

Catch Word #248 – Thanks, but no thanks

Episode description

In this interesting Catch Word episode, Andrew and Kassy will teach you some useful expressions to use when talking about things you don't want to do.

Catch Word is a great series that focuses on key vocabulary and phrases used in all sorts of common everyday English conversations. This episode focuses on phrases that you might use when talking about things you don't want to do or places you don't want to go. Tune in to learn these new phrases and boost your English fluency to the next level!

Fun fact

Life is too short to waste time doing things you really don't want to do, so the next time your friend invites you to a party that you don't want to go to or begs you to join a club that really doesn't hold your interest, just say NO! The relief of skipping these events will far outweigh the potential awkwardness or disappointment of saying no to your friend.

Expressions included in the study guide

- Thanks, but no thanks
- To give off a weird vibe
- Suit yourself
- To rag on [someone]
- Wouldn't be caught dead
- Rather die than [something]



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: Hello there, everyone. My name's Andrew.

Kassy: And I'm Kassy.

Andrew: And this is the Culips English Podcast.

Hello there, friends. Welcome back to Culips. Today we have a Catch Word episode for you. Now Catch Word is the Culips series where we teach you vocabulary, could be idioms or phrasal verbs or expressions, that will help you improve your English listening and speaking. And in this episode, we'll teach you about two idiomatic expressions that you can use to talk about things that you absolutely don't want to do. So this is gonna be a fun episode. And to help me with it is my cohost Kassy. Hey there, Kassy.

Kassy: Hey, Andrew. And hey, listeners. We're gonna kick this episode off with a shout-out. One of our listeners from Japan named Yuto left us a five-star rating and a nice review on Apple Podcasts. Yuto wrote, "Thank you very much, Culips. I am a Japanese junior high school student." Wow, junior high. "And a heavy Culips listener. I love to listen to Culips and have been listening to your episodes every morning. I feel that I can speak better in my English lessons. And I hope that you will keep going on with new episodes." Thank you, Yuto. That's really kind.

Andrew: Yeah, thanks, Yuto. And I'm impressed. You're only in junior high, but your English seems excellent. So keep up the good work. And don't worry, we're going to keep recording new episodes, as well. Now, listeners, if you'd like to get a shout-out in an upcoming Culips episode, just like Yuto did, then please leave us a five-star rating and a positive review on Apple Podcasts or whatever platform you use to listen to us. And doing this will really just help more English learners from around the world find us and study with us.

There's a transcript and a study guide for this episode that's available for all Culips members. And we highly recommend checking it out and following along with the guide while you listen to Kassy and I here today because, really, it's the best way to study with us.

Now the guide is available for all Culips members. And when you're a Culips member, you'll get access to lots of other special bonuses, as well, like an invitation to our monthly livestreams and access to our members-only series, the Fluency Files. So if that sounds good to you, then you can find out all the information that you need and sign up by visiting our website, Culips.com.

So with that out of the way, Kassy, I think we can get started with this episode. And the first expression that we are going to teach our listeners is a fun one. It is **thanks, but no thanks**. **Thanks, but no thanks**. And could you break this one down for us? What does it mean exactly? **Thanks, but no thanks**.

Kassy: Yeah, so **thanks, but no thanks** is a way for you to say that you're not interested in doing something. And it can come off as kind of rude or sarcastic. And you usually use it to talk about declining an offer that you had zero interest whatsoever in doing.

Andrew: OK, perfect in declining an offer. Yeah. So it would be a little bit rude to say this to somebody's face, right? Like, Kassy, if I asked you this question, if I said, "Hey, Kassy, after we finished recording this Culips episode, you want to go grab a coffee and hang out for a bit?" And you said?

Kassy: **Thanks, but no thanks**.

Andrew: Yeah, I would be like, what? Wow, that came out of nowhere. Like, that was so rude. That's how I would feel, right? It would just be way too strong of a way to say that. But, Kassy, maybe I asked you to go to the café after we finished recording and you said, "Sorry, I'm kind of busy. I think I'm just gonna head home after we finished recording." OK, no problem. But then later, you're talking to your sister, maybe, and you're like, oh my god, Andrew asked me to go to the café with him after we recorded and I was like **thanks, but no thanks**. I don't want to hang out with him. That's the kind of situation, right? You would use it to talk about saying no to somebody, but not directly to their face, when you're talking with somebody else, maybe behind their back, almost, a little bit, that kind of situation.

