

Catch Word #191 – Get a hold of yourself!

Episode description

English expressions can be tricky, especially if they sound the same but have different meanings. Don't worry, because Andrew and Morag are here to help! Join them for this Catch Word episode as they explain three uses of the expression to get a hold of.

Fun fact

Depending on the dictionary or grammar website that you consult, you may see a hold written as one word (ahold) or two words (a hold). The one-word version (ahold) is usually not recommended in formal writing, but is becoming more and more common in dialogue or informal writing.

Expressions included in the study guide

- To get a hold of [someone]
- To get a hold of [something]
- To get a hold of yourself
- To pull strings
- To snap out of it



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 is Andrew.

Morag: And my name is Morag.

Andrew: And you're listening to Culips. Hey, Morag!

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

Andrew: I am doing really well, how about you?

Morag: I'm doing pretty well, yeah, not too bad. Although my sleep has been disturbed a bit in the last little while.

Andrew: Your sleep has been disturbed? I'm sorry to hear that—what's up?

Morag: It's nothing terrible, it's my cat, Toast. As we've talked about him before, he's lovely but he can be a bit annoying. He's started to attack my head at about 3:30 in the morning trying to get me let him outside.

Andrew: Oh.

Morag: He's never had an outside area that he's been to. I just moved apartments and now he has a balcony, he loves the balcony. I think it's his first experience of, like, you know, wind and nature and birds.

Andrew: Mmhmm.

Morag: Oh my God, so he'll sit and watch the little finches that sit on the railing. You know that sound that cats make? The kind of clicking?

Andrew: No.

Morag: Oh.

Andrew: Is it like a purring sound?

Morag: Cats make this clicking sound when they are hunting, so when they're crouched down and they're getting ready to pounce, they kind of, like, they kind of go, like, eh eh eh and they have a little weird clicking noise. And apparently, I was told by a very knowledgeable cat man, that is the only time when cats can project themselves into the future, is the only time when they can think in—not in the present.

Andrew: So they can imagine themselves ...

Morag: Pouncing, they are planning the pounce.

Andrew: They're planning the pounce.

Morag: Every other time, they're purely creatures of the moment, and that is the only ... That thing is the only time they're able to think in the future.

Andrew: So, wow, cats are very Zen.

Morag: Very.

Andrew: Living in the now all the time, except when they are hunting.

Morag: It's just that one moment, it's like a planning moment. Of course, my cat, he just did that straight for like 2 minutes and scared away the birds, so, yeah.

Andrew: Well, if you let him out long enough, I'm sure he'll catch you something at some point because cats are pretty good hunters.

Morag: Uh, I hope not. Ew.

Andrew: Ew.

Anyway, Morag, we'll change the subject here and we'll **get a hold of ourselves** and talk about today's lesson, today's episode. Because what we are going to do today is a Catch Word episode. And Catch Word is the series where we introduce and define and explain and give examples of really interesting English vocabulary, especially vocabulary that's difficult like idioms or phrasal verbs.

And today we are going to take a look at three ways that we can use the expression **to get a hold of**. **To get a hold of**. So, this is the verb get. To get what? **To get a hold of**. A space H-O-L-D space of. Three different words. **A hold of**.

So, we'll get started here in just a second, but I want to tell everybody that we think the best way to study with this episode is with our learning materials. So, you can actually download the transcript, detailed vocabulary explanations, and examples, and a quiz for this episode by signing up and becoming a Culips member. And you can do that on our website, which is Culips.com. So if you wanna get the most out of this episode, we recommend that you check out the learning materials.

OK, Morag, let's get started: So, three expressions with **get a hold of**. Do you wanna introduce the first **get a hold of** expression?

Morag: Sure! So our first **get a hold of** expression is **to get a hold of someone**. **To get a hold of someone**. So, the basics of this expression is to contact somebody or to find them. Say you're having trouble contacting a friend for a while. You've sent some messages, but haven't heard anything back in a while, then you might say you're having trouble **getting a hold of them** or contacting them.

Andrew: Yeah, exactly, or you sent somebody some emails and they didn't respond and you were worried, so you gave them a call and they didn't answer, you've sent them a text message and they didn't reply.

