

Bonus episode #126 - Time trap

Episode description

In this week's bonus episode, Andrew tells a funny story about trying to stop wasting time on his phone and computer. He uses an app to block distracting websites so he can focus better. But instead of staying on track, he discovers a new distraction he didn't expect. Andrew talks about how his plan took an unexpected turn and what he learned from it. He also shares the meaning of the expression, "When God closes a door, he opens a window," and how it fits his experience. Join him to hear about his ironic adventure with technology and staying productive.



Note: The transcript has been edited for clarity.

Andrew: Hello, everybody, and welcome to bonus episode number 126 of the Culips English Podcast. How is it going? I hope you're doing well. My name's Andrew. I'm a Canadian, but I'm based in Seoul, South Korea.

And what I do here in these bonus episodes is I tell you some stories from my everyday life. And I hope that by listening to them, you will be able to B.I.G.B. That is our motto for this series, and it's an acronym. It stands for build your fluency, increase your cultural knowledge, grow your vocabulary, and become a better and clearer English communicator. So, if you are interested in achieving those goals, then I am here to help you achieve those goals, and I think you will enjoy this series.

To accompany this episode and actually every bonus episode, there is a 100% free for everyone, interactive transcript and vocabulary glossary. It's a great way to follow along and study with this lesson, and you can get it just by following the link in the description for this episode. Plus, if you're a Culips member, then you'll also get a comprehension quiz as well, so you can test how much you are able to understand after you finish.

Speaking of Culips membership, if you're ready to take your English to the next level, then we are here to help. And if you become a Culips member, then we're going to give you our best learning tools to help you every step of the way. As a Culips member, you'll get access to our live speaking classes that happen several times each and every week. You'll also get our member-only series called The Fluency Files. You'll have ad-free audio plus helpful study guides and interactive transcripts for all of our episodes and so much more.

To sign up and become a Culips member and to improve your English with our awesome learning tools and support the work that we do here, well, then just visit our website, Culips.com, or click the link in the description for this episode and you can do that. And a big thanks and shout out to all of the Culips members out there for your support. Guys, Culips wouldn't be here without you. So, thank you so much. This episode goes out to you.

And I think now pretty much we might as well get started with this week's story. It's kind of light and funny, and I hope you guys will all enjoy it. It's about saving time and wasting time at the same time. Let's get right to it. Here we go. Enjoy.

I want to start this week's story off by teaching you an expression. In fact, maybe it's one that you've heard before in English. It's pretty common, and I have **a hunch**—I'm not sure exactly—but I have a hunch that if you are a speaker of at least a European language, then maybe you have this expression in your own native language as well. If that's the case, let me know in our Discord community or in the comments. I'd be really interested to find that out.

But the expression is, "When God closes a door, he opens a window." OK? When God closes a door, he opens a window. And usually, we use this expression in English when we want to console somebody or cheer somebody up after they've heard some bad news, or they've gone through a difficult experience. Maybe you went for a job interview, and you really thought you were going to get the job and you were super excited to get that job and start the new position. But then a few days later, you got a call and you found out you didn't get the job. Well, in that kind of situation, your friend might say, "Hey, you know, when God closes a door, he opens a window." And that just means, although this opportunity isn't available to you, in the future, you will have more opportunities. OK? So, when God closes a door, he opens a window.

Now for this story that I want to tell you, I was thinking about my day today. And in fact, this story that I'm about to share with you just happened to me today. So, I was reflecting on my day and thinking about what could I share with you that would be a little bit funny and entertaining to hear this week. And I thought, oh, you know, when I was reflecting on my day, I thought God closed a door on me today, but he kind of opened a window. And I'm using this expression here today in a more humorous sense, OK? I didn't like miss an opportunity for a new job or anything like that. But one thing in my life got turned off, at the same time, another thing in my life got activated. And that's kind of **where I'm coming from**. That's my mindset going into the story that I'm going to share with you right now. So,

let's get started with it in earnest then.

And I guess I should preface this story by saying, like so many people around the world, I have a daily battle with my phone—a daily battle with my phone! I don't want to use it as much as I do, but it's so, so, so addicting. Apps like Instagram, YouTube, Reddit. I think these are my top three time wasters. In fact, on my phone, I have these three apps categorized into a folder, and the folder is called "Time Suck." And what I mean by that is that they suck up my time. If I go into that folder and I open one of those three apps, then for sure, I'm going to lose 20 minutes of my life. And of course, I'm going to enjoy that 20 minutes. I always enjoy browsing through the content that I see in those apps. But the problem is, it's usually... it's not stuff that like really stays with me for a long time. Most of it is short content that I just browse through and then forget right away. So, it's not like I'm learning something or improving my life. Really, I'm just sucking life away from me. I'm like shortening my life in a way. I guess I'm entertaining myself, right? It's entertaining to look at these kinds of things. But I think most people from around the world would agree that these apps just take our attention and our focus and don't really give us too much in return.

