

Simplified Speech #128 – Grandparents

Episode description

Many have cherished memories of their grandparents, from listening their stories to feeling loved and supported throughout childhood. In this Simplified Speech episode, Andrew and Kassy share stories about their grandparents. Today's conversation might tug on your heartstrings!

The Simplified Speech series features clear, easy to understand conversations between native English speakers. This helps improve your English listening skills and, by listening, helps you speak English naturally. The topics covered are relevant to everyday life, so you can use what you learn right away.

Fun fact

Several countries celebrate Grandparents Day (like Mother's Day or Father's Day). The United States even has an official song for the day, *A Song for Grandma and Grandpa* by Johnny Prill, and an official flower, the forget-me-not.

Expressions included in the study guide

- The name stuck
- Reckon
- My heart burst
- Tug on [one's] heartstrings
- Waterworks
- Hop on the [adjective] train



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. The transcript has been edited for clarity.

Andrew: Simplified Speech #128. Hello there, everyone. My name's Andrew.

Kassy: And I'm Kassy.

Andrew: And this is the Culips English Podcast.

Hello there, Culips listeners. Welcome back to Simplified Speech. This is the Culips series that features clear and easy to understand conversations between two native speakers. And here at Culips, we hope that by listening to the Simplified Speech series, you can improve your English listening and speaking skills. Today I'm joined by my cohost, Kassy. Hey there, Kassy.

Kassy: Hey, Andrew. And hey, listeners. Well, Andrew, I'm looking forward to today's conversation because it's a topic near and dear to my heart. We are talking about grandparents.

Andrew: Yeah, I'm really looking forward to this conversation, Kassy, because we were talking just before we hit record here, and you have some really interesting stories to tell about your grandparents. So I'm really stoked to hear these stories in more detail.

Kassy: We also wanted to give a shout-out to our listener Fatima who left us a nice comment on Castbox. Fatima wrote, "Thanks a lot for creating these amazing episodes. I can't miss any of them." Thanks, Fatima.

Andrew: Thank you, Fatima, for your support. So with that being said, Kassy, I think it's time to get into this topic. We are going to discuss grandparents today. Now, Kassy, unfortunately, my family situation is a little different than most people's, I think, because by the time I was born, three out of the four of my grandparents had already passed away. So both of my mother's parents, I never had the opportunity to meet. And also my father's dad, my dad's dad had passed away before I was born. So I really only knew one of my grandparents, which was my paternal grandmother, who I called Nana, my Nana, And I knew my Nana pretty well. She has passed away now, unfortunately, but she lived until I was a teenager, so I knew my Nana pretty well.

Kassy, what about you? Did you have a relationship with your grandparents or do you have a relationship with your grandparents? Are they still around?

Kassy: Yes, I have a really close relationship with my maternal grandmother who, funnily, we call her Bear.

Andrew: Bear?

Kassy: Yes.

Andrew: Why Bear?

Kassy: There was a kid's book. Do you know the Care Bears?

Andrew: Yeah, of course, the Care Bears cartoon and animated series. Yes.

Kassy: So we originally called—when it was just my sister and I, we called our grandma Gram. But we were the oldest cousins. When our youngest cousins came around, they read this book and they saw a bear in there called Gram Bear. And for some reason, they liked calling her Bear better than Gram, and **it stuck**. So now everybody calls her Bear.

Andrew: OK, that's a cute nickname. And, Kassy, actually, you just sort of hinted about something that I think is interesting in English-speaking places. And that is that there are several names that we can use to call our grandparents. Of course, I don't think too many families call their grandma Bear. That's kind of a cute and unique thing that's special to your family.

But as I mentioned, I called my dad's mom Nana. And I think what a lot of families do is they'll have different names for each of the grandmas so that the kids can keep them separate, right? Because if you just say grandma and you have two grandmas, then it can often be a little bit confusing. Like, which one are you talking about? So a lot of families will use other words like nana, papa, grandma, grandpa, grammie, nanny.

Kassy: My great grandmother was very tiny. So we called her Little Grandma.

Andrew: Little Grandma. OK, so there are different names that we can use to call our grandparents. So, Kassy, you told me before we started recording that you saw your grandparents recently. Could you tell us a little bit about what your visit was like with them?

Kassy: Yeah, of course. So I'm actually visiting my entire family right now. Cousins, grandparents, sisters, but one person in particular was really special. It was my maternal grandfather. He actually divorced my grandma, like, way before I was born. But they decided that, you know, they really wanted to keep a connection for their child and their grandchildren. So he's always been a part of my life, but I haven't seen him in 5 years, since I first came to Korea.