Kassy: So this expression is a little bit rude and sarcastic. But you're not directly being rude and sarcastic. You're doing it as kind of a joke to someone else, not the person that you're declining.

Andrew: Yeah. So the meaning is you just really don't want to do it, right? **Thanks, but no thanks** means there is no way that I want to do that thing.

Kassy: I think the best way our listeners can understand this is by listening to an example situation. Isn't that right, Andrew?

Andrew: Yeah, that's a great idea. So let's take a listen to the first conversation example now.

Friend 1: How was work today?

Friend 2: The worst. This creepy customer asked me out on a date.

Friend 1: Oh, no. So what did you do?

Friend 2: Well, I was, like, **thanks, but no thanks**, and told him I already had a boyfriend.

Friend 1: And then what happened?

Friend 2: I gave him his coffee, and he left the café.

Friend 1: Nice. Sounds like you handled that situation perfectly.

Andrew: So in that example conversation, we heard two friends talking about their day. And one of the friends had a really weird experience happen. While she was working at the café, a customer came in and asked her out on a date. And she didn't want to go out on a date with that customer because he was creepy. And, Kassy, we should break this down, because it's a really common word to use to describe guys, especially creepy guys, creepy men. We don't usually use it to describe women as often, but I guess we technically could. But what does that mean, Kassy? I'm really interested to hear your perspective on this. What is a creepy guy like?

Kassy: It's just a guy that **gives off a weird vibe**. And, unfortunately, I really do think it's based on your preference of attractiveness. If you find a guy really hot or handsome and he hits on you, he flirts with you, you might not find him creepy. But if a guy comes in that you're, like, he's not my style, and he starts flirting with you and asking you out, you're gonna be like, ew, what a creep.

Andrew: Right. So I guess a creepy guy is just some guy that gives you kind of like romantic attention that's unwanted, right? It's like you're not into it. And as a result, he's creepy.

So, in the example conversation, then, this creepy guy asked the barista out. The barista didn't want to go on the date so she said, I already have a boyfriend. But then later when she was talking about the incident with her friend, she said, **thanks, but no thanks**. There's no way I want to go on a date with that creepy guy.

Kassy: Yeah, she used that expression to emphasize how little she wanted to go on a date with that creepy customer.

Andrew: Let's listen to example conversation #2 now.

Kassy: OK.

Sister: Want to come over for dinner on Saturday?

Brother: Yeah, sure. What are you going to order?

Sister: I'm not ordering any food. I'm planning to cook.

Brother: You're planning to cook? Don't you remember what happened last time?

Sister: Yeah. But I've been watching a lot of cooking videos on YouTube since then. I'm going to make lasagna. It'll be delicious.

Brother: You know, **thanks, but no thanks**. You said the same thing last time and, no offence, but it was terrible.

Sister: Fine. **Suit yourself**. I guess I'll just enjoy a whole lasagna by myself.

Kassy: So this conversation is actually between a brother and a sister. The sister is inviting her brother over for dinner to cook for him. And he is like **thanks, but no thanks** because apparently she is a horrible cook. And in this case, he can use **thanks, but no thanks** to her face because they're siblings. This is, you know, one of the ways that they **rag on each other**. **Rag on each other** is like tease each other. And he's not afraid of hurting her feelings by saying it right, Andrew?

Andrew: Yeah, exactly. In a close relationship, like between a brother and a sister, especially when there is no malice or hate behind the comment, then it's all right. But you wouldn't want to say **thanks, but no thanks** to, you know, your boss or something. If your boss was like, would you mind staying behind an hour to help us with finishing this project up? And you said, **thanks, but no thanks**. You'd probably have to find a new job pretty soon.

Well, I think we can move on to expression #2 for this episode. And it is a related expression. It has a similar meaning, but it's a little bit different. Let's break it down for everyone. The expression is I **wouldn't be caught dead** doing something. I **wouldn't be caught dead** doing something. So for example, Kassy, I **wouldn't be caught dead** hanging out with Paul, or I **wouldn't be caught dead** wearing that purple hat. I **wouldn't be caught dead** dancing in that nightclub, something like that. So could you break this one down and tell us what it means?