So that's why I have these apps categorized on my phone in the folder "Time Suck." And in fact, that Time Suck folder is **hidden away** from the main screen. So, if I want to open one of these apps, I have to **scroll through** several screens to get to it. But still, I find a way to get to them, and I open them very often throughout the day.

And you know, I think from time to time, this is all right. Everybody needs to relax to clear their mind. Sometimes we're busy, sometimes we're tired. If I'm, you know, just riding the subway or doing something like that, then I have no problem using these apps. But when it does cause a problem for me is when I'm supposed to be productive and get some work done, and I open one of these apps or I go to one of the websites on my computer—because that's another problem: you can open these websites through your computer.

I'm laughing right now because my wife actually—I think like so many people around the

world, we all struggle with this, right? My wife struggles with this as well. And so not too long ago, she told me that she deleted Instagram from her phone and that she wasn't going to use the app anymore. She was going to take a digital detox and take a break from it. But then I think it was later that day or maybe the next day—maybe she made it one day, I can't exactly recall—but then I saw her browsing Instagram on her computer. Because you can just open it on your computer. It doesn't even matter if you delete it from your phone, it's there on your computer as well. So, these apps are really, really addicting. And yeah, even if I have them hidden away on my phone, I can find a way to open them on my computer as well.

And as I was saying, not a big deal if I'm just commuting or killing some time for a few minutes while I have to wait for something in my daily life. But when I'm trying to work in my professional life, then opening these websites—especially when I'm using my computer to work—it can cause a lot of problems. Because when I open Instagram or Reddit or YouTube on my computer, well, then it's not like I've just wasted time, but I've also lost my focus. And finding my focus again and concentrating again, that can be a real challenge for me.

And today, this was my Culips day, my hardcore Culips day, where I spend pretty much all of the day doing many tasks for Culips. And a lot of that work involves editing audio or editing video or checking audio or video. And those are computer-heavy processes. And so, from time to time, my computer, you know, is a pretty good computer. I don't want to complain about my computer, it's a workhorse, it does a lot of great things. But it's a little bit slow from time to time. When I ask it to do a CPU-intensive task, like maybe a video edit or video export, well, that takes a little bit of time. And I find that when I'm working with audio or video, I have to do many tasks that take my computer maybe 30 seconds to process that task before I can continue. And so that is the perfect amount of time for me to lose my focus on the audio or the video editing task at hand.

And what do I do in those 30 seconds? Well, often I'll just pop open my web browser and head on over to Reddit or head on over to YouTube or open Instagram. And then boom,

I'm **down the rabbit hole**. And then I've lost my focus. And what should have just taken 30 seconds to accomplish—I just have to sit there and wait for 30 seconds—well, then maybe in fact, it will turn into five minutes, 20 minutes, one hour, who knows. Once I've lost my concentration and I've **veered off** of what I'm supposed to do, it can take some time to get back on track.

And so, this is not good. It means that I end up taking a long time to do the tasks that I want to do. Maybe I could accomplish something in one hour, but it ends up taking me an hour and a half or two hours. So, this just makes for some real long workdays.

And so, I thought, I've got to do something about this problem. I'm kind of powerless in a way. It's an addiction. I can't help myself. My body just automatically opens these services. They're too addicting, too enticing for me. So, I looked for a solution online, and I found a plugin and an app that you can install on your computer and on your phone, and it is a blocker. So essentially you can load this list of different things that you want to block, and this software will just block it across all of your devices for the amount of time that you want to work. So, you can load up all the sites and services that you want to block. You can block everything from Slack to Gmail to Reddit to Instagram—anything that you type in there, it will block across all of your devices. So, on my phone, on my computer—boom, beautiful.

And so, I downloaded this app, and I installed it last week, and I got a seven-day free trial with the app. And I tried it out, and I thought, wow, this is so good. I used it just for like an hour because once you load it and you press start, then there's **no going back**. It's blocked for that whole time, and there's no solution. You just have to wait for the time to run out.

So yeah, I did it last week. I tried it just for the one hour while I was working on some things. And while I was working, I found myself in those little moments of rest while my computer was working on a task, and I had to wait for it to finish its processing. I found myself going to Reddit to just try and browse and kill that 30 seconds. But then that blocker

would be like, "Sorry, you're working right now!" And then I would go back, and pretty much by the time I was back into my audio editing app, those 30 seconds had passed, and I could just continue with the edit.

So, I thought, wow, this is really, really effective. And so, I signed up for a one-year membership for this app.