Andrew: Kassy, my grandma, my Nana, like I said, I knew her until I was a teenager. However, the last several years of her life were a little bit rough. Unfortunately, she was ill, and quite old and fragile. So I'm wondering about your grandparents. What's their condition like? Are they healthy?

Kassy: Great question. My friends were really jealous of this growing up, because my grandparents are super young. They had my mom when they were 18.

Andrew: Wow.

Kassy: So they are only like 72 or 73 right now.

Andrew: OK. Just a little bit older than my parents, actually.

Kassy: That's what my friends always say. My Grandma Trentwell, before COVID she travelled all around the world. My grandfather drove 13 hours in a day to get here to see me for a day and a half.

Andrew: Wow.

Kassy: He's dedicated.

Andrew: Well, he probably really missed you if he hadn't seen you for 5 years.

Kassy: That's right. But what's really cool about him is most of my family are Yankees. Yankees are people that live in the north, northern part of the USA. But my grandfather is a southerner. And he has a special kind of accent, Andrew.

Andrew: Where is he from exactly down south?

Kassy: He's from Arkansas.

Andrew: Arkansas. OK, the home of Bill Clinton. He is the only other person from Arkansas who I know of. Kassy, what does your grandpa talk like, because I know that the southern accent is kind of unique? Could you maybe give an imitation of how your grandpa speaks?

Kassy: Yeah, maybe he'll say, "I **reckon** I'm gonna head down to the corner store and pick up a cup of joe."

Andrew: I **reckon**. What does that mean, I **reckon**?

Kassy: That means I think or I'll probably do that. Yeah.

Andrew: Yeah. And a cup of joe is a cup of coffee, right?

Kassy: And he loves to play his guitar, which is a guitar.

Andrew: Guitar. Yeah. The southern accent guitar, a little different stress on the first syllable. So your grandpa's a guitar player, then?

Kassy: Amazing. If any of our listeners know Elvis Presley or Johnny Cash, my grandfather sounds just like them.

Andrew: Really? Oh, that's awesome. Yeah, I love that style of music, that kind of 1950s American country folk sound, a little bit of rock and roll thrown in as well. That's a really cool sound. So, did your grandpa bring his guitar and play for you?

Kassy: Oh, yes, he did.

Andrew: Really? Wow.

Kassy: I was so excited. And I didn't realize how much I missed it. But, Andrew, he was two songs in and I just started bawling, like tears running down my cheeks. It was so nostalgic and my **heart just burst** hearing it. It was beautiful.

Andrew: What song did he play?

Kassy: First, he played all my favourite Johnny Cash songs, *Folsom Prison* and *Ring of Fire*. But there's one song that holds a special place in my heart. He wrote a song for me and my sister when we were young.

Andrew: Wow. OK.

Kassy: And it's about us.

Andrew: Wow. So is that the one that really **tugged on your heartstrings** and got the **waterworks** going?

Kassy: I was crying way before that. But my sister joined in when her verse was sung.

Andrew: Now, Kassy, you were really on the ball and you didn't know that we were going to do this for the podcast, but you actually recorded some of your grandfather's guitar playing. And you're kind enough to share it with our audience. So we're going to play a little clip here of your grandfather playing guitar and singing and we'll take a listen to that right now.

Kassy's grandpa (singing): Oh, when I'm feeling low she makes me happy. And when I'm feeling down she picks me up. Well, just to see her smile, clearly, bright, and wide. She's a sassy little lassie, that's my Kassy. Yes, she's a sassy little lassie, that's my Kassy. She's the apple of my eye, I can't deny it. Well, she's my pride and joy who means all the world. She's a sassy little lassie, that's my Kassy.

Andrew: Wow, Kassy, you were right, your grandpa sounds awesome.

Kassy: I'm almost tearing up again.

Andrew: Well, you know, Kassy, unfortunately, growing up, I didn't have the same kind of relationship that you have with your grandparents, just because my grandparents weren't around. Of course, I heard lots of stories about my grandparents. And I think they sounded like super interesting people. My mom's dad, my maternal grandpa, he was Scottish from Scotland. However, he immigrated to Canada and also lived in the USA for a little while. He was in the navy during World War II and fought in the war. He was a jack of all trades, and apparently was really handy. He was an engineer. He had a hobby of raising chinchillas and selling chinchillas. He sounded like a pretty eccentric, kind of interesting individual so it's a bummer that I never got to meet him.