Kassy: Yeah, so I **wouldn't be caught dead** doing something essentially means that you really don't want to do something, usually because it would cause embarrassment towards you, or shame towards you, or you know, it would ruin your image.

Andrew: Yeah. So it's not that you don't want to do it because it's difficult. It's more like it would be embarrassing, right? So if your boss asked you, hey, do you mind staying behind an hour late today to help us finish up this project? And you said, "Oh, I **wouldn't be caught dead** helping you do this project." Then, again, you'd probably have to find a new job. You'd probably get fired. But it wouldn't also, it wouldn't really fit that context because that means you're, like, too embarrassed to do the project.

Kassy: Yeah, that's right. Usually, if I were to use this expression, it would be talking about, you know, some clothes I didn't want to wear or some place I didn't want to go to or some activity that I really, really, really didn't want to do.

Andrew: Yeah, exactly. And again, the emphasis here is why don't you want to do it? Well, because it would be embarrassing to do.

Kassy, can you think of any examples in your life? What is something that you **wouldn't be caught dead** doing?

Kassy: Honestly, now that I'm in my, you know, mid-20s—kind of up for anything. But when I was in high school, oh my gosh, I **wouldn't have been caught dead** doing so many things. Wearing a certain clothing brand over another. Going to a place in the mall where I knew everybody else went and I didn't want to go there because I wanted to seem different and cool, which I totally wasn't.

Andrew: Yeah, I think that's a good point. When I hear this expression being used, I think a lot of, like, teenagers, younger people. When you're a teenager, a lot of things are super embarrassing that are not so embarrassing once you're older. You're absolutely right about that. And I also think of maybe, like, rich people or really stuck-up people, like, I **wouldn't be caught dead** driving in a Ford car. Like, I need to take my Lamborghini everywhere, right? Kind of like rich or stuck-up people, when they are looking at how just regular, everyday people live, sometimes they could think that might be embarrassing. So I don't know if I've ever heard somebody say that in real life. But definitely in movies and stuff you'll hear this kind of expression being used.

Kassy: I think you could use it for talking about places that are really crowded, too, like I **wouldn't be caught dead** at a beach during spring break. You know, during spring break beaches are crowded with drunk, young 20-somethings or teenage kids. I would **rather die than be in the same place as them during spring break**.

Andrew: Yeah, that's a great point. So if you want to use this expression with an action, like doing something, then we have to use that gerund form, right? I **wouldn't be caught dead** going to the mall during a Black Friday sale. Actually, that's probably true for me, actually. But we can also use it when talking about locations. I **wouldn't be caught dead** at the beach during spring break. I **wouldn't be caught dead** at a music festival during the hottest day in August, something like that.

Kassy: Shall we take a listen to our first example conversation?

Andrew: Yeah, let's do it.

Friend 1: Need a ride home?

Friend 2: No, I'm fine. I'll just take the bus.

Friend 1: The bus? Come on, just ride with me. We're going in the same direction anyway.

Friend 2: No offence. I hate to say it but I **wouldn't be caught dead** riding in your old beater.

Friend 1: What? What's wrong with it?

Friend 2: That thing is a piece of junk. It rattles like crazy, barely can go the speed limit, and blasts out exhaust like a factory.

Friend 1: Well, if that's how you feel, then you can just take the bus.

Friend 2: I will. If you ever upgrade your car, let me know. Then you can give me a ride.

Andrew: So in this example conversation, we hear two students talking. And one student refuses a ride. She says I **wouldn't be caught dead** riding in your old beater. And a beater is just like a really old car that is almost ready to go to the junkyard, right? It's got just a little bit of life in it. But often, they look really bad. And this car rattles and doesn't work very well. So that student, she just didn't want to ride in that car. She refused and said, I **wouldn't be caught dead** riding in your old beater.

Now, Kassy, another thing that we should mention is kind of like what this expression means on a deeper level. Like, what it means is I don't want to do it, right? But if we were to break it down, I **wouldn't be caught dead**. What it technically means is even if I were dead, I still wouldn't want to do it. That's how much I don't want to do it, right?