Now, as I mentioned, last week when I was trying it out, I just used it for one hour. But today, like I said, this is my hardcore Culips day. I wanted to have a really productive day here at Culips today. And so, I blocked pretty much everything except the messaging app that I use here in Korea called KakaoTalk. Sometimes I need to use that to communicate with family and friends and work stuff, so it's important that I have that available to me. So, I blocked, yeah, pretty much everything—every app except for KakaoTalk. And even when I have KakaoTalk running, it's still in like do-not-disturb mode on my phone. So, it really has to be one of my essential contacts to be able to make it through to me.

But I loaded that all up, and I blocked it for 10 hours today. And yeah, it's been going pretty well so far. I did find myself opening my Reddit many times and my Instagram many times and my Gmail many times. Actually, I'm most curious about my Gmail. When I open it, I'm probably going to have a flood of emails. Maybe it's not a good way to do this. We'll find out. It's an experiment today. But I still have about another two hours to go before the lock is off. So, I feel free, really. I feel like I haven't been distracted by the outside world at all today. So that's kind of cool.

But as I was mentioning at the start of this episode, when God closes a door, he opens a window. And in this sense, like I said, I'm kind of being humorous and joking with the way that I'm using this expression. So, God closed the door on me accessing social media today, but he kind of opened a window because today in the morning while I was drinking my morning coffee, I discovered on the New York Times website this game. And this game is called Connections.

Do you guys know this game? It's a word game. And essentially what it does is it feeds

you 16 different words. And although they appear to be really random, there are four sets of four words that are somehow connected. It could be that they're connected due to their meaning. It could be like a pop culture connection. It could be to do with the sound of the word. That's your task: is to try and find how are they connected and which words are connected. And as I mentioned, there are four sets of four for a total of 16 words.

Now, it might sound easy, but it's a little bit challenging, and actually it's a great vocabulary activity. I'd recommend it to all Culips listeners out there. Probably if you're just like a brand-new English learner, you might find it a little bit difficult. But at the intermediate to advanced level, this could be a really fun game for you to test your vocabulary.

Because it will give you just a plain word like "ball"—B-A-L-L, ball. But when you think about it, wow, that word can mean many different things. It could be something that you play sports with, like a tennis ball or a basketball. It could be a dance that you go to—you know, you go to a wedding reception in a ballroom, or you have a fancy party in a ballroom, and you dance, and you have this kind of elaborate, fancy party—we call that a ball as well. It could be maybe part of the idiomatic expression "to be having a ball." You could say, "Oh, I'm having a ball," and that means that you're having a wonderful time. And there are other meanings associated with this word as well.

So, **what may seem easy on the surface**, actually, you have to really **rack your brain** and use all of your brain cells to try and compute and find the answer to this puzzle.

And I just learned about this game, and this morning I played it with my wife. I introduced it to her and showed her about it. And one of the connections that I can tell you about, I think I remember from this morning. The four words that were connected were "ball" which is why that was fresh in my mind, "tire," "floaty," and "balloon."

Ball, tire, floaty, and balloon. And a floaty is a pool toy, something that you would use to float in the water; that's why we call it a floaty. And yeah, floaty actually has different meanings as well. Like it could be something that is suspended in liquid. Like if you were drinking something and you noticed there was some little thing floating in your cup, you

could be like, "Eww, there's a floaty in my drink." So, it has some different meanings. This is one of the challenges of this game.

Anyways, can you guess how those four words are connected? If you guessed that they are connected because they are all things that you can inflate with air. Well, then ding, ding, ding—you got the correct answer. OK? So that's kind of how you play the game. You've got to find these connections.

So anyways, I was playing this game with my wife and introducing it to her and also learning about it myself because this is brand new to me as well. And yeah, as you can maybe guess, this type of game is right down my alley. It's something that I really enjoy as a word nerd and an English language lover. This is like, wow, it just **scratches that itch** that I have, right? It just feels really good to play one of these games.

So, although I blocked my social media today, I didn't know about the game Connections when I blocked it this morning. And the New York Times, to read that newspaper, you have to be a subscriber. So, I didn't block that app because I'm not a subscriber to the New York Times.

And I often go to the New York Times to play Wordle every day, and now Connections, I think this will probably be my new daily routine as well. And they give you one free game each day. But after playing that Connections, I was like, "Oh, I want to play more. I wonder if there's another website where I can play this game?"

So, I Google-searched "Connections," and I found this website. Maybe I'll link it for you guys in the description for this episode. But I think it was called Unlimited Connections or ConnectionsUnlimited dot com? something like that. And it just has, like the name suggests, just as many games as you want to play. You can play one after the other, after the other, after the other.

And so today, although I had my social media blocked from this app that I had downloaded, I didn't include the Connections Unlimited website. And so, I was able to play

that game a lot today. And it was so new and fresh and exciting for me. I think I probably played for like an hour today, and I found myself opening it whenever I was doing one of those audio or video tasks that took my computer some time to process.

