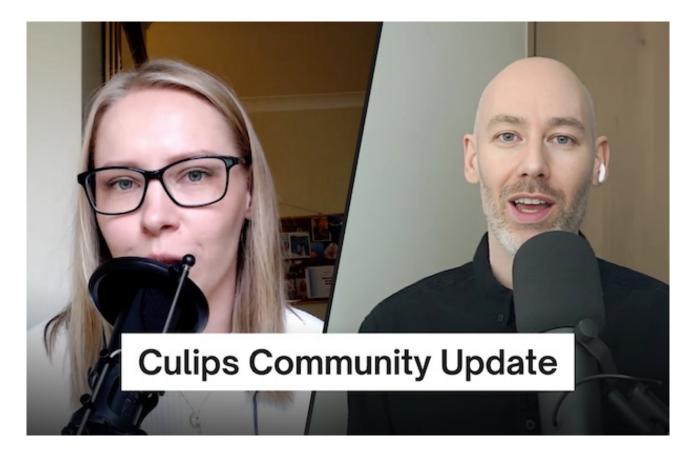# Culips Community Update - January

Episode description

In this episode, Andrew and Alina share exciting news about February's free grammar challenge on countable and uncountable nouns. Learn how to join the challenge by signing up for the Culips Discord server, participating in fun, easy tasks every second day, and earning a completion certificate. Plus, discover other ways to connect with the Culips community and improve your English. Don't miss it!

Note: The transcript has been edited for clarity.

Andrew: Hey there, everyone, and welcome to another edition of the Culips English Podcast. How's it going? I hope you're doing well. My name is Andrew, and I'm happy to be here with you for the very first edition of a new kind of episode here at Culips, which is called the Culips Community Update. At least that's our working title, and maybe it will change in the future. If you have a better suggestion for the name of this series, please let me know.

But what we're going to do in this episode is invite Alina, our Discord moderator, onto the show for some updates about what's happening over on our Discord. We have lots of exciting things happening there every day, and I want to make sure that everyone who listens to Culips knows about all of the events and the activities that we have on our Discord server so that you too can participate. Of course, it's free completely for everyone to participate in these activities, and I just want to spread the word and let you know about all of the interesting and fun ways you can improve your English with our Discord community.

So, we're going to be joined by Alina in just a moment here. And specifically, she's going to talk about the February challenge that will be happening all during February on our Discord server, where we're going to practice learning about countable nouns and uncountable nouns. So Alina has created this really interesting and fun challenge where every second day, not every day, every second day, you have to do a short task related to this grammar, and the idea is that by practicing and engaging with this grammar all month long, by the end of the month, you will feel really comfortable with this grammar, and you'll be able to use it and understand it in your own English going forward. So that's essentially what we're going to talk about in this episode, but Alina is going to go into a few more details than I did here.

So, I think we might as well just get right into it and welcome Alina to the show. So, let's do that now. Here we go, and I hope you enjoy this episode.

zJoining me now to give us a Culips Discord community update is our very own Discord moderator, Alina. Hey there, Alina. How are you?

Alina: Hi, Andrew. I'm good. How are you?

Andrew: I'm good as well, and Alina, I wanted to get you onto the podcast here to give us some updates about what's happening over on our server, because it's very active every day. And I think, you know, I've realized that Culips is blossoming into more than just a podcast. We're becoming a full-fledged English community, and we have so much going on over on the Discord every day, and I think some people who are maybe just only listening to the podcast might be missing out on some really, really fun conversations and just a great way to improve their English over on our Discord server as well.

So, I wanted to get you onto the podcast here so you could tell us about some of the fun things that are happening over on our Discord server. And the first thing that we wanted to talk about is the challenge. The monthly challenges that are happening. Alina, could you just give us a brief introduction? What are the monthly challenges, and how do they work over on the server?

Alina: Sure. So, we have been running those challenges for a year now, actually. We're doing the 13th currently. And it's been kind of fun. You know at first, we started off just kind of like, you know, trial and error. We weren't sure exactly how it's going to work, because how many people are going to be interested, and of course, it started off with just a few people, but, like, over time, you know, it's only kind of grown and more people, yeah, started joining. And yeah, we've been getting a lot of positive feedback in terms of people, you know, say that they learn a lot, and they're very helpful.

