

Silly hamster

Episode description

In this bonus episode, Andrew talks about buyers remorse and his regret for buying a phone case. Plus in the vocabulary lesson, he teaches you a useful idiomatic expression: **To check all your boxes.**

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Note: The transcript has been edited for clarity.

Andrew: I recently upgraded my phone. I'd been using the same phone for about the last six years, and it was time for an upgrade. The phone itself worked OK, but the battery didn't hold a charge for very long and the charging cable would never stay in place. It was really, really annoying. I'd have to struggle just to get it plugged in just right or it would never charge. And then just the slightest bump or movement would knock the cable out again. Every morning I'd wake up, and just like many people the first thing I do is reach for my phone, so I'd grab my phone and the battery would be dead. It was really, really frustrating.

Now I know a little bit, just a little bit, about computers, and phones, and electronics. I'm by no means an expert, but I've done some simple repairs on phones and computers in the past like changing out screens or hard drives. So, I realized that it was probably just a problem with the charging connector, and I tried my best to clean my old phone and to try and fix the problem, but it didn't really help too much. So, I figured that my phone probably had a major problem with the charging port and the battery, and it wouldn't be worth the investment to fix an old phone. And although it did work well when I was able to get the phone to charge, the camera on it was starting to show its age and I'd noticed that I pretty much stopped taking photos with that camera all together. Recently when we rang in the new year, I went back through my photo album for 2022 and I was really disappointed with how many photos I had taken last year. I think the reason why I didn't take too many photos was mostly due to the fact that the camera didn't take great pictures anymore. So, for all of these reasons I decided to bite the bullet and get a new phone.

My name is Andrew, and this is bonus episode 37 of the Culips English Podcast. Today, I'm gonna share with you a funny story that happened to me when I was shopping for a case for my new phone. And then a little later on in the episode, I'm gonna teach you about an idiom that will help you improve your English listening and speaking fluency. It's an idiom that I'll use when telling you the story, so keep your ears open and see if you can

hear when I use it. There's a 100% free interactive transcript for this episode. I recommend studying with the transcript while learning with me today. To get the transcript, just click the link in the description or visit our website Culips.com.

So, let me tell you the story about my phone case. Well, I bought my new phone last month and I have to say so far, I've been really impressed by all the new features and functions that my new phone has that my old one didn't. For example, here in South Korea where I live, we're still required to mask up whenever we're inside a public place. Now, the kind of phone that I use has a feature called Face ID and you use this feature to unlock your phone. I know some people have phones that use a fingerprint reader or a password, but mine uses a face reader. Now, with my old phone it was always super annoying to try and unlock my phone when I was wearing a mask. With the mask on the phone wasn't able to recognize my face and I'd always get an error and then have to type in my pass code to unlock my phone. I know it doesn't seem like much, but I did find it annoying. But now with my new phone, the face detection feature works much better, and I can unlock my phone even when I'm wearing my mask and it's really convenient.

And of course, everything else on the new phone is much better too. The screen is sharper, the processor is faster, and the camera is a huge upgrade and I've noticed that I've been taking a ton of photos with it. In fact, I'm trying to take at least a photo every day so that next year at the end of the year when I look back on my 2023 and try to remember what I did, I'll have a lot of memories to look back on.

Anyway, so I got the new phone, but I didn't buy a phone case for it. Personally, I'm not a huge fan of phone cases. I usually keep my phone in the back pocket of my pants and if I use a big bulky case, then it's hard to slide the phone in and out of my pocket. And on top of that, I'm not really sure how much protection you actually get from using a case. The phone that I used when I lived in Canada during my grad school days, which was around 2015 or so, had a phone case. I used a phone case with that phone, but I completely shattered the screen on that phone when I accidentally dropped it. Now, the dumb thing

about that was that the phone just gently dropped to the floor after it slipped out of my hands. But I was sitting on the floor at the time, so it really only dropped, like I don't know, 30 centimeters or so, but it's still completely shattered, and the case did nothing to protect that phone. So, all of this is to say that I guess I'm a phone case skeptic. I mean I guess those big, really thick ones work well probably, but then it turns your phone into a big brick and who wants to carry that around in their pocket? So, I told all of this to my wife, and can you guess what she replied with? Well, she told me that I'd be stupid not to use a case and that if I did break my phone and I didn't have a case and ended up having to pay a lot of money to replace it, then I would regret it. So, I thought about that for a moment, and I realized of course that she was right. I had no good argument about why I shouldn't use a case, so I decided to shop for a simple phone case for my new phone.

