my new Nintendo Switch, which I talked about buying a few bonus episodes ago. So, if you haven't heard that story yet, you can go to Culips.com, look at the bonus episodes and find the one where I talk about getting a Nintendo. But for Christmas, my wife bought me the two *Zelda* games for the Nintendo Switch. So, I was **over the moon**. I was so happy with this gift. As I've mentioned on Culips before, I'm a huge *Zelda* fan and they're just like these action-adventure role-playing games for non-gamers out there, but they're really fun. And so, I was stoked to get these games.

And from what I've heard, they can take over 100 hours to totally complete each one. So that's like 200 hours of gaming. And I'm pretty slow at doing everything these days. Even when I watch a movie, I have to watch it in like three or four parts. I hit pause and I go and do something else. And when I read books, I'm kind of like that. I don't know. Maybe that's something that I can work on in the new year is trying to improve my attention span because yeah, it's just hard for me to focus these days for a long time on anything. I seem to just **have about an hour in me** and then after an hour, I give up. So, I think that means that will take me years to finish these two *Zelda* games, but that's great. **I've got my entertainment sorted out** for the next couple of years.

So, I played a lot of *Zelda* on New Year's Day, but also my wife played a lot of *Zelda* on New Year's Day. And she doesn't seem to have the same problem as me. She can keep her focus going on things like that for much, much longer. So, she's already way ahead of me in the game. She's already way far ahead, so that's kind of cool. If I get stuck and don't know what to do, I can just ask her for help, and she can give me a hand. And I joked with her like, "Who did you buy these games for? Was it really a present for me or was it a present to yourself? Because you're taking full advantage of this new *Zelda* game that we have in the home." But of course, I'm just joking about that. And it's fun to do it together,

even though it's a one-player game. And so, we have to take turns, but that's what we did on New Year's Day. Played a lot of *Zelda*.

And also, we ate some rice cake soup, which is called "ddeok guk." And that is one of the hardest words in the Korean language for me to pronounce. So, apologies to all of the Korean listeners out there for my poor pronunciation. But "ddeok guk" is a classic soup that Korean people eat on New Year's Day. It's just a very nice tasting soup with a kind of beef broth and it's got some rice cakes. And in my case, my wife also put some dumplings called "mandu" into the "ddeok guk." So that was our New Year's Day meal, and it was a delicious way to welcome in the New Year.

Well, that brings us to the end of this week's bonus episode. Thank you everyone for tuning in and studying along with me today. I hope you enjoyed this episode and of course, I hope you found it helpful for building your English skills.

Please don't forget that we have our New Year's sale happening right now. Until January 15th, you can save 25% off a yearly Culips membership, where if you're already a member and you want to extend your membership by another year, then that's possible too. You can do that during the sales period and save 25%.

So, everyone have a great week. In a few days here, we'll be releasing a brand-new Catch Word episode. So, until then, take care and we'll talk to you soon. Bye-bye.

Glossary

1. **A once-a-year type of thing:** An event or activity that happens only once every year.
2. **The way the two holidays worked out:** Refers to how the timing or scheduling of the two holidays (Christmas and New Year's) turned out to be advantageous or convenient.
3. **Just a me thing:** An expression used to indicate that something might be unique or peculiar to Andrew, not necessarily common to others.
4. **Be in the mix:** To be involved in or a part of ongoing activities or events.
5. **A contraption:** An unusual or complicated device or gadget.
6. **Load up on bread:** To purchase a large quantity of bread, often more than usual.
7. **A goodie:** A sweet treat, often used to refer to baked goods or snacks.
8. **Cheesy, sentimental things:** Actions or behaviors that are overly emotional, romantic, or clichéd in a way that can seem insincere or exaggerated.
9. **I'm feeling my age:** A way of saying that one is becoming aware of the effects or limitations of getting older.
10. **Maybe it sounds lame to you:** Andrew is acknowledging that what he is describing might seem uninteresting, dull, or unappealing to the listeners.
11. **To crack a bottle of champagne:** To open a bottle of champagne, often in a celebratory manner.
12. **Too expensive for our blood:** An expression meaning something is too costly or expensive for one's financial situation or preferences.

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13. **You know the deal:** A casual way of saying that the listener is already familiar with the situation or what typically happens.
 14. **To be conscious about the noise:** To be aware of and considerate about the level of noise one is making, especially in a context where it might disturb others.
 15. **To ease into the new year:** To start the new year in a relaxed, gentle, or gradual manner without rushing into activities or responsibilities.
 16. **I was over the moon:** Extremely happy.
 17. **I have an hour in me:** Suggesting that Andrew can focus or engage in an activity for only about an hour before losing interest or getting tired.
 18. **I've got my entertainment sorted out:** Having arranged one's activities for enjoyment in advance.

Episode credits

Host and preparation: Andrew Bates
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Image: Canva.com