So that's what I mean by when God closes a door, he opens a window. In this case, he closed the door to my social media use, but he opened the window to Connections. And at the end of the day, I still found a way to waste some time. But hey, maybe it wasn't a total waste of time because I was able to tell you this story here and introduce you to a new vocabulary game, which I hope a lot of Culips listeners will check out and try and see how it goes.

I know at least on the website that I was using that lets you play the game as many times as you like, there are difficulty levels, so you can select easy, normal, or difficult. So, check out the game and let me know what you think.

Anyways, everyone, I think lesson learned for me today: going forward, I'm going to need to include Connections in the block list for that app. But today, anyways, it got through, and I did enjoy playing it. So maybe it's not a waste of time after all.

Anyways, that's the story that I wanted to tell you today. I hope that it entertained you a little bit, but even more importantly, I hope that it helped you to improve your English language skills. If you have any questions or comments about this episode, we'll be talking about it over on our Discord server.

Our Discord is the place where our community gathers to hang out, to practice English together, and it's a wonderful place to be active with your English. You've been passive with your English listening to this episode, but I think you can do more. I think you can be active with your English as well. You can share your thoughts, share your opinions, ask questions, and be a part of our community over on the Discord. It's free for everybody to join, and the link to do so is in the description for this episode. So, I look forward to seeing you over there.

And on our Discord, that's the place where you can leave your completion code for this episode. Or if you're watching the video version of the podcast here on YouTube, you could leave a comment on our YouTube page as well, or on our Instagram page—really, wherever is OK.

But let's make the completion code for this week "Connections." C-O-N-N-E-C-T-I-O-N-S, Connections. So, a little bit of a difficult completion code for this week. But what I'd like you to do is to make an example sentence or leave a comment with that word "Connections," and that will signal to me and our entire learner community that you completed this episode.

Alright everyone, that's it for me for now. Thanks for completing an English study session with me today. Please take care this upcoming week. Happy English learning as always, and I'll catch you in the next brand-new Culips episode. Until then, bye bye.

Glossary

1. **Have a hunch:** To have a feeling or guess about something without knowing for sure. In this episode, Andrew says, "I have a hunch that if you are a speaker of at least a European language, then maybe you have this expression in your own native language as well," meaning he suspects listeners might know the expression. *Example: I have a hunch that we'll get good news soon.*
2. **Where I'm coming from:** This means the perspective or viewpoint someone has. In the episode, Andrew says, "That's kind of where I'm coming from. That's my mindset going into the story," explaining his point of view before telling his story. *Example: When you see where I'm coming from, you'll understand my decision.*
3. **Hidden away:** Placed somewhere not easily found or seen. Andrew says, "That Time Suck folder is hidden away from the main screen," meaning he keeps distracting apps out of sight on his phone. *Example: She keeps her favorite snacks hidden away in the cupboard.*
4. **Scroll through:** To move through digital content on a screen by sliding your finger or mouse. Andrew mentions, "I have to scroll through several screens to get to it,"

talking about moving through screens on his phone to find an app. *Example: He scrolled through the photos to find the one he liked.*

5. **Down the rabbit hole:** To get deeply involved in something, often in a way that's hard to stop. Andrew says, "And then boom, I'm down the rabbit hole. And then I've lost my focus," describing how he gets caught up browsing the internet. *Example: She went online to check one fact but fell down the rabbit hole of reading articles.*
6. **Veer off:** To change direction suddenly or to go off course. In the episode, Andrew says, "Once I've lost my concentration and I've veered off of what I'm supposed to do, it can take some time to get back on track," meaning he gets distracted from his work. *Example: The car began to veer off the road during the storm.*
7. **No going back:** Once a decision is made or action taken, you cannot undo it. In the episode, Andrew explains, "Once you load it and you press start, then there's no going back," referring to activating the app blocker that can't be turned off until time runs out. *Example: After submitting the job application, there was no going back.*
8. **What may seem easy on the surface actually is challenging:** Something that looks simple at first might be hard when you try it. Andrew says, "What may seem easy on the surface, actually, you have to really rack your brain," referring to the game that seems easy but is difficult. *Example: The test may seem easy on the surface, but actually it's quite tricky.*
9. **Rack your brain:** To think very hard to remember something or solve a problem. In the episode, Andrew mentions, "You have to really rack your brain and use all of your brain cells to try and compute and find the answer to this puzzle," talking about the mental effort needed for the game. *Example: I had to rack my brain to recall where I left my keys.*
10. **Scratches that itch:** To satisfy a desire or need that you've had for a while. Andrew says, "It just scratches that itch that I have," meaning the game satisfies his love for word puzzles. *Example: Playing basketball on the weekend scratches that itch for competition.*

Episode credits

Host and preparation: Andrew Bates

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