Morag: That person is really difficult **to get a hold of**.

Andrew: You can say that person is difficult **to get a hold of**.

Morag: Yeah, wow.

Andrew: Exactly. Anyway, so yeah, **to get a hold of someone** means to contact them, to reach them, to find them and to talk with them. Right?

Morag: Mmhmm.

Andrew: So, I think we can give an example using this expression, **to get a hold of someone**.

Morag: Let's go.

Coworker 1: Hey, have you seen Danny anywhere? I've been trying **to get a hold of him** for the last hour, but he's not answering his phone.

Coworker 2: Oh, he's at a lunch meeting. He should be back in the office later this afternoon.

Coworker 1: Ah, OK.

Morag: In this example, a man is trying **to get a hold of his coworker, Danny**. Remember **get a hold of Danny** means to contact Danny, so after calling him a few times unsuccessfully, the man asks the secretary where Danny is, and she replies that he's on a lunch meeting and will return in the afternoon. So, there was a reason why the man couldn't **get a hold of him**.

Andrew: Morag, an interesting thing about this expression **get a hold of** is when we say it quickly, it really sounds like one word doesn't it? Even though it's many words, **get a hold of** quickly sounds like getaholda, getaholda, I can't getaholda him, I can't getaholda her, I can't **get a hold of Morag**.

Morag: Yeah.

- Andrew: And even when I say that quickly, I can't **get a hold of Morag**, so the "of" really is pronounced like an a, too ... Aholda.
- Morag: It would sound a little strange to be like oh I just can't **get a hold of him**. No.
- Andrew: No, we don't pronounce things that carefully, we squish them all together and make it one chunk of language, one utterance. So, **get a hold of** quickly is getaholda. Getaholda. Getaholda. And, so, moving on to our second **get a hold of** expression is ... **To get a hold of something, to get a hold of something**. And, so, what does it mean if you **get a hold of something**? Not someone this time, but something.
- Morag: Well, Andrew, **to get a hold of something** is to get or to find something you want or need. It's usually something you have been looking for and then you finally **get a hold of it** so you grasp it, you have it in your hand. It's a more literal meaning of **get a hold of**.
- Andrew: Right, because when you **get a hold of someone**, you don't actually grab them, right, you don't actually hold that person. That's not what we mean. But when we **get a hold of something**, yeah, it might be the case that you actually have that thing in your hand or, you're right, it's a more literal definition of this expression.
- Morag: Yeah, depending on the size of the object, like if you managed **to get a hold of a new fridge**, you probably don't have it in your hand, but many other objects, like, you know, clothing, jewelry, whatever.
- Andrew: Exactly. So, again, **to get a hold of something** means to get or acquire that thing. And it's usually something you want really bad and often it's something that you buy, isn't it?
- Morag: Yeah.
- Andrew: Yeah, I really want that thing, and then after thinking about it for a long time, maybe saving my money, or searching for it because it might be rare. Then, finally, **you get a hold of it**, you feel really satisfied.
- Morag: Yeah, it's a good feeling **to get a hold of something** after either a long time or a long search.
- Andrew: Can you ever think of a time that you finally **got a hold of something**?
- Morag: Yeah, uh, I think when I was a kid, I remember we've talked about this before, actually, but renting gaming consoles.
- Andrew: Mmhmm.

- Morag: For a long time from the video store, and then when I finally **got a hold of my own N64**.
- Andrew: Oh yeah.
- Morag: Oh my god, it was so good.
- Andrew: That's so funny, because I was thinking of an example of me **getting a hold of something** and it was when I **got a hold of an SNES**, a Super Nintendo.
- Morag: Ah.
- Andrew: I had wanted one for so long and then finally I was given a Super Nintendo on Christmas day. I finally **got a hold of it** and it was awesome.
- Morag: I'm glad you had that experience, too.
- Andrew: All right, Morag, let's give an example using this expression, **to get a hold of something**.
- Morag: All right.