Kassy: Which is pretty—yeah.

Andrew: Pretty extreme.

Kassy: Yes.

Andrew: Because when you're dead, you have no feelings and you don't care about anything, because you're not around anymore. But even if you're dead, you don't want to do it. It's that kind of meaning. So it's very strong.

Kassy: Very similar to the expression I'd **rather die than bla**, which is also very severe.

Andrew: Yeah, I'd rather die than ride in your car with you, very harsh. What do you think about saying this to somebody face like that? I hate to say it, but I **wouldn't be caught dead** riding in your old beater. But what do you feel like the relationship is there?

Kassy: Yeah, again, I would never say this unless it's with someone that I'm really close to and I'm not afraid of you know, like, severely hurting their feelings. It's more of a sarcastic, you know, teasing kind of nature.

Andrew: Yeah, that's a good point. It's more like a sarcastic comment than a serious comment that you would say to someone. If you say it in a joking, fun, loving way, then it's probably OK. But if you're serious, then it can have a very harsh meaning. Absolutely.

Kassy: Yeah. I don't know if this is true in every culture, every language, but especially in the United States, Canada, and I believe in Korea, too, I find that the meaner you are to your friends, the more you like them, actually. I feel like I say the worst things to my friends, but it's all in jest.

Andrew: Yeah, it's absolutely true, right? Because when you're not close with someone, then you're always polite and always nice. But that kind of **ragging on people** and teasing people and cutting people down, that is a sign of closeness. Absolutely, I agree with that.

Kassy, why don't we listen to the final conversation example for this episode?

Kassy: Let's do it.

Coworker 1: Did you see what Ralph was wearing in the office today?

Coworker 2: You must mean the orange suit?

Coworker 1: Yes.

Coworker 2: What in the world was he thinking?

Coworker 1: I have no idea. He must have got it as a gift or something. Otherwise, why would anyone wear something so ugly?

Coworker 2: Right? I **wouldn't be caught dead** wearing a suit like that.

Coworker 1: Yeah, me neither.

Kassy: OK, so in this conversation, we have a guy called Ralph who shows up to work wearing an outrageous orange suit. And his coworkers mentioned to each other that they **wouldn't be caught dead** wearing a suit like that. That suit was so outrageous, so ridiculously ugly that they couldn't even fathom wearing it. They would rather be dead than wear it in public.

Andrew: Yeah, so it must have been just a very ugly suit. Poor Ralph. Maybe he's colour-blind or something and didn't even notice.

Kassy: Poor Ralph.

Andrew: Well, listeners, that brings us to the end of today's episode. We hope that you enjoyed it and we hope that you learned some new expressions that you can use to improve your English vocabulary.

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If you have a question or a comment or a suggestion for an upcoming Culips episode, then we would love to hear from you. You can reach us at our email address, contact@Culips.com.

That's it for now, but we'll be back soon with another brand-new episode. Take care and we'll talk to you then. Bye, everyone.

Kassy: See ya.

Detailed Explanations

Thanks, but no thanks

Phrase

The phrase **thanks, but no thanks** is most often used sarcastically or humorously amongst friends. If you say **thanks, but no thanks** in a sarcastic way, it means that you are not really grateful for an offer and you want to make a joke about how much you don't like the idea. For example, if a friend asks you to go to a Justin Bieber concert and you really don't like his music, you might say, "Ugh, **thanks, but no thanks**. You have fun, though." This response implies that you really do not want to go and you're turning your friend's invitation down in a slightly rude but humorous fashion.

Here is one more example with **thanks, but no thanks**:

Ryne: Hey, wanna go see the new Black Widow movie with me on Friday?

Theresa: **Thanks, but no thanks.** Marvel is so overrated.

Ryne: C'mon! Marvel movies are the best. They're action-packed and hilarious, and they've got super-famous actors in them.

Theresa: Sure, I guess, but they are also all the same. I could take a clip of one of the movies and it would honestly fit into the storyline of any of the other Marvel movies. They're fun to watch in the moment, but completely forgettable.

Ryne: Wow, I didn't know you had such strong opinions about superhero movies.

Theresa: I have strong opinions about everything.

