

## Bonus episode #075 - A sofa story

### Episode description

In this episode, Andrew shares a story about finding the perfect sofa for his living room. He talks about the challenges of finding the right size, fabric, and color. Listen to hear all about the ups and downs of his sofa saga and improve your English fluency along the way.

Become a Culips member: <https://esl.culips.com/amember/signup>

Study with the interactive transcript: click [here](#)

Join the Culips Discord server: <https://discord.gg/Bpxa85CFuc>



---

Note: The transcript has been edited for clarity.

---

**Andrew:** Welcome, welcome, welcome to bonus episode number 75 of the Culips English Podcast. My name is Andrew, and I will be your host and your English study buddy for the day. And I have a confession to make. My confession is that I ripped off, I copied that introduction to the podcast that, "Welcome, welcome, welcome." There's actually another really famous podcaster who starts all of his episodes like that. And I guess it got stuck in my head. I wanted to try it out. But I've got a trivia question for you. Do you know the name of the podcaster? Or the name of the podcast? I will accept either answer. Who is it that starts their podcasts like that? If you know the answer, leave a comment on our Discord channel, and I'll give you a virtual high five as a prize. I'll say, "Great job!"

Anyways, everybody, welcome back to another week of the bonus episode series here. And what I do in this series is I just tell you some stories from my everyday life. I'm a Canadian, but I live abroad in Seoul, South Korea, and I share what's going on in my life, what's new with me, and give you some updates about that. And along the way, I hope that you'll be able to improve your English fluency by listening along with my stories. Two announcements before we get started.

Number one, there's a free interactive transcript for this episode. And in fact, I included a little bonus in this episode, there's a glossary as well. And I'll talk a little bit more about that later on. But make sure you check out the transcript for this episode; you can follow along while you listen. Or if you want more of a challenge, you can check it out after you finish listening to the episode just to check your comprehension level. It's a great tool, I highly recommend it. And to get it, just follow the link in the description for this episode.

Announcement number two is about becoming a Culips member. And again, I highly recommend becoming a Culips member. Culips is 100% supported by our member community, and without our members, we wouldn't be able to exist, we wouldn't be able to

keep making free audio lessons each and every week. If you'd like to support the work we do, then just sign up and become a member on our website Culips.com. When you're a member, you'll get amazing bonuses and benefits. And I can't go into all of them right now. But to just name a few, you'll get full access to our study guide library, you'll get to listen and learn with our Fluency Files series, which is exclusive to Culips members, you'll get ad and announcement-free audio for all of our regular episodes, invitations to our monthly member-only live streams, and we just had one last week, it was a blast. You'll get to join the member-only channel on our Discord, and so much more. So take advantage of these amazing opportunities for improving your English and for supporting what we do here at Culips. And sign up and become a Culips member today.

So the story that I have for you this week is about shopping for a sofa. I know on the surface, it might sound kind of like a boring topic. But actually, when I was listening back to the story and getting it ready for you all, I thought it was a little bit funny and interesting. So I hope you'll agree with me and find it funny and interesting as well. So without any further introduction, let's get to it right now. Here we go!

Very quickly, I'm going to tell you some background information, just in case you're new to the podcast and you don't really know about what's been going on in my life for the last year or so. But to **make a long story short**, in June of this year, my wife and I moved into a new place. We bought an old house a couple of years ago, and then we totally **gutted** and remodelled the house. And then in June, we moved in. So it's an old house, but it's new to us, and it feels like a new house because of the remodelling.

And since we moved in in June, we've been adjusting to life in the new place. And we've set up the house mostly the way that we want it. Our bedroom is furnished and **good to go**. Our kitchen is furnished and good to go. Our bathroom is furnished and good to go. Everything is furnished and good to go except for our living room slash dining room area. When you hear the word 'house', maybe the image that comes to mind is like a big North American style house. At least that's the image that pops into my mind. Maybe that's just

because of where I grew up, I'm not sure, but our house is located not in North America, it's here in Korea in Seoul, and things are a little bit different over here. Because of the huge population in this mega city, people live with a smaller **footprint** than they do in my home country, Canada.

So, our house is quite small. And that's why we have this living room slash dining room, really, this room in our house, which is like the main room, has to serve those two purposes. And actually, if I'm being honest, it also has to serve the purpose of my wife's office. So it's a very important, main space in our house, it has these three functions that it needs to serve. And it's where we spend the majority of our time. Now we have this room furnished a little bit with some of the furniture that we brought from our old apartment to the new place. But it doesn't really work in this space. And the way that it's set up now just isn't using that room to its full potential. And so furnishing that room and decorating it so that it can live up to its full potential and just be a nice, good place in our house to eat, to hang out, to work, in my wife's case, at least, is **a top priority** for us, and something that we've been working on since we moved into the place.