And the same goes for my other grandparents, as well, that I never got to meet. However, I had some other family members. I have an aunt, on my dad's side, actually, my dad's only sister, who is I think 11 or 12 years older than my dad. She is such a fantastic person in my life, my aunt. And although she's not really, like, grandma age for me, she was like the kind of grandma figure in my life. I think she really stepped up and filled that grandma-like role. So although I never called her grandma or anything like that, I think she kind of played the role for me as an older relative that I'm really close to. So I'm super thankful to my aunt and also her husband, my uncle. They kind of stepped in and provided like a grandma/grandpa-like relationship in my life. And we did lots of fun things when we were kids. They would take us camping, and we'd spend time at their house. And I'm still really close with them today.

So, listeners, don't worry, it's not like I missed out on this kind of grandparent/grandchild relationship. I think I had a really close relationship with my other family members that filled that missing spot.

Kassy: Yeah, it's total opposite for me, Andrew. You know, you only had one that you saw closely. I think I have, you know, six. I don't know how common it is in Canada to divorce, divorce and remarry, but it's very common here in the US. I've had grandparents just **hop in the family train** throughout the years.

Andrew: Yeah, that's really interesting. Well, you know, my Nana, who I mentioned earlier, she was actually divorced. And I had a kind of step-grandpa growing up, as well. Although I wasn't very close with him, I did have a kind of step-grandfather for a little while there when I was growing up. So, yeah, same thing happened in my family, Kassy.

Kassy: Andrew, one thing I actually think about when I think of grandparents is, I think about the future because, you know, you hear scientists or doctors saying that our lifespans are getting longer. And I can just imagine, you know, a couple generations from now, maybe everybody will have, like, 12 grandparents or something, because, you know, people will be living longer and have your grandparent, great-grandparent, great-great-grandparent, grandparents, it could be really different in a couple generations.

Andrew: Yeah, that's fascinating to think about. I know that in my family, my immediate family, we seem to have children very late in life, which is why I think my grandparents already passed away by the time I was born, because my mom was 34 or 35, when she had me. So that's later in life. And I'm 37, I don't have any children. So if I do have children, then it will be at a late age, as well. And that's just kind of how my family does things.

However, I have a cousin and his side of the family is much different. They seem to have kids when they're young. And that cousin, on his mom's side of the family, which isn't connected to my family through a blood relationship, that side of his family has children very young, and he actually has a grandma and a great-grandma. So there are four generations on that side of the family. And, yeah, Kassy, I can only imagine as medical technology develops even further and we have new scientific breakthroughs and longevity, maybe 250 or 200 years becomes a reality, then we're going to have great-grandmas, great-great-grandmas, great-great-great-grandmas. Family gatherings, like Thanksgiving and Christmas, they're going to be crazy. There's going to be too many people at the house.

Kassy: Yeah. You'd be surprised, though, Andrew, because I feel like people are having fewer and fewer children. So, you know, it might be the same amount of people, just more and more generations. But who knows?

Andrew: Well, Kassy, I think we can wrap up our conversation here. But, actually, in a future Culips episode, I would like to talk more about this topic of aging and longevity, because I think there are many, many things to talk about. So maybe we'll save the rest of this chat for a future episode. But for today, we will finish things here. So thank you for listening, everyone. We hope you learned a lot with this episode today.

That's all for now. Talk to you next time.

Detailed Explanations

The name stuck

Idiom

The name stuck is used when someone gives a person or thing a nickname, and people continue to use that name. For example, if your parents called you “honey” instead of your name as a child and they continued to do so as you grew up, you could say that **the name stuck**. People often use this idiom when explaining how they got their nickname.

When it’s obvious that the conversation is about a name, you can say simply **it stuck**. In this episode, Kassy says her cousins “liked calling [their grandmother] Bear better than Gram, and **it stuck**. So now everybody calls her Bear.”

Here are a few more examples with **the name stuck**:

Eric: So I just found out that your name is actually Penelope. It’s not Penny?

Penelope: Nope! It’s Penelope.

Eric: Why does everyone call you Penny, then? Isn’t that kind of annoying?

Penelope: Not at all! I’m used to it. My family has called me Penny for my entire life.

Eric: Really?

Penelope: Yeah! I guess when I was born, my brother couldn’t say Penelope so my parents switched to calling me Penny so he could, you know, say my name and stuff. And, yeah, **the name just kind of stuck**. I probably wouldn’t even respond to Penelope!

