

Catch Word #179 – It's in the vault

Episode description

Everyone has secrets. When someone tells you a secret, are you good at keeping it to yourself? In this episode, Andrew and Morag explain in detail two expressions related to keeping information to yourself: *in the vault* and *to hold your tongue*.

Fun fact

The expression *in the vault* was made popular by the TV show *Seinfeld*, created by Larry David and Jerry Seinfeld. Often described as “a show about nothing,” for its focus on the trivial details of daily life, *Seinfeld* also popularized a multitude of other expressions, including *yada, yada, yada*—boring or empty talk—and *close talker*—someone who stands too close to another person during conversation.

Expressions included in the learning materials

- In the vault
- To hold your tongue
- To burst [someone's] bubble
- To think better of [something]
- To talk back



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: Hey everybody. My name's Andrew.

Morag: And my name is Morag.

Andrew: And we're back with another Culips episode.

Announcer: If you want to learn English for everyday use, you've come to the right place. At Culips, we help make English understandable. By listening to our podcast, you can learn natural expressions and conversational structure. If you're interested in learning more about Culips and what we do, check us out on Facebook or our website, Culips.com. That's C-U-L-I-P-S.com. Thanks for listening. We hope you enjoy this episode.

Andrew: Hey Morag. How are you?

Morag: I'm all right, Andrew. How are you doing?

Andrew: I'm pretty good. You know, I had a really exciting weekend.

Morag: Oh yeah? What happened?

Andrew: Well, a couple of years ago, I started running. I thought, "I'm getting a little older, and I need to exercise regularly." And I don't really like the gym and lifting weights too much, so I decided to start running, to start jogging.

As time went by, I started getting faster and faster. But this weekend, when I went running, I was the fastest I've ever been. I beat a new personal record for myself. So I was really excited all weekend long.

Morag: That's really cool, Andrew. I've had my stints running before, and I really liked it, but I found it really hard to keep up all the time. So I'm very impressed.

Andrew: Well, don't be too impressed. Because I was pretty proud of myself, I was like, "Yes, I beat a new personal record. I'm getting faster." I thought, "Hmm, maybe I'm getting to the point where I'm competitively fast."

Morag: Hmm.

Andrew: “Where I could enter a race and not embarrass myself.” So I Googled my time to see how fast it was, and apparently, I’m on par with a non-competitive high school runner.

Morag: Oh.

Andrew: That sort of **burst my bubble**. Anyways, I can try to catch the high school athletes later. But for now, I think we’ll get started with this episode.

And just before we jump into things here, I want to remind everyone that the best way to study with Culips is by signing up and becoming a Culips member. Members get unlimited access to our learning materials, which include full transcripts, detailed vocabulary explanations, and a quiz for every episode. And all of this comes in a convenient PDF file. You can download it to your computer or phone, or I guess you could even print it out.

Morag: Yeah, all of the info you need to know for the membership, and all the learning materials, is on our website, which is Culips.com. So feel free to take a visit to our site and find a membership option that works best for you.

Andrew: Yes, totally. OK. So Morag, let’s get started today. And today, we’re going to do a Catch Word episode. And in a Catch Word episode, we teach and describe and explain how to use a couple of related English slang expressions.

And today, our expressions are related to the theme of remaining silent, or not sharing a secret or opinion, so keeping something a secret.

Morag: So our first expression for the day is **hold your tongue, hold your tongue**.

Andrew: **Hold your tongue**, yeah. **To hold your tongue**. Morag, what does this mean—**hold your tongue**?

Morag: Well, **to hold your tongue** means to keep quiet mostly, or to stop or restrain yourself from saying something. Usually, it’s something that you feel like saying, but you probably shouldn’t.

Andrew: Yeah.

Morag: You want to say something kind of rude or mean, or you have an emotion and you want to express it, but you **hold your tongue**. And you stop because you **think better of it**.

- Andrew: That's right. You keep quiet, even though you really, really feel like speaking your mind, like sharing your opinion, your true thoughts. You **hold your tongue**, and you stay quiet because you know, well, it's probably a bad idea if you speak your mind all of the time. You might offend somebody or get yourself in trouble.
- Morag: I definitely have **to hold my tongue** sometimes around bosses if they say something that you already know or that you disagree with. You know, instead of **talking back**, sometimes you need **to hold your tongue**. And that makes everything a little bit easier.
- Andrew: Yeah, yeah. For sure.
- Morag: Mmhmm.
- Andrew: And I think this expression is pretty easy to visualize. If you could imagine yourself holding on to your tongue, well, in this situation, it'd be really difficult to speak, right? You wouldn't be able to make any words come out of your mouth if you are physically grabbing and holding your tongue with your hands.
- Morag: Yeah. There's no words coming out if you're holding your tongue.
- Andrew: Yes.
- Morag: Or at least no words that make sense.
- Andrew: That's right. Just some blah, blah, blahs. I have a question for you.
- Morag: Mmhmm?
- Andrew: In your opinion, is this a common expression these days, or is it a little bit old-school?
- Morag: I definitely associate it with my grandmother or my mother telling me **to hold my tongue**.
- Andrew: OK.
- Morag: So I think it might be slightly old school, but I definitely still use it in the context of wanting to say something, but knowing that I shouldn't.
- Andrew: OK. This is very interesting because this expression actually has two slightly different meanings and uses.
- Morag: Hmm.