- Friend 1: Do you have any plans this Saturday?
- Friend 2: Saturday? Um, nope.
- Friend 1: Well, you do now. I just **got a hold of a pair of tickets to the U2 concert**.
- Friend 2: Oh my god, are you serious? It sold out months ago! How did you get them?
- Friend 1: Well, it turns out my cousin is friends with their manager. It's weird. Anyway, he was able **to pull a few strings** and get me the tickets.
- Friend 2: So, we're going to U2?
- Friend 1: Oh yeah.
- Friend 2: Yeah!

- Andrew: In this example, a couple of friends **get a hold of tickets to a U2 concert**. **To get a hold of something** means to acquire something that you want, to get something that you want, and the friends do just that, they **get a hold of the concert tickets** because turns out one of the friend's cousins was able **to pull a few strings**. I like this idiom **to pull a few strings**. What does it mean if **you pull a few strings**, Morag?

Morag: Well, **to pull a few strings** is to maneuver or orchestrate or do something to make things happen in your favour, or to make something happen that you want. You can think about it like puppeteering, you know, if when people are operating a puppet, they pull strings to make it move. So if you **pull a few strings**, you make something happen by doing an action.

Andrew: Yeah, usually when we **pull some strings** or **pull a few strings**, we talk to the people that we know to try and take advantage of our connections or our power or our situation to make something happen that we want to happen, and this is what happened in that example.

So, Morag, before we do run out of time we should talk about that third **get a hold of** expression. And this one I should say is probably my favourite.

Morag: Me too.

Andrew: It's **get a hold of yourself. Get a hold of yourself.**

Morag: What it means is to calm down and to control yourself. So you're **getting a hold of yourself**, you're not allowing yourself to fly away in emotional distress, or we usually say it to people who are upset or very obviously ...

Andrew: Exactly, somebody is really emotional, really out of control, you can tell them to calm down by saying, hey, **get a hold of yourself**, like, **snap out of it.**

Morag: Mhmm, or you got **to get a hold of yourself**, like, you can't keep on being that upset.

Andrew: Yeah, chill out, relax, you can even say this expression to yourself. I know I have done this before, sometimes when I am, you know, writing a test or something and I'm really stressed out and I'm not focusing on actually writing the test, I'm just worried about my stress. I say to myself, "Andrew! Man! Come on you gotta **get a hold of yourself**, I gotta **get a hold of myself** and just write this test." So this is kind of in our inner speech, too, we sometimes use this expression to talk to ourselves.

Morag: I've definitely done that. Do you want to do an example for this one?

Andrew: Let's do it.

Husband: Ugh, look at this jerk! He has no idea how to drive, what's he doing?

Wife: What are you doing? Can you **get a hold of yourself**, please? If you keep on driving like that, you're going to get us both killed. Like, calm down.

- Morag: In this example, a wife tells her husband **to get a hold of himself** because he is driving dangerously and experiencing road rage. So when you tell someone **to get a hold of themselves**, you are telling them to calm down, to get their emotions under control.
- Andrew: Morag, I have a question about this expression. Now if you tell somebody **to get a hold of themselves** like, “Hey, **get a hold of yourself**,” would you come across as being rude?
- Morag: I think you could. It’s definitely not compassionate or understanding.
- Andrew: Mmhmm.
- Morag: So, I wouldn’t say it, I wouldn’t, like, to tell your boss **to get a hold of themselves**. It’s also implying that the person is excessively emotional, so they might think that they’re displaying a fine amount of emotion. But if you tell them **to get a hold of themselves**, you’re saying that they’re excessive or they’re being too much, which can come across as rude as well.
- Andrew: Yeah, I would not use this expression to anybody that I wasn’t close with, ’cause I think it could be a little too strong. You know, I’ve also used this expression sometimes to talk to my friends who have had a little too much to drink sometimes.
- Morag: Yeah.
- Andrew: And they’re kind of stumbling home, you know you’re like, “Ah man! Sober up a little bit, come on, **get a hold of yourself!**” We can use it in this way, too, to try and help somebody sober up a little bit. It doesn’t always work, this expression, but it’s something you can say.
- Morag: Absolutely, yup, yup.
- Andrew: Hey, Morag, I think we are out of time for today. But before we go, I want to thank everyone for listening, as always. And, again, if you want to check out the learning materials for this episode, just head on over to our website, Culips.com, for all of the details about how you can sign up and become a Culips member.
- Morag: And if you have any comments, questions, or suggestions for future episodes, please drop us a line, send us a message via our Facebook page, [Facebook.com/CulipsPodcast](https://www.facebook.com/CulipsPodcast), or you can email us directly at contact@culips.com.