You know, every challenge focuses on something different. That's something I kind of try to do, you know, so they're not just the same, it's like either, you know, we focus on grammar or idioms, speaking, writing. You know, phrasal verbs, vocabulary, so many

different things. You know, we did some shadowing as well. So yeah, it's kind of like, you know, something that why it's good, I believe, is because it's planned ahead, so it's a very good way to just stay consistent, you know. You don't have to come up with something, you know, yourself. If you just want to do a little bit of work, but, you know, regularly. Like, stay consistent on your learning journey, I feel like it's a good way to do that by joining the challenge.

Andrew: So, all you have to do if you want to participate in one of these monthly challenges then is just join our Discord server, and of course, we'll put the link in the description for this episode to our server so that you guys can join easily if you're not a part of the server yet. But then once you are a part of the server, then you just need to navigate to the channel, which is called Monthly Challenge. Is that correct? Is that the name?

Alina: Monthly Challenge, yes.

Andrew: Monthly Challenge.

Alina: That's correct.

Andrew: OK. And so, then each month, there's a different challenge, and as you mentioned, it will focus around one particular aspect of learning English. It might be pronunciation, it might be grammar, phrasal verbs. There's all different sorts of challenges. Right now, we are participating, I am participating, and Alina, you're doing it too. And many of our Culips listeners out there are also doing the January Challenge. Maybe you could just briefly describe what the January Challenge is all about.

Alina: So yeah, I kind of designed that challenge just to get people started, you know, the new year, a lot of people kind of get overwhelmed, you know, and they try to plan like a lot of big things, and often those goals are, you know, not exactly achievable, and they just

get kind of, you know, overwhelmed, and burnt out. And at the end of the, you know, month, they're just like, giving up on everything. So I just kind of wanted to help them like ease off, you know, into this process, like just, first of all, look back, you know, like reflect on the last year, reflect on something they are, you know, they would like to work on this year, but like, take it slow, you know, not like, oh, let's jump on it and like study 100 words every day or something like this, like something more realistic and measurable, you know. So yeah, that's what we're doing.

And we're taking it like one step at a time. And yeah, it looks pretty good. A lot of people posted a lot of nice messages there. And they're just like, so nice to read, because, you know, they get you motivated as well. They kind of encourage you, because people share all these things that they, you know, want to improve, and get better at. And you're like, yeah, I want to improve that, too, you know. It's pretty amazing, this feeling of, you know, the community doing it together.

Andrew: Yeah, absolutely. And actually, I've been having a little bit of a difficult time with this month's challenge, because all of the questions are about learning English. Which, so I've been posting mine, I've just been changing Korean and English and posting about my Korean goals. But yeah, obviously, you know, I'm still a language learner. So, I still have very similar goals and aspirations with my foreign language study as well. So, Alina, one thing that I think we should mention is that this challenge isn't an everyday challenge, right? It's not something that you have to do day in and day out. At least for the January challenge, it's every second day, is that right? Every second day?

Alina: That's correct. And we did actually originally start with challenges, like daily challenges. But to be honest with you, you know, it didn't seem like, you know, people could actually keep up, like it actually felt a lot more stressful. So, at some point, I think maybe in April, I kind of made this decision to actually only do it every second day. Because you know, some people don't even have time to say, for example, they can do it the next day. So, it's a little more relaxed, you know, you have time to like catch up. And

sometimes people post, say, you know, like three assignments at the same time. And that's fine. Like, if you feel like, you know, it's easier for you to do it, like once a week, that's acceptable as well. You know, no pressure. Of course, it's nicer when, you know, everybody sends the same kind of message and, you know, focus around the same topic. It's just a little bit easier to process all these messages. But I love how, you know, everybody learns to structure it very well.

So, first of all, we have this message that I post every month, you know, and I pin it so you can easily find it. And sometimes, you know, as you mentioned, we try to focus on something, you know, specific, but sometimes we try to combine different things as well. Like, for example, it could be, you know, that you could do some speaking and some writing in the same challenge as well. So yeah, that's how it works.

