

Real Talk #026 – Buying a bus ticket

AD-FREE

Episode description

Navigating public transportation in a new area is stressful enough without a language barrier. But have no fear! In this much-requested episode, Andrew and Suzanne introduce natural expressions used when buying a ticket at the bus terminal.

Fun fact

The word bus comes from the Latin word omnibus, meaning “for all.” This is fitting, because it is a vehicle that can be shared by many people at one time. The first bus system, which used horse-drawn carriages, was created in France in 1823.

Expressions included in the study guide

- When’s the next bus for [place]?
- Stuffy
- Ma’am
- Carry-on
- To tear off
- To weigh [something]
- To leave extra time



Transcript

Note: The words and expressions that appear in **bold text** within the transcript are discussed in more detail in the Detailed Explanations section that follows the transcript.

Andrew: Real Talk #026. Hey there, Suzanne.

Suzanne: Hey, Andrew. How's it going?

Andrew: It's going all right. But I'm pretty hot, Suzanne It's really hot and **stuff** in my apartment right now. How are you?

Suzanne: It's the worst whenever you're having to record, right? In the hot studio, because you don't want any motors running or AC going.

Andrew: That's right. I have an air conditioner in my apartment, but if I turn it on then there will be an annoying buzzing sound in the background for the entire episode. So I decided to turn it off, everyone. I'm sweating away here for you guys.

Suzanne: I gotta say, the one nice thing about Montreal, it's never that hot. I mean, not really, not terribly, terribly hot. Not yet, I would say, right?

Andrew: Not yet.

Anyway, Suzanne, today we're not going to talk about the weather, we're actually going to talk about how to buy a bus ticket at a bus terminal. So today we'll do a Real Talk episode. And Real Talk is the Culips series where we teach you guys the language and the expressions that you need to know in order to successfully navigate everyday, real-world, real-life situations. And Suzanne, did you know that this was actually a request from not one, not two, but several of our listeners?

Suzanne: Wow.

Andrew: Yeah, and so I thought, wow, people are interested in learning how to do this, how to buy a bus ticket. But, just before we get started, I want to remind everyone that we do have a study guide for this episode. And following along with the study guide and using it after you listen to the episode is a really great way to take advantage of what we will teach you here today. So if you're interested in downloading the study guide, just visit our website, Culips.com, for all of the information you need in order to get the study guide.

So Suzanne, what is the plan for this episode?



Suzanne: Well, today we're going to start by listening to an example conversation between a woman and a bus company employee at the bus terminal. The woman buys a bus ticket to Calgary, Alberta.

Andrew: Actually, this is a 100% real conversation. When I was researching this episode, I found a lady on YouTube who actually filmed herself buying a bus ticket, and originally I wanted to use just that audio. I was going to rip it from YouTube and just put it right into this podcast, but the sound quality was really, really terrible, so instead we will re-enact it. But just so all the listeners know, this is 100% natural. I changed a couple of the details so that her privacy would be respected, but, yeah, this is as real as it gets.

Suzanne: That's so cool. So after we'll take a close look at the expressions and the vocabulary that you can use when you need to buy a bus ticket at the actual bus terminal.

Andrew: Sounds like a great plan for today. So, let's get started. Let's listen to that example conversation right now.

Woman: I was wanting to go to Calgary 7:25 PM.

Employee: Oh, actually, we don't have a 7:25 today.

Woman: What time's the next time?

Employee: Calgary, Alberta?

Woman: Mmhmm.

Employee: It'll be, **ma'am**, I'm sorry, it'll be 10:20 tonight.

Woman: 10:20 tonight? So you have nothing for 7:25?

Employee: No, **ma'am**.

Woman: OK, I'll wait. How much is it?

Employee: It's gonna be \$22.50.

Woman: OK.

Employee: And you've only got just the one bag, correct?

Woman: Mmhmm. I forgot I gotta **weigh** that.

Employee: Just make sure that you **tear the old tag off**, too.

Woman: OK.



Employee: And what's your first name?

Woman: Nicky.

Employee: N-I-C-K-Y?

Woman: Uh huh.

Employee: Last name?

Woman: Smyth.

Employee: S-M-I-T-H?

Woman: No, S-M-Y-T-H.

Employee: Oh, I'm sorry. Do you have a phone number, Ms. Smyth?

Woman: Um, 123-456-7891

Employee: OK, Ms. Smyth, your bus is gonna be leaving out there from gate 10 at 10:20.

Woman: Mmhmm.