- Andrew: And also on our website you can find all of our back episodes, our previous episodes. We have hundreds of them, so if you're just chomping at the bit, waiting for a new Culips episode, well, maybe a good idea is to go back and listen to some old episodes to help you pass the time while you wait for the next one to come out.
- Morag: All right, so we will be back soon with another episode. So stay tuned.
- Andrew: Yeah, talk to you soon. Bye.
- Morag: Bye.
- Announcer: The best way to study with Culips is by becoming a Culips member. When you become a Culips member, you'll get full transcripts, detailed vocabulary explanations, and quizzes for each episode. Visit Culips.com, that's C-U-L-I-P-S.com, to sign up and become a member.

Detailed Explanations

To get a hold of [someone]

The first key expression in this episode is **to get a hold of [someone]**. As Andrew and Morag explain, **to get a hold of [someone]** means to make contact or find someone. In other words, if you **get a hold of [someone]**, you get in touch or communicate with someone.

Typically, the expression **to get a hold of [someone]** is used when you've been having trouble reaching someone, either by phone or email, and you finally get in touch with them. For example, if you keep calling your mother, and she only answers your call after a couple of days, you could say, "**I got a hold of my mother.**"

Here's one more example with **to get a hold of [someone]**:

Bailey:	I really need to make a doctor's appointment, but every time that I try calling, I get a busy signal.
Nismah:	Is it usually difficult to get a hold of your doctor ?
Bailey:	Yup, he has more than 1,200 patients!

To get a hold of [something]

The second key expression in this episode is **to get a hold of [something]**. As Andrew and Morag mention, **to get a hold of [something]** means to find and acquire something. It usually includes the process of looking for something and then getting it.

Typically, the expression **to get a hold of [something]** is used when you have been searching for something that you really want or need and you finally obtain it. You can use **to get a hold of [something]** when you acquire something that is difficult to get. Just replace the word something with the object that you got your hands on.

Here's one more example with **to get a hold of [something]**:

Tyler:	Sorry I'm late. I waited in line for tickets to Bon Jovi.
Hwan:	I heard that the concert was sold out. Were you able to get tickets?
Tyler:	Yeah, I can't believe that I got a hold of them! I got lucky and ended up buying the last pair. Apparently, some of the people that were ahead of me camped out for days waiting to buy tickets.

To get a hold of yourself

The third key expression in this episode is **to get a hold of yourself**. As Andrew and Morag explain, **to get a hold of yourself** means to calm down and to control your emotions. In other words, it means to force yourself to become calm and behave in an appropriate and sensible way.

The best time to use the expression **to get a hold of yourself** is when you or someone you know has suffered a shock or is in a difficult situation. For example, let's say you are in a car accident. The car accident makes you feel strong emotions, like anger and fear, so you start cursing and yelling. By cursing and yelling, you are letting your emotions control you. If you **get a hold of yourself**, you stop letting your strong emotions control you (ie, you stop yelling and cursing).

Be careful: Telling someone **to get a hold of themselves** can be considered rude or impolite. Avoid using the imperative form—**get a hold of yourself**—at work or in polite conversations.

Here are a couple more examples with **to get a hold of yourself**:

Aiko:	I'm so mad! I've never been so livid in all my life!
Jordan:	What's wrong?
Aiko:	I just got demoted. My boss pulled me into the office and said that they don't have the budget to support my position anymore, so they're gonna cut my salary. Can you believe it? I really need to get a hold of myself before I say something I regret and lose my job!
Jordan:	I'm sorry. That really sucks. Let's go for a walk at lunch, so you can blow off some steam outside of the office.

Alex:	I can't believe you just did that!
Christina:	Did what?
Alex:	Farted! So gross and disgusting! Next time, fart far away from me.
Christina:	Oh, get a hold of yourself ! You need to learn to relax a little and stop being so uptight. Everyone farts.