And it's kind of funny because I say it's a top priority for us, and usually when something's your top priority, it means that you deal with it quickly, right? But even though this is a top priority for us to get our living room/dining room set up the way that we like it, it's been taking a long time; here we are in November now. So that's what, how many months? June, July, August, September, October, you know, almost five months here since we've been moved into this place, and the room still isn't set up. Well, let me tell you why that is and why it's been taking so long. And I want to start with the sofa. So the story I'm about to tell you next is about shopping for a sofa, for a couch, for a chesterfield.

Do you know that word "chesterfield"? That's an old Canadian word for a sofa. In fact, these days, I think most English speakers will say "sofa" or "couch". However, in some parts of Canada, if you're talking with older folk, you might even hear that word chesterfield

being used. But I won't use chesterfield today. I'm just going to use sofa and couch. And let me tell you the story of shopping for the sofa now. Here we go.

Ever since I left Canada and I moved to Korea, I've always wanted to have a sofa in my house. It's one of those pieces of furniture that I grew up with, it's very common in a Canadian home to have a couch. But after moving to Korea, I always lived in small, shoebox apartments, and I never had a couch. And that would mean whenever I'd want to sit down to do something like maybe watch TV or read a book, then I'd have to either sit on the floor or sit on my office chair or sit on the chair that goes with my kitchen table, I guess we'd call it a dining chair, sit on my dining chair, or lie on my bed. And especially when reading, that's a really bad option for me. If I sit on my bed or lie on my bed to read a book, then 90% of the time, I'm falling asleep.

So I've always wanted to have a sofa in my house, just for a comfortable place to sit down, to relax, to read books, to listen to music, and also importantly, to have a cool place to hang out and sit when guests come over. So after moving into our new house, I knew it was a priority for me to have a sofa in our living room. And because our house is so small, actually, I had to **twist my wife's arm** a little bit to get her to agree to having a sofa. At first, she wasn't fully convinced that we needed one and thought we could do without one and we could just have a bigger kitchen table with many chairs, and that could serve as our main seating area. But I was able to successfully convince her that I've done that enough, and I wanted to upgrade to a sofa. So I could sit down and do all the things that I mentioned earlier, read books, listen to music, entertain guests, and hey, maybe even lie down and have a nap from time to time.

So we decided, OK, we're going to furnish our house with a sofa. So great. I had convinced my wife that we needed a sofa. And in my mind, I thought that would actually be the most difficult thing to do, that once we had agreed to buy a sofa, then the rest would be easy, but boy, was I wrong. After my wife agreed that we could put a sofa in the living room, well then the real challenge started, and we spent the next several months, maybe

three months, looking for the perfect one. And I think the reason why it took us so long to find a sofa is that we put a lot of effort and work, **blood, sweat, and tears**, so to speak, into remodeling this house. And we didn't want to just throw any old sofa into the middle of the living room and **call it a day**. One of the things that I've learned through remodeling this house is how important space is.

And one of the things that the designer that we worked with when remodeling the house said to us at the start of the process is that every centimeter matters. And something that may seem like an insignificant one or two centimeters can have a huge impact on the final results. So I think those words really influenced us. And because of that, my wife and I really wanted to make sure that we found a sofa that was a perfect fit for the space, and that it wouldn't be too bulky or take up too much room or just be a bad fit for that living room/dining room main room. In addition to that, we plan on staying in this house for a long time, I don't want to say that it's going to be our forever home. Who knows, it may end up being a home that we die in, I'm not sure. But we're not planning on moving anytime soon. Remodeling this house and moving into this house has been a big ordeal, and both of us are looking forward to just **planting some roots** here in this neighborhood. And at least for the foreseeable future, we plan to stay here.

So, because of all of these things, we needed to find a sofa that was a good fit for the space and, of course, was well-made and high-quality and wouldn't just break after a couple of years because, like I said, we're planning to be here long-term. So we want a sofa that can last long-term as well. And the biggest challenge that we had when searching for a sofa was the size. We needed to have a smaller-sized sofa with a maximum depth of 90 centimetres, and ideally, actually smaller than that would be perfect, 85 centimetres, or even 80 centimetres. But that was our hard limit.