Employee: Just make sure you **tear that old bag tag off** for me, OK?

Woman: OK.

Employee: And put this new one on. We'll make a call when your bus is ready.

Woman: Thank you. Have a nice day.

Employee: And you have a safe trip.

Andrew: All right, everyone. So we just heard that conversation between a woman and the bus company employee. And the woman bought a bus ticket to Calgary, Alberta, which is a city in Canada.

So, Suzanne, how about now we take a closer look at that conversation and identify the three most important parts, and take a look at the expressions and the vocabulary that were used by both the woman and bus guy. Does that sound all right?

Suzanne: Yeah, sounds great. So let's look at the first important thing, when the woman is asking about the bus schedule. So let's listen to that part again.



I was wanting to go to Calgary 7:25 PM.

I was wanting to go to Calgary 7:25 PM.

Andrew: OK. So, actually, Suzanne, what was really striking about this conversation to me is that there was no greeting. There was a not a hello, hey, how's it going? What's up?

Suzanne: Yeah.

Andrew: Actually, the woman just goes right up to the counter and says, "I was wanting to go to Calgary, 7:25 PM." And so this is a very clear way to just say what you want, although I don't know if it's the most polite way you could go about doing it.

Suzanne: Yeah, it seems like the woman is in a rush, maybe. And that's why. But you're right, there usually is a hi, how are you?

Andrew: Yeah. To me it seems like maybe she thinks that there is no bus there. Like, because it's interesting she says I was wanting to go to Calgary, not I want to go to Calgary. So I think maybe she's hoping there's a 7:25PM bus, but that she probably expects that there really isn't, that she already knows there isn't a bus at that time.

Suzanne: Right, that's true.

Andrew: So, the bus driver responds by saying, sorry, we don't have a 7:25 bus. So then, she asks a very useful question, what time's the next time? What time's the next time? So when is the next bus departing, right?

Suzanne: Yes.

Andrew: So there are several different ways you could ask this question. You could say what time's the next time? Or what time does the next bus leave? Or when's the next departure? All of these questions achieve the same thing. They mean the same thing, right?

Suzanne: Right, or just simply, **when's the next bus for Calgary?** Just the next bus for the location that you want.

Andrew: **When's the next bus for New York City? When's the next bus for Vancouver?** Absolutely.

Suzanne: Right. Yeah, and I think it's very interesting that they refer to, they don't really talk about the bus in the first couple exchanges, they actually just say 7:25 and we don't have a 7:25, right? So they don't refer to it as actually a bus, but a time.



Andrew: Yeah, because I think when you're in the bus terminal at the counter ordering a bus ticket, everybody just assumes that you're talking about the bus, right? So you don't have to refer to the bus, we just know that you're talking about it.

Suzanne: Exactly.

Andrew: And so one final thing here that I wanted to bring up, Suzanne, is the word that the bus counter guy uses to refer to the woman. He says **ma'am**. **Ma'am**, I'm sorry, no **ma'am**, right? What does this word **ma'am** mean?

Suzanne: Well, it's kind of like, you know, in French you would say madame or mademoiselle, it's like saying miss or sir. Sort of formal, a formal yet general way of calling someone. It's polite, depending on whether or not you like to be called **ma'am**, I guess.

Andrew: So we usually use this word only to refer to women, right? I think if somebody called me a **ma'am**, I might look at them strangely or get confused.

Suzanne: Yes.

Andrew: And we use it when we don't know somebody's name, right? If we don't know their name, we need a word, and **ma'am** is a polite word. If the woman is younger or a girl, you could say miss, right? Miss. And sir is the male equivalent and, actually, I use the word sir and **ma'am** all the time in my classroom when my students ask me a question. So they put their hand up, I say yes, **ma'am**? Yes, sir? I don't know why I do that, but it's a habit of mine when asking a question in the classroom.

Suzanne: That's great, that's funny.

Andrew: Yeah, it's fun. I like doing it. And one final thing, this word **ma'am**, I think, is way, way more popular in the southern United States.

Suzanne: Yes. Yes.

Andrew: Whenever I hear people from the southern part of the United States talk, they're using this word **ma'am** a lot so that's one thing to keep in mind, too. Depending where you are in the English-speaking world, your mileage may vary with this word, **ma'am**.

Suzanne: It is very popular there. Very common.

Andrew: Very common indeed.

All right, Sue, I think we can move on to the second key part of today's conversation about buying a bus ticket, and that is when the ticket agent refers to the woman's bag and they talk about the baggage. Let's listen to that part of the conversation one more time.