And of course, like most people these days I do my shopping online. So, I went online to do some shopping and it was really amazing after only a few searches, I guess the internet algorithm learned that I was in the market for a new case because suddenly all of my targeted online ads were for phone cases and phone accessories. Practically all of the ads that I was being shown on Instagram, for example, were specifically for phone cases. So, I looked at a ton of different options, but I was overwhelmed with all of these options, and I couldn't make a decision and I also couldn't find any that I really liked. Too many of the cases had designs that were tacky or when I did find a design I liked, then of course, the case was way too expensive.

Really, I'm a simple guy and there were only two things that I wanted out of a phone case. First, I wanted it to be a simple color only, like black or maybe just clear. And second, I wanted it to have a slot on the back for my transportation card so that when I ride the subway or the bus, I can just simply scan my transportation card by holding my phone up to the card reader. Now, I saw several phone cases like this online that met these requirements, but they were expensive. Like I couldn't justify paying 40 or 50 dollars for just a simple piece of plastic. I even got as far as adding a case into my online shopping

cart, but when I got to the payment section, I just couldn't pull the trigger and go through with it.

I couldn't pull the trigger. Have you heard that idiom before? To pull the trigger? It's one that we've covered on Culips I'm sure and it's an idiomatic phrase that means to take decisive action and it's usually used in the context of making a difficult decision or taking a step towards achieving a goal. So, I couldn't pull the trigger and actually make a decision to buy a new phone case. A week or two went by and I was still looking at cases on Instagram every day, but I didn't see anything that really fit what I wanted. For some reason that I can't really explain, I just kept being stubborn and hesitating over buying a case.

Well then, another week went by and my wife and I decided to go for a walk to a local bookshop after work. I think I mentioned this maybe in the last bonus episode, but we're both trying to read more this year. I had just finished the book I was reading, and I wanted to go to the bookstore so I could pick up something new to read. Now, when we got to the bookstore, I found the book that I wanted to buy right away. I love it in Korea, they have these little kiosks where you can go and search for the book that you want, and then you hit print, and it prints you out this little receipt with a map that shows you exactly where to go in the bookstore to find your book. And I always love searching for the books this way. Like, the whole process is really fun and there's something very satisfying about hitting print on the kiosk and the little receipt coming out of the machine. It's a wonderful experience. If you ever visit Korea, make sure to go to a bookstore and search for a book this way. I'm sure you'll love it too.

Anyways, I found the book that I wanted to buy right away, but my wife she wanted to browse around the bookstore for a little bit longer, so I did the same thing and I just wandered around the store. The bookstore that we went to is really big. It's got tons of books, but of course they also sell other things as well. And one aisle in the bookstore caught my attention. Can you guess what aisle it was? That's right it was the phone case aisle. There were thousands of phone cases in this aisle of the bookstore. So, while I was

killing time and waiting for my wife, I looked at all the phone cases for my kind of phone and I was pleased as punch to see that they had a case there that met all of my requirements. Only one color? Check. No silly designs? Check. Space for a transportation card in the back? Check. Affordable? Check. In fact, the case was way cheaper than I was expecting. So, I didn't hesitate once I saw this case that checked all of my boxes. I pulled the trigger, and I bought it right away.

Now when I got home a little later in the evening, I took the phone case out of its packaging and put it on my phone and it was only then that I realized the reason why the phone case was so cheap. I thought the phone case was just a plain clear case, but after I took it out of its packaging, I realized that there was actually a drawing of a dancing hamster wearing a party hat on the back. A dancing hamster wearing a party hat. The picture is kind of cute and pretty funny, but it's not my style and it's a little bit embarrassing to have to carry it around. Now you may be wondering why I didn't notice it before I bought it, but it wasn't really my fault because the way that the phone case was packaged in the box made it so that the hamster design was totally blocked. I only realized there was a hamster on the case after I took it out of the box.

Anyway, I don't want to overreact about the design too much and I think really no one ever pays attention to little things like the kind of phone case other people use. Like do you ever notice other people's phone cases? Probably not. It's easy to feel self-conscious about these things though and sometimes I forget to realize that I'm only the main character in my world and I think that the spotlight is shining on me everywhere I go. But in reality, everybody feels like this, and no one is really paying attention to me because everyone else is too concerned that the spotlight is shining on them, and everyone is paying attention to them.