To give off a weird vibe

Phrase

A **vibe** is a sense or feeling you have towards something or someone. For example, a person who is open, friendly, and easygoing will usually give off **good vibes**, while a person who is grumpy and confrontational will give off **bad vibes**. If someone were to give off **weird vibes**, it means their behaviour or appearance makes others feel uneasy or uncomfortable. You might **give off weird vibes** if you stand too close to someone, if you have bad hygiene, or if you act awkwardly in social situations.

In this episode, Kassy says that creepy guys **give off weird vibes**. Guys are considered creepy when they do things towards women that make women feel uncomfortable, such as staring at them too long, being unable to hold a proper conversation, or following them around.

Here are a couple more examples with **to give off a weird vibe**:

Franny: How did your date go yesterday?

Mimi: Eh, not so great. The guy kinda **gave off a weird vibe**.

Franny: Really? How so?

Mimi: Well, nothing too crazy. Honestly, he was very nice, almost too nice. Sometimes I couldn't tell if he was telling the truth or just saying things that I wanted to hear.

Franny: Isn't that what every guy tries to do on a first date?

Mimi: Maybe, but he seemed different. He also made way too much eye contact. He would look directly into my eyes while we talked and he barely blinked.

Franny: Hmmm ... That does sound a little creepy.

Jared: How's the house hunting going?

Billy: Oh, I've got a story for you! I went to check out a house yesterday that was **giving off the weirdest vibes**. Guess what I found out later? Somebody died in it a year ago. People think it's haunted. Spooky, huh?

Jared: That is pretty spooky. I take it you won't be buying that one?

Suit yourself Phrase

The phrase **suit yourself** is a reply that you might give if you don't agree with someone, but you are done arguing with them. **Suit yourself** means something like, "Fine, do whatever you like. I'm done talking about it." The phrase **suit yourself** is not intended to be rude, but the phrase does imply that the speaker is a little annoyed that they can't reach an agreement on something. For example, in one of the example dialogues of this episode, a girl asks her brother if he wants to try her lasagna. He refuses, stating that she is a bad cook. The girl replies with, "**Suit yourself**. I guess I'll just enjoy a whole lasagna by myself." In other words, she is telling her brother that he can do whatever he likes, and she isn't going to fight about it.

Here are a couple more examples with **suit yourself**:

Bella: Hey, Rosa, we're all going to the bar after work. You wanna join us?

Rosa: No, thanks. I'm a little tired. I'm just gonna head home.

Bella: Are you sure? It's Taco Tuesday. This place has got the best tacos in town.

Rosa: Yeah, I'm sure. Thanks for the invite, though.

Bella: Well, **suit yourself**. If you change your mind, though, here's the address.

Ricky: What's that smell?

Tibo: Ah, that's my muscle rub. It's great for loosening sore muscles. Wanna try some? You must be sore, too, after that workout we just had.

Ricky: Uh, thanks, but no thanks. That stuff smells disgusting.

Tibo: **Suit yourself**. It might smell awful, but it feels like heaven.

To rag on [someone]

Informal slang

To rag on [someone] is to bother, tease, or make fun of someone. Friends often **rag on each other** not because they want to make their friend feel bad, but because they are comfortable enough with each other to say slightly offensive comments in a playful way. For example, a group of guys might be hanging out, and one says he needs to leave early to spend time with his girlfriend. His friends will probably **rag on him** about it, telling him that he is lame for leaving early and that he listens to his girlfriend too much. In other words, his friends tease him about leaving early to go meet his girlfriend.

There are several different ways of saying **to rag on [someone]** that have the same or similar meanings, such as **to rake on [someone]** or **to roast [someone]**. Both expressions mean to make fun of or tease someone.

Here are a couple more examples with **to rag on [someone]**:

Roger: Dude, what are you wearing?

Tyler: It's something Stacy bought for me. She asked me to wear it.

Roger: You look like a Christmas store threw up on you. The reindeer on your shirt actually lights up!

Tyler: C'mon, man. Stop **ragging on me**. I like this shirt about as much as you do, but I don't wanna disappoint Stacy.

Roger: Wow, you must really love her if you're willing to go out in public wearing that.

Khalid: Mom, I need a new backpack.

Mom: Why, honey? You've got a perfectly good backpack already.