Employee: And you've only got just the one bag, correct?

Woman: Mmhmm. I forgot I gotta **weigh** that.

Employee: Just make sure that you **tear the old tag off**, too.

Employee: And you've only got just the one bag, correct?

Woman: Mmhmm. I forgot I gotta **weigh** that.

Employee: Just make sure that you **tear the old tag off**, too.

Andrew: OK, so the ticketing agent says, you've only got one bag, correct? You've only got one bag, correct? I'm assuming he says that because he can see that the woman only has one bag, right?

Suzanne: Right, that's probably what she brought up to the counter, and it's the only thing visible at that time.

Andrew: So let's say that actually she was carrying many bags with her, they were just maybe in the waiting area where all the seats are, and she had to say oh no, I have many bags. What would you say in that situation, Sue? If I was the ticketing agent, you were the customer, and I said, you've only got one bag, correct?

Suzanne: So I guess if it's of a certain size, it's not like a **carry-on**, then I would tell them how many I would have. So if it's more than one, you know, if I have two big bags, I would say, no, actually I have two bags and one **carry-on**.

Andrew: Perfect, perfect. So, no, actually, I have two bags and one **carry-on**.

Suzanne: Or more. Maybe you have more.

Andrew: And so the woman acknowledges, yes, I only have one bag, then she says I forgot I gotta **weigh** that, I gotta **weigh** that. And so what is **weighing** a bag? What is this all about, **weighing** a bag?

Suzanne: Yeah, usually they allow you to have a certain amount of kilos or pounds per bag for free, and I think that if you, you know if it's a little heavier you might have to pay an extra fee on the bag, or maybe if you have more than one bag, you can empty out some of one into the other, to even the weight.

But they do expect each customer to have a certain amount per bag, I guess to balance the bus, you know? To balance out the luggage area.

Andrew: Yeah, so there's always a weight limit whenever you take an airplane or take a bus, and you're expected to follow that limit, your bag can't be too heavy. So that's why she says, oh, I gotta **weigh** that. And **weigh** here is **W-E-I-G-H**, right? The spelling, not W-A-Y. And so this **weigh** means to measure the weight, the heaviness of an object.

Suzanne: Yeah.

Andrew: And so the final point here that we should make is when the ticket agent says, just make sure you **tear off** that old tag. What's he talking about here? What is **tear off** and what is a tag?

Suzanne: Well, **tear off** is a phrasal verb that we use to rip or remove the old tag that, you know, the bag tag, so maybe it had her address and her contact info, and maybe it had an old airline or an old bus company and it's not current. So in this statement, he's making sure that she removes the old info and puts on the new tag.

Andrew: Exactly, because if she keeps that old bag tag on her suitcase, then it could get very confusing if that bag ends up lost or if somebody takes it by mistake.

Suzanne: Yeah.

Andrew: All right, so after this part of the conversation, Suzanne, the ticketing agent takes the customer's name and phone number and this is information that you should always be prepared to give. And also you should have an ID card before you board the bus, because sometimes they'll wanna check your ID to make sure that it's actually you who is boarding the bus, that the name on the ticket matches the identity of the person who is riding.

Suzanne: Yeah, and if you're travelling between borders—so say you're visiting Canada and you're in Montreal and you wanna take the bus to New York City for the weekend—make sure you have your passport. Because when you're crossing borders, even though you've managed to cross the border maybe in your first trip after your plane, if you're taking a bus to move around between the US and Canada, you still need your passport.

Andrew: Yeah, absolutely. You need the passport to cross the border, so make sure you have your ID, have your passport, have all your documents ready to go.

OK, so guys, now we'll take a look at the third important part of the conversation, and this is just confirming the details of the bus trip. So let's



listen to that third important part of this conversation one more time right now.

Employee: OK, Ms. Smyth, your bus is gonna be leaving out there from gate 10 at 10:20.

Woman: Mmhmm.

Employee: Just make sure you **tear that old bag tag off** for me, OK?

Woman: OK.

Employee: And put this new one on. We'll make a call when your bus is ready.

Woman: Thank you. Have a nice day.

Employee: And you have a safe trip.

Andrew: So, Suzanne, what does the ticketing agent tell Ms. Smyth, the woman, Ms. Smyth?