Andrew: So, guys, I think Alina hit on a key point there, in that we know that you're busy. And Alina and I are very busy as well. So, we're not going to make this an everyday thing. And we're not very strict about having you complete the daily task on that exact day. So, if you fall behind because, you know, you're very busy one day or very busy one week, that's OK. You can catch up later and just post a little bit later. And that's fine. We're very flexible and understanding with that. We don't run too strict of a set of rules here. Right, Alina?

Alina: Yeah, exactly. And like, it's never too late to join because some people are like, oh, well, you know, it's the end of the month. Like, I'm just not going to do anything. Like, you can still join in, you know, and just maybe pick some of the assignments you kind of like, you know, you think like, oh, that sounds like fun. I could do that. Or you can just jump in and comment on, you know, other people's messages as well. That's kind of another form of participation, you know, and it's definitely encouraged, for sure. So yeah, no pressure.

Andrew: And we also design the tasks that you have to do for the challenge not to be too intense and to take too long, right? Like, we don't want you to spend an hour creating something to complete the task. Like, I think we know that everybody is busy. And yeah, I

mean, it is a good way to spend your time because you are using your English skills in a very productive way. And that's going to help you improve your English fluency by participating in the challenge. But at the same time, we don't want to overwhelm you or stress you out with a task that will take really, really a long time. So, Alina, we have a challenge for the next month, February, that we would like to invite everybody who is listening to this podcast right now to participate in. It's totally free. We should mention that as well. It's open to Culips members and non-members alike. Everyone can participate. And we're going to do the big reveal. We're going to share the topic for the February challenge. Alina, I'll let you do the honors. What are we going to be learning about in February through this challenge?

Alina: So, in February, we're going to focus around, you know, this topic that is kind of challenging not only for beginners, but also for some advanced learners, you know, from what I've noticed from my experience and, you know, my own experience learning English. And the topic is countable and uncountable nouns. And you know, it might sound like simple on the surface. You're like, what's there to learn about, you know, the nouns we can count, the nouns we can't count. But it is a bit more complicated because, you know, depending on what noun it is, you actually have to think of, you know, the verb you're using, the form of the verb. Or, you know, the quantifiers like much or many, all of these things, you know. And sometimes some nouns don't have a plural form, for example, "advice." Like you can't say "advices," which is something that a lot of us attempt, you know, learners. Or, you know, some words have only plural form like "news." So that's just something we're going to tackle there and, you know, try to clear up the confusion. And by the end of it, you should be definitely feeling a lot more confident, you know, about using these tricky nouns, and you'll have a better understanding of it.

And of course, I will be there, you know, every step of the way, like any kind of questions you have, any mistakes you want to be corrected, I'll be there to, yeah, help you and assist you in any way I can.zzz

Andrew: Yeah, and I'll be there as well, guys, and I'm going to participate in the challenge as many of you will as well, I hope. So yeah, just to recap how to join guys, you want to make sure you're a member of the Discord community. Once you are a member, then you will see the monthly challenge channel on your menu bar, and then you can just click on there. And at the top, there's a little pin icon. Yeah, it looks like a thumbtack, a thumbtack. And if you click that icon, then you will be able to see the image of the monthly challenge. And if you need to refer back to that image again, then just do that. And if you get lost or need help, then just send me or Alina a DM, a direct message, and we'll be happy to help you all. So, Alina, I'm stoked. I'm excited for this challenge. It's going to be a good one, I think.

Alina: Same, me too.

Andrew: We need to tell everybody about the completion prize. What happens if you complete the monthly challenge?

Alina: So yes, of course, important. If you complete the challenge, as in, you know, you complete every single assignment, and like, you know, of course, you participate actively, and you respond to other messages, then you get a completion certificate from us. And then you can collect them and display them and feel very good about yourself.

Andrew: Yeah, you'll get your very own completion certificate. And also, we're going to experiment. I don't want to promise this because we haven't actually tried this yet, right, Alina? But we are going to update our Discord server. We're going to bump it up to the next level, like on the administration side of things. And this should allow us, we think, to be able to give you a special role beside your Discord name that shows that you completed the challenge. So, you'll be able to have a little bit of flair beside your Discord username. Just to show the rest of the community that you participated in the challenge, and you completed it. So, there's some cool prizes that you get if you finish it.