Andrew: Depending if you're speaking British English or North American English.

Morag: Hmm.

Andrew: And British English, we use it more in the context of the first example that you gave, when you're using it as a command, usually to children, right?

Morag: Yup.

Andrew: Saying, "**Hold your tongue**. Don't speak. Be quiet." This is the way that UK English uses this expression.

Whereas the second example you gave, this is North American English. We use it to refer to ourselves, and about keeping quiet in situations where we really want to express ourselves and share our opinion.

So yeah, I thought that this expression was really fascinating because of the split between the two dialects of English.

Morag: That's quite funny because I wasn't aware of that. But it makes sense because two of my grandparents are directly from the UK. But I obviously live and speak in North America. So for me, the two were one. But that makes a lot more sense.

Andrew: Very cool.

Morag: Mmhmm.

Andrew: Well, I think for me as well, I use it in the context of keeping quiet when I feel like saying something.

Morag: Mmhmm.

Andrew: And I think this is probably the way that it's used most often these days. But I just wanted to explain to everybody that there are two different ways to use it. But anyway, let's get to some examples with this expression.

Friend 1: Hey, did you see last night's *Game of Thrones* episode?

Friend 2: No. You know what? I actually haven't seen the last few episodes.

Friend 1: Oh, OK. I'll **hold my tongue** then, and I won't spoil it for you. But believe me, you have to watch it.

Morag: In this example, two friends are talking about the popular TV show *Game of Thrones*. One friend promises **to hold her tongue**, and not spoil the story about what happened in last night's episode because the other friend has not yet watched the episode.

So in this context, when she **holds her tongue**, it means that she will remain silent, and not share the details of the *Game of Thrones* episode she just watched.

Andrew: OK. Let's do one more example with **hold your tongue**.

Friend 1: You know Jerry, the guy at my office that I'm always complaining about?

Friend 2: Yeah. Oh yeah, what did he do this time?

Friend 1: He ate my lunch!

Friend 2: What?

Friend 1: Yeah. I couldn't believe it. I left my sandwich in the fridge, and when I went into the break room, I saw him eating it.

Friend 2: That's unbelievable. Who would do that? Well, what did you do?

Friend 1: Nothing. I just **held my tongue**. I wanted to scream at him, but that would just create an awkward atmosphere in the office.

Friend 2: Well, I think you should talk to HR at the very least. He can't get away with that.

Andrew: In this example, a man complains about his co-worker, Jerry, because Jerry is very annoying and is always causing trouble. This time he ate the man's lunch, and this caused the man to become really angry. But he **held his tongue**, or restrained from yelling at Jerry, because he didn't want to cause a scene at the office.

So in the context of this example, the man **held his tongue**, which means that he remained silent, even though he really wanted to yell at Jerry.

Morag: I would've wanted to yell at Jerry too.

Andrew: There's nothing worse than eating somebody else's sandwich. That's low.

Morag: I agree. Not OK.

- Andrew: Not OK.
- Morag: Yeah.
- Andrew: All right, Morag. Well, let's move on to expression number two. What's our second expression?
- Morag: Our second expression is ***in the vault, in the vault***.
- Andrew: ***In the vault***, OK. Very interesting. First, maybe we should talk about a vault because this is not a common word. What is a vault?
- Morag: Well, a vault is a room, usually in a bank, that has incredibly thick walls and a giant, heavy door. It's basically to be as secure as possible, and it's where lots and lots of money and valuables are kept. Some houses might have vaults, but they would be for crazy rich people, you know. But yeah.
- Andrew: Not for us.
- Morag: No, I don't have a vault. But it's basically just a very, very secure space that is very difficult to get into, and where you keep important things.
- Andrew: Right, OK. So this expression, ***in the vault***, we use it when someone tells you something confidentially, and you are assuring that person that you won't share their secret. Their secret is ***in the vault***. It's in your personal vault. It means that you won't share it. It's ***in the vault***.
- Morag: It's locked up.
- Andrew: Mmhmm, yes. It's locked up. Exactly. And this expression was made popular by the TV show *Seinfeld*. Morag, do you like *Seinfeld*?
- Morag: I like every *Seinfeld* episode I've watched, but I haven't watched all that many. So yes!
- Andrew: I love *Seinfeld*. It's one of my all-time favourite TV shows. And so I'm happy that we get to share a *Seinfeld* expression with everyone. But really this expression is used in everyday speech too. It makes sense to use. So ***in the vault***, it just means that you are keeping a secret.
- I think it's time for some examples. Let's get to 'em.
- Morag: All right.