Suzanne: So the ticketing agent makes sure that she knows the gate or the door number in which she needs to be waiting at. Like, you know, I guess in the airline it's gate, a gate, and sometimes in a bus station it can be a gate or it could be a door to the garage area, and he's making sure that she knows which gate to stay by and at what time. So he's just making sure that she knows where the bus is going to be leaving from so she makes it on her bus.

Andrew: Cool. And then he reminds her one more time to put on a new bag tag and then he lets her know that they'll make a call when your bus is ready. We'll make a call, what does this mean? We'll make a call when your bus is ready?

Suzanne: Here make a call means that there will be an announcement, usually from the desk or the gate or over the loudspeaker through the terminal to give a call for all the passengers to head over to the gate, because the bus is boarding.

Andrew: And from my experience riding the bus in North America, I wouldn't rely on that call as a good warning for boarding the bus, because riding the bus in North America is, well, it's not the same as riding an airplane. The equipment isn't great in the bus terminal, and those speakers are very, very crackly and it's hard to understand what people say when they make announcements. So don't depend on an announcement over the loudspeakers.



Suzanne: I assume a lot of people would travel to New York City 'cause it's a very popular place to go, and it's very, um, there's a big Port Authority Bus Terminal right in, near Time Square. And let me tell you, it's not a very accessible, information-wise, terminal. So be ready to ask questions and directions, don't be afraid, and don't wait for that call.

Andrew: When I took the bus to New York City one time, I was confused in that bus station and I speak English really well.

Suzanne: Yes, it's really confusing.

Andrew: Yeah, if you are a tourist that doesn't speak English natively, then just **leave extra time**, right? I think that's the best thing to do. Make sure that you're early and you should be cool.

Suzanne: Yeah, that's a good idea.

Andrew: That brings us to the end of this lesson. Talk to you next time.



Detailed Explanations

When's the next bus for [place]? Question

When's the next bus for [place]? is a common question used when buying a bus ticket. When someone goes to the bus station, she usually wants to get a bus leaving at the earliest available time. Therefore, asking for the time of the next bus is a direct way of asking for the earliest available bus one can take.

There are many variations of this question that have similar meanings. If someone wanted to buy a ticket for the next bus regardless of the time, he could say, "Can I buy a ticket for the next bus to [place]?"

Here's one more example with **when's the next bus for [place]?**:

Ticket clerk: Hello, how may I help you?

Ryan: **When's the next bus for Frankfurt?**

Ticket clerk: The next bus is leaving at 7:30.

Ryan: Great, thanks. I'll buy two tickets for 7:30.



Stuffy Adjective

Stuffy is a word used when something doesn't have enough fresh air and the circulation is bad. People who stay in a **stuffy** room feel hot and uncomfortable. In this episode, Andrew says his apartment is **stuffy** because he can't turn on the air conditioner while he is recording.

Here are a couple more examples with **stuffy**:

Tony: Rochelle, it's really **stuffy** in here. Do you mind opening a window?

Rochelle: Oh, sure, no problem.

Reggie: I hate going to weddings.

Monique: Why? They're lovely.

Reggie: No way. The food is weird; I hate dancing; and I have to wear a **stuffy** suit and tie all day. The whole experience makes me uncomfortable.

Monique: Wow, remind me not to invite you to my wedding someday.



Ma'am

Title

Ma'am is a word used to politely talk to a woman. **Ma'am** is similar to the word miss; however, miss refers to a young woman or girl, while **ma'am** (which comes from the word madam) refers to older women of marriageable age.

Here are a couple more examples with **ma'am**:

Ticket clerk: How can I help you today, **ma'am**?

Margaret: I'd like to buy a ticket for the 6:00 bus to Paris.

Ticket clerk: Of course, **ma'am**. That'll be €23, please.

Jovan: Excuse me, **ma'am**?

Akari: Yes?

Jovan: You left your hat on the bench back there. Here you are.

Akari: Oh, thank you. How sweet of you!



Carry-on

Noun

A **carry-on** is a bag that can be physically carried on to a train, bus, or airplane. A **carry-on** is usually a small bag of important belongs, like a purse or a small suitcase. The opposite of a **carry-on** bag is a checked bag. Checked bags must be tagged and stored in a special baggage area.

Here are a couple more examples with **carry-on**:

Attendant: I'm sorry, ma'am. That bag is too big to be a **carry-on**. You'll have to check it and pick it up when you reach your destination.

Misha: Oh, all right. How much does it cost to check the bag?

Attendant: \$25.00.

Pilot: Attention, passengers. Please don't forget to pick up all **carry-on** items before leaving the airplane. Have a nice day and thank you for flying with us.