We started our sofa search just by searching for sofas online. I think most people would probably do that these days, you just go online. And we tried all the usual places first. So I think we went to IKEA first, and we looked through their online catalog to see what they

had. We also went to a really popular kind of furniture portal site here in Korea called Today's House. And we looked through all of the options they had. And that gave us some ideas of where to start. But unfortunately, we had to eliminate so many of the options right from the very start because they were just too deep. Like that 90 centimetre limit that we had was really hard to fulfill. And furniture trends vary from year to year to year, right? So, I don't know if it's just like the current 2023 trend is to have a deeper, bigger sofa. And maybe in a different year, it would have been easier to find something more narrow. But yeah, a lot of the sofas that we saw that we liked just from the pictures, when we looked at the actual measurements of them, they were over 100 centimetres deep and would just be too big for our space. So, although we were able to find lots of really nice-looking sofas, cool-looking sofas, on these websites, we had to eliminate so many of the options right away just because they were too big for our space. So that was **a bust**.

And next, we turned to social media, to Instagram. Instagram can actually be a really wonderful tool to use when you're shopping for something because of their targeted ads. So, obviously, my wife and I were both looking online a lot to try and find pictures and images of different sofas that we liked in other people's houses. And we turned to sites like Pinterest and Instagram for inspiration. And I guess Instagram clued in that I was looking for a sofa because I was just flooded and inundated with ads for different sofas. So that was actually great because I got to learn about many of the different furniture shops here in Seoul. And my wife was able to do the same thing. And in fact, she did, of course, a way better job than I did at this as well. But we were able to put together a list of different sofas and different furniture showrooms and different vintage stores and different pop-up stores, different antique stores. Oh my god, we made this huge list of places to visit. And we got started on our sofa shopping quest.

So we hit the streets and we started checking out the stores. And because Seoul is such a big city, it made things a little bit difficult. Like we couldn't check out all of the stores in one day. So we'd spend one Saturday in one area of the city, checking out all the furniture stores there. And then the next weekend, on the next Saturday, we'd go to a different



neighbourhood. And we did this for several weeks in a row and tested out so many sofas. Of course, this is another thing that makes it difficult about buying a sofa, as you can see a picture online that you really like. And the sofa looks amazing and really beautiful. And you're like, "Oh, this is the one! Let's go buy it!" And then you go to the showroom, and you sit on it. And right away, you're like, "Nah, this ain't the one!" Maybe it's too hard or too soft or just doesn't look the same way in real life that it does in the photo. So we had a lot of that. We had a lot of instances where we thought we found the perfect sofa just by looking at it online. But then when we'd see it in real life and try it out, we realized that it actually wasn't good for us at all. So we went to store after store just looking at sofas, testing out sofas, sitting on sofas, talking to furniture salespeople, getting estimates, collecting brochures, and I have to say it was getting pretty exhausting. It was tiring to do this, in fact.

What we'd do is usually like I said, head out on a Saturday, we'd eat some lunch, and then we'd hit three or four or five different furniture stores. And after doing that, we'd be pretty tired from walking around and from talking with people and debating different furniture styles. And then we'd go to a cafe and kind of summarize what we'd seen in the day and make a list of our top contenders and all the ones that we had eliminated. And it was actually funny going to some of the cafes after furniture shopping because both my wife and I started to develop a pretty good eye for furniture after being to all these furniture stores. So this happened a few times where we'd go to a cafe, and we'd recognize where the furniture was from. We'd be like, "Oh, this table is from this and this store" or "These chairs are made by this brand." And we became kind of furniture experts, which was kind of funny. We could tell how good a cafe was by the brand of furniture that they had furnished their cafe with. And it just went to show how much time we actually spent looking at different furniture shops.

And the problem, I don't know if you've ever had this as well, but the problem when you're looking at so many different options like this is that you start to forget your original opinion. After sitting in like 10 sofas in a row, then it gets hard to remember what the first sofa actually felt like. And sometimes when we'd have like a top three list of the sofas that we'd



like, when we were trying to **pull the trigger** and make a decision on buying one of those top three, then we couldn't actually remember, like, "Ah, what was that color like, exactly again?" Or "Was that sofa hard or soft? I can't quite remember." And probably we should have been doing this from the beginning, but after our first round of visiting different furniture stores, we started to make notes and take pictures because we were forgetting some of the key information. You know it was just like information overload, and we couldn't remember the details about the sofas. So we would doubt ourselves afterwards, and it just led to this kind of **decision paralysis**. We had so many options after going to all of these different furniture showrooms. But we couldn't quite make a decision, we didn't know which sofa would be the best for us.