Samiya: Oh! Candy-beansies! I’m going to get a whole bag of these.

Brett: What? Candy-beansies? You mean jelly beans? Why are you calling them that?

Samiya: That’s what my mom called them when I was little and by the time I found out they’re called jelly beans, it was too late. The **name stuck** in my head!

Reckon

Verb (dialect)

Reckon means to think, suppose, believe, or expect, depending on the context. You can make it a statement, showing that you agree or that you think a specific way. You can ask others “you **reckon**?” as a way to see what they think. Overall, **reckon** has gone out of style. So, to many native English speakers, it sounds old-fashioned and archaic.

The meaning and frequency of its usage depend on where you are in the world. In some southern American states, it's part of the regional dialect. There it means to suppose, to think, or to decide. So “I **reckon** I'll head out” would mean “I suppose I'll head out” or “I'm going to head out.” However, in the United Kingdom and British English, **reckon** is used in its more serious context. In the United Kingdom, **I reckon** means to take account of, consider, or calculate.

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

Fern: Mamma says there's more of those tomatoes out toward the back of the field. She needs us to go out there and grab her a bushel.

Billy-Bob: Wasn't she out there this afternoon?

Fern: She was, but she forgot to get 'em.

Billy-Bob: I **reckon** we'd better get a move on, then, if we're gonna have time to wash up before dinner.

Fern: I **reckon** you're right.

Rais: So, we've got everything on our list, right?

Nicole: I think so. Diapers, baby wipes, bottles, burping blankets.

Rais: And a new outfit.

Nicole: Of course a new outfit! Look at this. Little Sherry is going to look so cute!!

Rais: Right, of course. And I agree. Sherry will look adorable. Now, how much do you **reckon** this will cost?

Nicole: Oh, I dunno. Around \$80, I'd guess.

Rais: Well, that's OK. It's in our budget. Let's go before we see another cute outfit.

My heart burst Idiom

My heart burst means to be so emotional that you can't contain it. The feeling is overwhelming. Usually it's a positive emotion, like happiness or joy. Your heart expands with excitement, happiness, or joy. Sometimes it can be a negative emotion, like sadness, though that is less common. The idiom comes from the way bubbles or balloons burst if they're filled too full.

Kassy mentions listening to her grandfather play songs and starting to cry. "It was so nostalgic and **my heart just burst** hearing it," she says. Kassy was both happy and sad, and the feelings were overwhelming.

Here are a couple more examples with **my heart burst**:

Gabriella: Christmas is only 3 days away! I can't wait. I'm so excited.

Xiang: I'm looking forward to the time off. I need a break.

Gabriella: Does your family celebrate Christmas?

Xiang: Not really, no. We exchange gifts, though. And since we moved here, we do the whole family dinner thing.

Gabriella: It's a great holiday, I think! My favourite part is when the kids open their gifts. **My heart bursts** at the sight of them opening their presents and their eyes lighting up. It's wonderful.

Ali: You have that meeting with the director today, right?

Dominic: Yeah. I'm so nervous, man. If this goes well, I'll get the promotion. Ginny and I will be able to buy that house we've been looking at!

Ali: Listen to me. You can do this! You've totally got this. I'll be there, so anytime you get stuck, look at me.

Dominic: Thanks, man. That means a lot. Like, **my heart's bursting** right now, knowing you've got my back.

Tug on [one's] heartstrings Idiom

To **tug on [one's] heartstrings** means to stir one's emotions. When something **tugs on your heartstrings**, it makes you feel sympathy, empathy, pity, or sadness.

This idiom is used for things that elicit very strong feelings. For example, an advertisement that makes you cry or tear up **tugged on your heartstrings**. The idiom comes from the medieval ages; they believed tendons supported the heart. They called these tendons heartstrings.

You can replace tug with pull or pluck: **pull on one's heartstrings**, or **pluck at one's heartstrings**. You can also remove the preposition on: **tug one's heartstrings**.

Here are a couple more examples with **tug on [one's] heartstrings**:

Victoria: Well, that wasn't exactly what I was expecting from the movie trailer.

Troy: What do you mean?

Victoria: It was all action! Like, way more action than they put in the trailers, or the books for that matter.

Troy: Sure, it wasn't a movie that **tugs on your heartstrings**, but it was still good! The action made it better, I think.

Victoria: Yeah, yeah. It was good. But it wasn't what I expected, you know?