To tear off

Phrasal verb

To tear off means to rip or remove something. Usually, **to tear off** is used with paper products or other things that are easily torn. You can **tear off** a piece of paper from a notebook or **tear off** a chunk of bread. There are a few common variations of **to tear off**, such as:

Past tense: **tore off** [He **tore off** some toilet paper.]

Past participle: **torn off** [Her necklace **was torn off** by the thief.]

Here are a couple more examples with **to tear off**:

Mohamed: Hello, I'd like to open a bank account.

Bank teller: Go to the ticket stand and **tear off** a number slip. When your number is called, come to the desk.

Mohamed: Yes, thank you.

Jeb: Hey, Connor. Can you **tear off** a piece of notebook paper for me?

Connor: Yeah, no problem. Here you go.

Jeb: Thanks, bro.



To weigh [something]

Verb

To weigh [something] is to find out how heavy something is. Heavy and **weigh** are very similar words, but heavy is an adjective and **weigh** is a verb. **Weigh** is used in more formal measurements; for example, if someone wants to know **exactly** how heavy something is, he wouldn't say, "How heavy is it?" He would say, "How much does it weigh?"

Here are a couple more example with **to weigh [something]**:

Annabelle: Let's buy some apples.

Sebastian: All right. We have **to weigh them** over here first.

Annabelle: OK, it looks like they weigh 0.8 kilograms. That'll cost us \$5.

Sebastian: It's a little pricey, but they look delicious. Let's buy them.

Airline clerk: Place your suitcase here. We must **weigh** your bag. If it's more than 25 kilograms, you will be charged extra.

Charity: Yes, ma'am. I understand.

Airline clerk: OK, it looks like it's 23 kilograms. You're good to go. Just attach this tag to the handle and move it to the conveyer belt. Have a nice flight!

To leave extra time

Phrasal verb

To leave extra time means to leave early enough that you are able to arrive at a destination without stress. Here is a situation:

A man lives 30 minutes from the bus terminal. His bus leaves the bus terminal at 9:00. The man decides to leave his house at 7:50. This **leaves extra time** in case there is traffic, or if he wants to buy a snack at the bus terminal before his departure time.

In this episode, Andrew says that tourists who aren't native English speakers should always **leave extra time** when travelling in case a problem occurs. They should leave early, so that they don't have to worry about missing a bus, train, or airplane.

Here are a couple more examples with **to leave extra time**:

Rashid: Mom, I'm leaving for Vancouver tomorrow at 1:00.

Mom: Honey, there is construction on the road on the way to the train station. Maybe you should go at 12:00. That **leaves extra time** in case of traffic.

Rashid: Oh, right. Good idea. I'll leave at 12:00, then.

Trish: Hey, boss, here's the schedule for your business trip to Montreal.

Boss: Did you remember **to leave extra time** in my schedule in case my meetings run late?

Trish: Yes, I did. I added an extra 30 minutes of break time between each meeting on the schedule, so you have flexibility in making it to all of your engagements on time.

Boss: Great work. See you next Tuesday.



Quiz

1. What is the opposite of a carry-on bag?

- a) a storage bag
- b) a checked bag
- c) a suitcase
- d) an overloaded bag

2. Which is an example of stuffy? Select all that apply.

- a) a teddy bear with too much cotton inside of it
- b) a room with no air conditioning
- c) a man wearing a thick, black suit on a hot day
- d) chicken filled with lots of bread and spices

3. True or false? Ma'am is a title used for younger women, while miss is used for slightly older women of marriageable age.

- a) true
- b) false

4. Which sentence is grammatically correct? Choose all that apply.

- a) It weighs a lot.
- b) It's very weigh.
- c) How much heavy is it?
- d) How much does it weigh?
- e) You must weigh your bag here.

5. What is an example of something you cannot tear off?

- a) a necklace from around your neck
- b) paper from a notebook
- c) a piece of bread from a loaf
- d) peanut butter from a jar



Writing or Discussion Questions

1. **Have you bought a bus ticket in another country before? Was it difficult? Why or why not?**
2. **Can you describe an experience where you had a problem travelling because of the language barrier?**
3. **Are you someone who leaves extra time when you travel, or are you usually late when you leave to go places?**
4. **Do you like public transportation or do you prefer driving? Why?**
5. **If you could only have one small carry-on for a long journey, what would you put in it?**

Quiz Answers

1. b 2. b,c 3. b 4. a,d,e 5. d

Episode credits

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