To pull strings

When someone **pulls strings**, they make use of their connections or influence to make something happen or to get something. That is, **to pull strings** means to use your relationships or power to achieve a goal.

To understand this expression, imagine a dog on a leash and the leash as the strings. Every time you pull the leash (strings), you make your dog walk in a certain direction. Because you are holding the leash (strings), you can influence or control where he walks. You use your authority over the dog to make him do something that you want. So **to pull strings** means to use your influence to make something happen.

You can use the expression **to pull strings** when talking about using your authority, power, or relationships to get something or to help someone. For example, if your father helps you get a job by talking to his business associates, he **pulled strings** to help you.

In casual conversation, you might hear **to pull some strings** or **to pull a few strings**. Both these phrases mean the same thing as **to pull strings**. They are just variations.

Here are a couple more examples with **to pull strings**:

Joy:	I can't believe I failed my final exam in sociology. I never should have written it. I was way too sick to be in school.
Adam:	Why didn't you just get a doctor's note and write it another time?
Joy:	I underestimated how sick I was.
Adam:	I tell you what, I'll talk to your professor and see if I can pull some strings . I used to be a teacher's assistant and know him pretty well. Maybe he would be willing to let you write a paper for extra credits.
Joy:	Thanks! You're a lifesaver!

Sean:	How did you get the promotion? Dwight has a lot more experience and has been with the company longer than you have.
Kevin:	I happen to be best friends with my boss's brother. I guess my best friend pulled a few strings and got me the job!
Sean:	Lucky you!

To snap out of it

To snap out of it means to stop acting in a negative way or to stop experiencing negative emotions. When someone **snaps out of it**, they suddenly go from a bad state to a better state. For example, if someone goes from feeling sad to very happy in an instant, you can say, "They **snapped out it**."

Although **to snap out of it** is similar **to get a hold of yourself**, there is a key difference: **to snap out of it** means to stop acting or feeling something immediately, whereas **to get a hold of yourself** means to just get your actions or emotions under control. With **to snap out of it**, there is an emphasis on the change happening quickly.

To snap out of it can also mean to regain your focus or senses. For example, let's say a student is daydreaming and not paying attention. The teacher may try to get the student's attention by saying, "**Snap out of it**."

Telling someone **to snap out of it** can be considered rude or impolite. You should only use this expression with friends or in casual conversations.

Here are a couple more examples with **to snap out of it**:

Valentino:	I can't stop thinking about Jade. I can't eat or sleep. I keep replaying the breakup over and over again in my head. I still don't understand why she left me.
Calvin:	Dude, you need to snap out of it . I know it was a rough breakup, but it's been 6 months. You have to accept that the relationship is over and move on with your life.
Valentino:	I guess you're right.

Millicent:	You've been staring out the window for a half hour. What is with you? You haven't heard a single thing that I've said.
Lynn:	Sorry, I've been daydreaming about our upcoming vacation. I can't wait to visit Iceland and see the aurora borealis. I keep imagining what it will be like to see the lights in person.
Millicent:	Well, you need to snap out of it and come back to reality! We still have a lot to get done before we get on that plane, and I need your help.

Quiz

1. True or false: To get a hold of [someone] means to clutch them in your arms.

- a) true
- b) false

2. Which of the following situations would be the best time to use get a hold of yourself?

- a) George is yelling
- b) Lindsay is eating pizza and feels full
- c) Kelly has hurt her foot
- d) Ben is sleeping

3. True or false: Telling your boss to snap out of it is discourteous.

- a) true
- b) false

4. What does to get a hold of [something] mean?

- a) to make contact with an object
- b) to contact someone by phone or email
- c) to control an object
- d) to acquire an object

5. To pull strings means _____ to make something happen.

- a) to walk your dog
- b) to use a puppet
- c) to have a father
- d) to use your influence

Quiz Answers

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

Episode credits

Hosts: Andrew Bates and Morag St. Clair

Music: *Something Elated* by Broke For Free

Episode preparation/research: Andrew Bates

Audio editor: Andrew Bates

Transcription: Heather Bates

Study guide writer: Stephanie Minelga

English editor: Stephanie MacLean

Business manager: Tsuyoshi Kaneshima

Project manager: Jessica Cox