Friend 1: So I'm thinking about planning a surprise party for Rebecca. Her birthday's in 2 weeks.

Friend 2: Oh, that would be so much fun. I'll help you.

Friend 1: Oh, that'd be great. But look, you can't ruin the surprise, OK? You really have to keep this a secret.

Friend 2: Don't worry. It's **in the vault**.

Morag: In this example, two friends are talking about throwing a surprise party for their friend Rebecca. The party will only be a success if it's kept a secret, and is a real and total surprise. Both friends agreed to keep it a secret, and one of the friends says, "The secret is **in the vault**." That means that he will definitely keep the details of the party a secret. And won't share them with anybody, or won't let Rebecca know.

Andrew: Nice. Very important to do this.

Morag: I've never been a part of a surprise party. I think because it seems so difficult to keep something actually secret.

Andrew: Mmhmm. It's very tempting to tell sometimes.

Morag: Mmhmm, especially if you actually make it a big party, oh yeah.

Andrew: OK, let's jump to our final example for today's episode, one more time with the expression **in the vault**.

Friend 1: Can I tell you something?

Friend 2: Yeah, of course.

Friend 1: OK. But this is a secret, OK? Just make sure to keep it **in the vault**.

Friend 2: Yeah, no problem. I mean ... But what is it? Spill it!

Friend 1: OK. Well, rumour has it that I'm getting a promotion. You're looking at the next assistant manager of ABC Industries.

Friend 2: Oh my God, that's amazing!

Friend 1: Yeah. But hey, it's not official yet, OK? So just keep it a secret.

Friend 2: Yeah, yeah. No ... What did I tell you? It's **in the vault**.

- Andrew: In our final example, a man tells his friend about a promotion that he is expecting to get at work. But because it isn't official yet, he asks his friend to keep it **in the vault**. So the man asks his friend to keep the information a secret.
- Morag: Well, Andrew, it looks like we've come to the end of the episode.
- Andrew: I think so. I want to thank everyone for listening, and if you have any comments, questions, or suggestions for future episodes, drop us a line. You can send us a message via our Facebook page, facebook.com/culips/podcast.
- Morag: Or you can also send us a message through our website, Culips.com.
- Andrew: We'll be back soon with a new Culips episode.
- Morag: OK. Talk to you soon, everybody. Bye.
- Andrew: Bye.

Detailed Explanations

In the vault

When an object is physically in a vault, an object is in a safe and secure place. It is protected from theft. So when someone says that a secret is **in the vault**, they are saying that the secret is safe. In other words, they will not tell the secret to anyone else.

The expression **in the vault** is most often used as an affirmation. If someone asks you to keep a secret, you can reply with, "**It's in the vault.**" This will reassure them that you won't tell anyone else their secret.

Here's one more example with **in the vault**:

May:	Can you believe that Jessie is moving?
Karl:	What? I didn't know that Jessie was moving!
May:	Oh no! I thought you already knew. I really shouldn't have said anything. Can you do me a favour, and keep this a secret?
Karl:	Don't worry. It's in the vault .

To hold your tongue

As discussed in this episode, **to hold your tongue** has two meanings. In British English, **to hold your tongue** is a direction, usually given to children, to be quiet. If you tell someone **to hold their tongue**, you're telling them not to speak.

In North American English, **to hold your tongue** means to stop yourself from saying something that you shouldn't. For example, if you're angry at someone, you might **hold your tongue** and refrain from saying something mean.

Here's one more example with **to hold your tongue**:

Curtis:	What a day! I had one of the rudest customers ever.
Amelia:	Did you say anything to them about their behaviour?
Curtis:	No, I held my tongue . No matter how rude a customer is, I try to be polite.
Amelia:	Good for you! I don't know if I could manage that.

To burst [someone's] bubble

To burst [someone's] bubble means to change someone's outlook or opinion from a positive one to a negative one.

This expression is a little tricky, but is easy to picture. Imagine that someone's happiness or positive opinion about something is a bubble. **To burst the bubble**, or to pop the bubble, you simply have to tell them information that ends their ability to think positively about that something. By revealing something negative, you are taking away their happiness, or you are **bursting their bubble**.

When you **burst [someone's] bubble**, you usually aren't ruining their happiness by lying or just being mean. This expression is used in situations where the person's positive outlook is unstable or fragile—like a bubble.