Alina: I feel like, you know, participating myself now that you mentioned it, because I would love a nice role, you know, that would set me apart.

Andrew: You have the moderator role. I don't think you could get any higher than that.

Alina: Well, you made it sound good.

Andrew: So, Alina, there's a couple of other updates that we wanted to run by everybody here about the server. The next one that we had was talking about, aha, the class schedule is now available on Discord as well. Could you tell everyone about that?

Alina: Yes, we've been receiving some requests about that. And I do find them helpful myself, because, you know, you don't always have time to go on the website, you know, because Discord is just so easy. You just go and, you know, see them all there. So, what we have started doing is creating events for these classes, for our classes. And to find them, you need to go to your sidebar, you know, left hand sidebar. And at the top right corner, there is this like little icon, kind of like a calendar icon. If you click on it, you will see all of the events. And ideally, what, you know, would be nice if you did is if you click interested, so you'd be notified about each event like an hour before, I think they notify you. And then when it starts, you also get notification. So yeah, there's all the info, you know, the host and the time. And it's your local time, because Discord also does it for you, you know, no conversion there. You don't have to worry about that. So yeah, that's an easier, I believe, way to, you know, also kind of keep an eye on when is the next class that you could join.

Andrew: Yeah, yeah, absolutely. And for listeners out there, guys, if you don't know, we do have three speaking classes each and every week that are available for Culips members. So, this is a member-only feature. But if you are a Culips member, then you can see the schedule either on our website, but now also in the Discord. And like Alina said,

the time is displayed in your local time zone. So that's really convenient. I know it can be a little bit confusing because we have listeners from all corners of the world. So, it's impossible for us to say like, "The class starts at 7pm." Right? Because everybody's 7pm is a different time. So that's a little bit annoying, and honestly, frustrating as the administrators here at Culips. But Discord solves that problem for us, it will show you the time in your local time zone, you can set your notification. And that makes it so that you won't ever miss one of our speaking classes. So that's a cool new feature. And thank you to Alina, thank you for doing that and posting those to the server. Well, Alina, thanks for the update. And yeah, I hope everybody will participate in our February challenge. And yeah, we'll be back next month too with another Culips Community Update. So, Alina, we'll talk to you then. Until then, take care and thanks for listening, everyone.

Alina: Bye.

Andrew: OK, so that brings us to the end of our very first Culips Community Update episode. Wonderful. It was great to hear from Alina. And everyone, we're going to do this going forward once a month. We're going to invite Alina onto the podcast so she can give us some updates about what's happening over on our Discord community. I mean, guys, if you haven't checked it out yet, it's really, really a wonderful place to practice your English and to practice using English, right? Of course, with the podcast, you can do lots of English listening. But with the Discord server, you can do lots of English output. You can communicate your ideas either through writing or speaking. So, I really highly encourage you to check it out and join the friendly community that we have over there. So, I think it's time for me to go. Everybody, please take care and we'll be back soon with another brand-new Culips episode. And I'll talk to you then. Goodbye.

February Challenge

2 Watch our short video about countable and uncountable nouns. You'll find the link below!

4 List 3 countable nouns and create a sentence for each using "many".

6 List 3 uncountable nouns and create a sentence for each using "much".

8 Describe your home using many and much. Example: "I have many rooms. I don't have much furniture."

10 Write 3 _incorrect_ sentences using uncountable nouns. Correct each other's sentences!

12 Are you good at giving advice? What's the best advice you've ever received?

14 What kind of hair do you have? Has your hair changed since you were a child?

16 Describe your perfect day, using both countable and uncountable nouns.

18 What is the most surprising news you've ever heard?

20 Record a short voice message about your plans for the weekend, using countable and uncountable nouns.

22 Do you think having less luggage makes traveling easier?

24 Do you think fewer people are reading books these days? Why?

26 Do you think money is more valuable than time? Why?

28 Record a short voice message about your current food habits. Use "less", "fewer", "more", "some" and "a/an."

★BONUS: Find a Culips episode where both countable and uncountable nouns are used. Share with others!

🌐 culips

Episode credits

Hosts and preparation: Andrew Bates and Alina Morozova

Operations: Tsuyoshi Kaneshima