TRANSCRIPT · EPISODE 230

What Does That Even Mean? “I’ll Think About It”: Did They Mean Yes?

English learning resource · EN

Full episode script · English

85 lines

Study task: Listen again and notice the expressions you studied.

Imagine I invite a classmate to a food market on Saturday.

She smiles and says, "I'll think about it."

In my head, I hear: almost yes.

This is an imagined situation.

It did not really happen, but the misunderstanding is easy to recognise.

So I choose a time, and I write it in my calendar.

I even tell my friends we are going.

Saturday morning comes, and I wait.

I check my phone again and again, and I have no message.

So, what does that even mean?

Did she mean yes?

Welcome to What Does That Even Mean?

I'm Martin.

And I'm Julia.

Juan, that is a very normal question.

Yes, and the honest answer is: it depends.

"I'll think about it" is not a yes, and it is not always a no.

It does not give you a clear answer.

The person might need time, or they might be avoiding a direct refusal.

The meaning depends on tone, context, and what happens next.

So how can I understand it better?

Let's compare three phrases.

First, "I'll think about it."

It can give the person time without making a promise.

For example, someone asks, "Do you want to join our book club?"

The answer is, "I'll think about it, but can I see the books first?"

That question can suggest interest, though it is not a yes.

Second, "Let me get back to you."

The person may need to check a calendar or ask someone else.

Often it also means they plan to reply.

For example, "Can you finish the report on Friday?"

The answer is, "Let me get back to you, because I need to check with my manager."

Third, "I'm not sure yet."

This usually expresses uncertainty.

It does not tell you everything the person is thinking.

So none of these phrases is a clear no.

Not by themselves.

But we can look for clues.

Listen to the voice.

Is it warm, or flat?

Does the person ask questions about the plan?

Do they give a reason or a time?

Those details can give you clues, but they do not prove what someone feels.

A quiet voice or a smile can mean different things to different people.

Sometimes people use these phrases because they find it hard to say no directly.

And sometimes they truly need time.

Both are possible, so one phrase alone cannot tell you.

And what should I do, then?

You can ask a friendly follow-up question.

For example, "No problem, could you let me know by Thursday?"

That is polite, and it is clear.

It gives the other person a clear way to answer.

That is much better than my plan.

If I could go back to Thursday, I would ask her then.

In my example, I treated an uncertain answer as a yes.

In that version of the story, she replies that Saturday does not work.

She suggests the following week instead.

Then I would know the plan, and she would have room to say no.

Now let's try a challenge.

We will give you four situations.

Decide what the person probably means.

Number one: "Let me get back to you after I check my calendar."

The person needs information, and they probably plan to answer.

You can wait a short time, and then ask again.

Number two: "I'll think about it," said in a flat voice, with no questions.

This is unclear.

It could be interest, or it could be a polite way to say no.

So the best move is a friendly follow-up with a day.

Number three: "I'm not sure yet, but I'll know on Friday."

The words express uncertainty, and the person gave you a date.

You can wait until Friday and then follow up.

Number four: "I'll think about it," with a smile, and then the person asks, "What time does it start?"

Questions about details may suggest interest.

But it is still not a promise, so a short follow-up helps.

So here is my plan.

Notice the context, then ask a friendly follow-up.

That works well.

Remember, this is not a rule that fits every person or every culture.

It is a way to listen better and to ask better questions.

You can read all three phrases in the transcript on yourenglishtoolbox.com.

Read them, listen again, and notice the clues.

The link is in the description.

Thank you for listening.

See you next time.

Bye for now.