And to make things even worse, now we had forgotten a lot of the details about some of the sofas we liked. So we realized that we had to go and look again. So we chose about five or six places from our top contenders list, and we went back to those showrooms again, to check things out for a second time. And it was really funny sometimes when we checked it out again, it was like immediately, like, "What were we thinking?" Like, I think there was one sofa that was on the top of my list and my wife's list as well. It was a top contender. And then when we went back to that showroom for the second time, we just immediately eliminated it. We were like, "What were we thinking? Like that sofa is not good for us at all!" And it was pretty interesting that process of like seeing how when you have many options, some of the ones that we thought were really great at first turned out to be not so great in the end.

So, we kept going through this process of elimination. We went to the showrooms two or three times. And then finally, finally, finally, in the end, we were able to find a sofa that we liked that checked all of our boxes. It was the correct size. It was the correct price. Not too expensive. We did check out some really **high-end** furniture stores just to compare and just to see. And I remember we went into one furniture store in Gangnam, which is a rather affluent area of Seoul, and the sofa was about 45 million Korean won, which is probably close to around 40,000 American dollars-ish, around there. And so that was insane. That's

like a sofa that's the same price as a car. And of course, yeah, we need a sofa that's like 20 times more affordable than that. But it was cool to compare the really, really high-end sofas and some of the **low-end** sofas as well.

But the sofa that we ended up deciding on checked our box for price, it checked our box for design, all of these things were not maybe the best, but they were all good enough and it checked all of our boxes. So finally, we found our sofa, we sat down with the sales guy to buy it. And he asked us what colour and what fabric would you like. And oh my god, this was like a whole other process. Once we found the sofa, then we had to choose the fabric for it and the colour for it.

And so actually choosing the fabric wasn't so bad, there were only like seven options or so for the different kind of fabric that you could choose. And so the sales guy brought out these different fabric samples and showed us these huge books of different colours and options. And right away, my wife and I were like, "This is the fabric!" We found the fabric that we liked right away. And so the sales guy was like, "Great, let me make an estimate for you about how much this will cost. And while I'm doing that you can decide on a colour." So we're going through the colour book for that kind of fabric. And after a few moments, he came back with the estimate. And we were like, "Why is this so expensive? It's like over double the price of the **sticker price** on the sofa." And we found out that it's because we both chose the most expensive fabric.

And I guess you know, in retrospect, it seems obvious that the fabrics would really influence the price of the sofa. But we didn't know that it would be that expensive. And once we saw the estimate, we were freaking out because that doubled the price of the sofa and made it so it wasn't affordable for us anymore. So we had to give up on our first fabric choice. And instead, we chose a different kind of fabric that was still nice and still seemed pretty good. I mean, I'm not really a fabric expert, so I don't know anything. But it looks like a good fabric. And the sales guy told us all of its key points and key features.

And it sounded good to me. So we had to choose a different fabric than we originally wanted. But I think it'll be fine. I'm not expecting any difficulties with the fabric.

So we decided on the fabric then finally, but we still had to choose the colour. And there are so many colour options, maybe 50 or 60 different colour options.

And that's really **torture** for me. It's stressful because it's a big piece of furniture, and it's going to really stand out in the room no matter what. So having the correct colour is super, super important. And I think I've talked about this on Culips before. Usually, I'm a pretty **plain Jane** type of guy. Most of the time, I just wear all black clothes in my personal life, black jeans, black T-shirt, done! I keep things simple and plain most of the time, but you can't really carry that philosophy over to a sofa. I mean, there was a black fabric option. But that would look maybe a little gloomy and gothy in our living room to have a black sofa. So I had to delegate to my wife for choosing the colour.

Thankfully, she's a designer by trade. So she has a much better eye for colour than I do. And we also had kind of a colour palette to work with because of some of the colours that are already in the room. So we narrowed it down to like yellows, greens, and blues. And in the end, we decided on this kind of shade of green. So it's **a bold choice**, a shade of green, a green sofa that is going into our living room. My wife and I both wanted to have something funky and hip and cool. And not necessarily just this plain tan, boring sofa, we want to have some colour and some life and some excitement in the room. So we decided on the green.