So, I think for this reason and also because of that stubbornness that I mentioned earlier, I'll just keep rocking this silly party hamster case. I'll put a picture of the case in the PDF version of the transcript for this episode and I'll post a picture to Instagram as well in case you want to see what this phone case looks like. All in all, this whole ordeal reminded me of a valuable lesson, which is, if it sounds too good to be true, it probably is. The case that seemed perfect actually wasn't and I think the reason why it was so cheap is probably because of the silly hamster design. Hopefully, when I need to upgrade my phone again in another five or six years the technology will have advanced to the point that makes a protective case unnecessary and I can just rock a caseless phone like I've always wanted to.

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

Before I let you go, I'd like to teach you about the idiomatic expression I used a little earlier when telling you the story about my new phone case. The expression is: to check all your boxes. To check all your boxes. To check all your boxes. And of course, we can change that "your" pronoun to match the context of the sentence. So, to check all my boxes. To check all his boxes. To check all our boxes. And so on. Did you hear when I said this expression earlier? I used it when I was talking about how I thought the phone case from the bookstore met all of the requirements that I wanted from a new phone case. If you didn't catch it earlier, don't worry it's OK. We're going to rewind the audio now, go back, and take another listen to that part a couple of more times. So here we go.

So, I didn't hesitate once I saw this case that checked all of my boxes. I pulled the trigger, and I bought it right away.

So, the idiomatic expression to check all your boxes means to meet all of the requirements or criteria that you have for something or for someone. For example, if you're looking for a

new job and you find one that pays well, has good benefits, and is in a location that you like well then you could say that it checks all your boxes. This expression is easy to visualize because the imagery behind it comes from a checklist. You know a checklist like a list of items that need to be completed. The metaphor of a box being checked suggests that each item on the list is completed. So, then you can imagine that when someone uses this expression that they've gone through a kind of mental checklist and have checked off all the items that are required or important to them so that they confirm that everything is in order. Some English speakers, I think especially in the UK, will say tick all my boxes instead of check all my boxes. But don't worry both expressions have the exact same meaning, and all English speakers will understand both variations so feel free to use whichever one you like. As always, I've prepared three example sentences which will show you how we can use this idiom in a natural way, so let's listen to the first one now. Here we go.

Example sentence number one.

You might like this new restaurant downtown. It checks all your boxes. Food's delicious, it's got a great atmosphere, and the service is fast and friendly too.

Let's break this example sentence down. We hear the speaker giving a restaurant recommendation and they're giving this recommendation to someone, maybe to a friend, because they know the friend's preferences and they know the kind of restaurant that the friend likes. So, they say well this restaurant has delicious food, it's got a great atmosphere, and also it has fantastic service. So, I know that you like these styles of restaurants. I mean really who doesn't like that kind of restaurant? But they know that that friend likes this kind of restaurant, so it checks all their boxes, right? It meets all of their requirements.

Example sentence number two.

John's new car is so cool, and it checks all of my boxes for safety, fuel efficiency, and style. I think I might just have to test drive one myself.

In this sentence, we hear the speaker talking about his friend John's new car and he says that the car is really cool, and it checks all of his boxes for what he wants out of a new car. It's safe, it's fuel efficient, and it's stylish. He loves the car, and he might go to the car dealership and test drive one himself because maybe he also wants to buy this model of car.

Example sentence number three.

I was so happy to find this apartment. I wanted an affordable two-bedroom, a place with lots of natural light, and a place where the landlord would let my pet cat Coco live with me and this one checked all of my boxes.

Let's break this final example sentence down. In this example, we hear the speaker talking about their new apartment and they were really happy because they found a fantastic apartment to live in and one that checked all of their boxes. One that met all of their requirements, right? An affordable two-bedroom? Check. A place with lots of natural light? Check. And a pet friendly place? Check. So, the speaker from that sentence then found an apartment that is the perfect fit for them. It checked all their boxes.

That brings us to the end of this week's bonus episode. Thank you for listening and great job on completing an English study session with me today. Remember that learning English takes time and effort, but with consistent practice and a positive attitude you can achieve your goals. If you made it this far in the episode, you're doing exactly what you need to do to improve your English, so keep up the awesome work. I'm gonna take off now, but I don't want things to stop here. I'd like to throw the conversation over to you. It's your turn to be productive with English and practice outputting English.

So, I'm curious, have you ever bought anything by mistake that you kind of regret just like me and my hamster phone case? Or if you happen to buy a phone case with a silly hamster on it just like me, what would you do in this situation? Would you throw it out and buy a new one? Or would you just keep rocking the phone case like I'm doing? Drop a comment on our website Culips.com and let me know. I hope you have a great week, take care, and I'll talk to you soon, bye!

Episode credits

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