For example, in this episode, Andrew mentions that he was very happy when he set a personal running record. However, his **bubble was burst** when he found out that his personal record, the fastest he's ever run, is only as good as a non-competitive high school runner. So the bubble was his feeling of pride, and what **burst his bubble** was the information that he's not actually that fast compared to other runners.

Here are a couple more examples with **to burst [someone's] bubble**:

Alton:	I finally decided what I want to do in life. I'm going to go back to school and become a doctor! I'm so excited that I've finally decided what I want to do!
Shelley:	That's a great goal. I think it's really cool that you're not bothered by the fact that it will take you more than a decade of schooling to become a doctor.
Alton:	What? I didn't know that. A decade is a really long time. That sucks.
Shelley:	Sorry to burst your bubble . It takes a really long time and a lot of hard work.

Jack:	My sister is really excited about her new job, but I used to work at the same place, and the management is just terrible. I don't know if I should warn her or not. What do you think?
Gretchen:	I don't think you need to burst her bubble . Maybe she'll like it better than you did.

To think better of [something]

Sometimes you have an idea that seems good at first, but after considering it for a while, you decide against it. In these situations, you can say that you've **thought better of the idea**.

So **to think better of [something]** means to change your mind about something. It means to reconsider an idea or opinion, and change your idea or opinion to a negative one. That is, when you **to think better of [something]**, you go from thinking that something is good to thinking that something is bad.

The expression **to think better of [something]** is often used when talking about activities, plans, or decisions. For example, if you make a coffee date for 10:00 p.m. at night, you might **think better of drinking coffee at 10 p.m.** because 10:00 p.m. is too late to drink coffee!

Here are a couple more examples with **to think better of [something]**:

Debbie:	Hey Damon, what are you cooking?
Damon:	I'm just roasting some veggies. I'm starving! My stomach feels completely empty.
Debbie:	If you're so hungry, why didn't you stop at a fast-food restaurant?
Damon:	I was going to grab a pizza, but I thought better of it . I really should save my money. I need to be responsible and make my meals.

Tracy:	When is your brother coming to stay with us?
Greg:	He's not.
Tracy:	What? How come?
Greg:	It was a bad plan. He's still coming for a visit, but I asked him to stay somewhere else.
Tracey:	What made you think better of him staying here ?
Greg:	I remembered what happened last time. He stayed out late every night and made a huge mess. This time he can stay in a hotel!

To talk back

To talk back is a phrasal verb that means to answer in a rude or disrespectful way. However, not every rude answer is an example of someone **talking back**. **To talk back** is used specifically when someone responds rudely to another person who has authority over them.

Parents often use **to talk back** when their children respond in a disrespectful way. For example, if your child responds rudely, you can say, "Stop **talking back**."

If you're an adult, there are fewer situations where **to talk back** would be appropriate. However, you could still be accused of **talking back** if you responded rudely to a superior at work, an elder, or a police officer (or another public authority figure).

So **to talk back** is to respond impolitely to someone in a position of authority.

Here are a couple more examples with **to talk back**:

Mario was speeding in his car. He was seen speeding by a police officer and has just been pulled over.

Officer: Do you know why I pulled you over?

Mario: Do you think I'm stupid? I was speeding. Are you going to give me a ticket or what?

Officer: Don't **talk back** to me. It's impolite and won't help your situation.

Jake: Are you going home for Christmas?

Hattie: Yeah, I'm leaving in a couple of days. How about you?

Jake: I'm leaving for home soon too. I wish I didn't have to go.

Hattie: Why is that?

Jake: My grandma is staying with us this year. She seems to think I'm still a little kid. Whenever we're having a conversation and she doesn't like my opinion, she accuses me of **talking back** to her! It's really annoying.

Hattie: I know how to fix the problem. Just agree with everything she says.

Quiz

1. Which of the following expressions can you use to tell someone you're going to keep their secret?

- a) yada, yada, yada
- b) in the vault
- c) close talker
- d) in the bag

2. When you burst someone's bubble, you change their opinion from _____.

- a) positive to negative
- b) negative to positive
- c) indifferent to positive
- d) indifferent to negative

3. If you want to tell someone to be quiet, which of the following could you say?

- a) "Tip your hat."
- b) "Tie your lips."
- c) "Stop your mouth."
- d) "Hold your tongue."

4. When you think better of something, you _____ it.

- a) recommend
- b) rediscover
- c) reconsider
- d) relive

5. To talk back means to respond to an authority figure in what way?

- a) rudely
- b) quickly
- c) politely
- d) quietly

Quiz Answers

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

Episode credits

Hosts: Andrew Bates and Morag St. Clair
Episode preparation/research: Andrew Bates
Audio editor: Andrew Bates
Transcription: Transcript Heroes Transcription Services
Learning materials writer: Morag St. Clair
English editor: Stephanie Minelga
Business manager: Tsuyoshi Kaneshima
Project manager: Jessica Cox