And it's going to take about six weeks for the sofa to be built and delivered. It's not totally a custom sofa because the size or the design doesn't change. But you can choose your fabric and colour configuration like I've been telling you about. So it'll take a little while for the sofa to be built. And I can't wait for it to get here. And for us to fully decorate and get things set up in that main room in our house because I think it'll just be fantastic, and it's perfect timing for the late fall and winter season coming up here soon when we'll be spending more time inside. And I'm really just looking forward to spending some weekend

afternoons relaxing on the sofa, reading a book, drinking a coffee, maybe some light jazz music playing in the background. That's what I'm anticipating doing a lot of this fall and winter.

So, of course, when the sofa finally arrives, I'll take a picture and share it with you on our Discord and our Instagram. But for now, we don't have it. So I can't do that yet. But I will give you a visual update when the time is right. And now that we finally chose a sofa, my wife and I are already on to the next piece of furniture, which is the dining table and chairs. And I think this will be much easier. But **never say never** who knows, I thought it was going to be easy to find a sofa at first, and I turned out to be wrong. But **my fingers are crossed** that finding a dining room table and chairs is going to be easy, and then essentially will be set up. And we can focus more on just living our life rather than having to set a living room up.

You may have noticed over the last couple of weeks, I haven't included a vocabulary lesson at the end of the bonus episode. And that's something that I started doing when I began this series. But just because I've been really busy with some other things in my life, I haven't included it over the last couple of weeks. And so I wanted to A) ask you a question. And B) try something new for this week and get your feedback so that I can know what is the best kind of series to make for you in the future. So for this week, I thought let's try something new. Instead of focusing in on one expression and including it in a vocabulary lesson at the end of the bonus episode, I'm going to include a glossary and give definitions for maybe 10 or 15 expressions and include it in the free transcript for this week's lesson. So definitely make sure to click the link in the description for this episode so you can see the transcript and the glossary. And, of course, this will be free.

But the question that I have for you is what would you like me to do here in the future? Have you been finding the vocabulary lesson at the end of the bonus episode helpful? Have you been learning new English expressions that way? If you'd like me to continue doing that, of course, I'm happy to do that in the future. Or if you'd rather have me

continue, like I'm trying out this week with the glossary, well, then let me know either way because really, I just want to make the best lessons I can, and getting your feedback and your opinions and ideas will help me to do that. So that's what we're trying this week. But based on the feedback that I get from you, well, then maybe I'll change things up for next week and be back with the vocabulary lesson. Really, it's up to you. So let me know what you think. And the best way to do that is just by leaving a message on our Discord channel. And again, you can join that for free, the link is in the description for this episode. And you can leave a message on there, tell me what you think. We'll chat about it with the community. And together we'll find the best path forward.

So, that's it for this week, everyone. Thank you for making it all the way to the end of my sofa story. I hope you enjoyed listening to it. And I hope, more importantly even, that it was helpful for building your English fluency. So take care. Have a great week this week, as always, happy English studies, and I'll talk to you next time. Goodbye!

## Glossary

1. **Make a long story short** - To provide a concise or brief summary of a lengthy narrative or explanation.
2. **Gutted** - To completely remove all the interior components and structures, leaving the space empty for a remodel.
3. **Good to go** - Ready and prepared for use.
4. **Smaller footprint** - Referring to the practice of living in a smaller or more compact space.
5. **Top priority** - The highest level of importance or urgency.
6. **Twist [someone's] arm** - To persuade or convince someone, often through effort or argument, to do something they are initially hesitant to do.
7. **Call it a day** - To agree to stop doing something.
8. **Blood, sweat, and tears** - Refers to hard work, effort, and dedication put into a project or task.

9. **Plant some roots** - To establish a stable and long-term presence in a particular place, showing commitment to a specific location or community.
10. **That was a bust** - Describing something as a failure or disappointment, indicating it did not meet expectations or produce desired results.
11. **Pull the trigger** - To make a final decision or take action on something.
12. **Decision paralysis** - A state of being unable to make a decision due to having too many options or conflicting information.
13. **High-end** - Referring to luxury or premium-quality products or services.
14. **Low-end** - Referring to products or services of lower quality or affordability.
15. **Sticker price** - The original price or cost of an item before any discounts or additional costs.
16. **Torture for me** - Expressing difficulty or discomfort when making a decision due to numerous options
17. **Plain Jane** - An expression used to describe someone who prefers simplicity and plainness in their choices.
18. **A bold choice** - A decision that is daring or unconventional.
19. **Never say never** - Suggesting that one should not rule out the possibility of something happening.
20. **My fingers are crossed** - Expressing hope or optimism for a positive outcome.

## Episode credits

Host and preparation: Andrew Bates

Operations: Tsuyoshi Kaneshima

Image: Canva.com