Khalid: Yeah, but that one has Ninja Turtles on it.

Mom: So? You love Ninja Turtles.

Khalid: Yeah, I did when I was, like, 8. I'm in middle school now. All the kids in school were **ragging on me** about my backpack.

Mom: Oh, I'm sorry. I didn't realize. How about we go look for one after dinner tonight?

Wouldn't be caught dead

Phrase

If you **wouldn't be caught dead** doing something, it is something you really hate doing, usually because it will bring you a lot of embarrassment or discomfort. In the second example dialogue for this phrase, two friends were discussing a man's outfit choice. One friend said that he **wouldn't be caught dead** wearing an outfit like that. In other words, that outfit was so embarrassingly ugly that he would never wear it.

Here are a couple more examples with **wouldn't be caught dead**:

Mom: Sweetie, make sure to keep your schedule open this Saturday. We're going to LaLa Land for your brother's birthday.

Clara: Ugh, Mom, do I have to go? LaLa Land is for babies. **I wouldn't be caught dead** going there. What if someone I know sees me?

Mom: Of course you have to go. It's for your brother's birthday. Plus, if it's such a baby place, as you say, then you're not likely to see someone there that you know.

Clara: Fine, but I'm not promising to act happy about it while I'm there.

Terence: Have you ever been to Disneyland?

Ray: Yeah, once. Why?

Terence: Well, my wife wants to take the kids there next weekend. I'm just not sure if it's worth the time and money.

Ray: It's pretty cool, actually, but **I wouldn't be caught dead** going there on the weekend. It's a madhouse on the weekends. The lines for rides are endless. There are a million people there. You should go on a weekday, preferably not in the summer.

Terence: Wow, that's really good advice, actually. Thanks.

Rather die than do [something]

Phrase

If you would **rather die than do [something]** then you really hate doing that thing and you will try to avoid it at all costs. This phrase is very similar to the phrase **wouldn't be caught dead**. There are several ways to say this phrase, such as **couldn't pay me to do [something]** or **wouldn't dream of doing [something]**. Each of these phrases implies that doing some action is unimaginable or worse than death.

Here are a couple more examples with **rather die than do [something]**:

Zara: Wanna try out for the musical with me? Auditions are tomorrow.

Arna: Um, no. I'd **rather die than get up on stage in front of a bunch of people**.

Zara: Why not? You have an amazing voice. You'd do great!

Arna: No way. Not happening. I'd be so nervous, I'd probably end up fainting onstage or puking my guts out.

Mom: I bought you this suit to wear to your cousin's wedding.

Jorge: There is no way I'm wearing that. I'd **rather die than be seen wearing that thing**.

Mom: You can't wear jeans and Converse to a wedding. You're wearing the suit and that's final.

Jorge: It's not like anyone will be looking at me anyway! Everyone will be looking at the bride and groom.

Mom: That's not the point. We're going to a wedding, not a friend's birthday party. You need to dress up!

Quiz

1. Which phrase does NOT mean that you would really hate to do something?

- a) I wouldn't be caught dead doing [something]
- b) I'd rather die than [something]
- c) I've hardly ever done [something]
- d) you couldn't pay me to do [something]

2. Which word goes in the blank? If you are ragging on someone, then you are _____ them.

- a) hitting
- b) crying on
- c) encouraging
- d) teasing

3. Which word works BEST in the blank? If someone gives off a weird vibe, he _____.

- a) smells funny
- b) makes you feel uncomfortable
- c) looks happy
- d) has unusual taste in music

4. A friend invites you to a party. You say no to the invitation. What might your friend say next?

- a) thanks, but no thanks
- b) I'd rather die
- c) suit yourself
- d) stop ragging on me

5. True or false? You can use the phrase "thanks, but no thanks" when talking with your friends.

- a) true
- b) false

Writing and Discussion Questions

1. What is something that you wouldn't be caught dead doing? Why?
2. Has your mother ever asked you to do something and you thought, "I'd rather die than do that"? Talk about it.
3. Do you and your friends like to rag on each other? What do they rag on you about?
4. Have you ever met someone who gave off a weird vibe? How so?
5. Write or act out a dialogue that includes the phrase "thanks, but no thanks."

Quiz Answers

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

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