Noora: I'm really looking forward to the concert tonight.

Hidayat: Me too. I haven't heard Rosa play live before. I've heard her music, and her piano playing is fantastic.

Noora: It really is. I don't know why, but her playing always **plucks at my heartstrings**.

Hidayat: I like to listen to her music when I'm meditating. It puts me in this Zen-like state.

Waterworks

Slang

Waterworks is a slang term for tears. **Waterworks** can describe any stage of crying. It can refer to the source of tears, tearing up (starting to cry), or weeping. **Waterworks** is always plural.

In this episode, Kassy shared a story about listening to her grandfather's song. Andrew asked, "So is that the one that really tugged on your heartstrings and got the **waterworks** going?" He's asking if it made her emotional and if it made her cry.

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

Henry: Whoa, what's with the **waterworks**?

Elizabeth: It's this book. This great character died, and it's just so said. I can't stop crying!

Henry: Oh, no. That sucks. I'll grab you some tissues.

Elizabeth: That would be great, thanks. I got tears on my book!

Arata: Ugh, I can't stand Karen from the billing department!

Sung-Min: Karen? The bossy one who started 3 months ago? What did she do this time?

Arata: We got into an argument in the break room. She took the hot chocolate packet I'd set aside while I was boiling my water. Just took it, right in front of me. When I demanded she give it back, she yelled at me! The manager came in when I yelled back, and Karen started to cry! She said I was bullying her. Me!

Sung-Min: That's sounds like Karen. She turns on the **waterworks** whenever the managers are around so she'll get her way.

Arata: It's so manipulative! And I'm so angry that it works!

Sung-Min: Same here.

Hop on the [adjective] train

Expression

Hop on the [adjective] train means to join an activity or group described by the adjective. In this episode, Kassy says, “I’ve had grandparents just **hop in the family train** throughout the years.” She means that new people have joined her family and filled the role of grandparents throughout the years. You could also say **hop in the [adjective] train** or **ride the [adjective] train**.

There are a few versions of this expression. A popular one is **hop on the gravy train**. This means to experience ease, success, or profit, especially if it is undeserved. Another is **hop on the bandwagon**, which means to join an activity that has recently become popular.

Here are a couple more examples with **hop on the [adjective] train**:

Alexander: What are you doing tomorrow night?

Kira: Nothing, why?

Alexander: I got invited to ride in a hot air balloon and I can bring a friend. Want to come?

Kira: Uh, I don’t know. Being suspended in the air with just hot air keeping us up sounds crazy to me.

Alexander: I think you should **hop on this crazy train** with me. At least then I’ll have someone to grab when I’m terrified.

Kira: Ha, OK, I’ll go with you for support.

Minato: I finally bought some yeast!

Wu: Yeast? You gonna bake some bread or something?

Minato: Yup! I’m **hopping on the bread-making train**, finally.

Wu: You’re only a year late, but, hey, at least you’ll get bread out of it.

Minato: It’s never too late to learn how to make bread!

Quiz

- 1. Which of the following means crying, weeping, or tearing up?**
 - a) fireworks
 - b) watertruck
 - c) waterworks
 - d) firetruck

- 2. If something tugs on your heartstrings, that means it:**
 - a) makes you feel sympathy, empathy, pity, or sadness
 - b) physically pulls on your heart muscles
 - c) pulls you around by your shirt
 - d) attaches strings to your heart and tugs them

- 3. Which of the following might you say after explaining how someone got a nickname that is still used to this day?**
 - a) the name stacks
 - b) the name sucks
 - c) the name stuck
 - d) the name stunk

- 4. If someone says, "I reckon it'll rain today," what do they mean?**
 - a) they want it to rain
 - b) they hope it'll rain
 - c) they calculated the humidity and know it will rain
 - d) they think it is going to rain today

- 5. If something fills you with joy, which of the following could you say?**
 - a) my heart is popping with joy
 - b) my heart is bursting with joy
 - c) my heart is pounding with joy
 - d) my heart is breaking with joy

Writing and Discussion Questions

1. Do you have a nickname? How did you get your nickname and why do you think it stuck?
2. Describe a time when you felt like your heart was going to burst with happiness or joy.
3. Describe a time when something pulled on your heartstrings.
4. What was the last movie, TV show, or book that made you turn on the waterworks? Why was it so sad?
5. Have you ever hopped on an [adjective] train or bandwagon? What was it for and why did you decide to try it?

Quiz Answers

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

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