

Catch Word #196 – At all (part 2)

Episode description

Andrew and Morag continue their lesson about the expression at all in part 2 of this Catch Word episode.

Fun fact

The Collins Dictionary ranks at all as one of the 1000 most commonly occurring expressions in their dictionary!

Expressions included in the study guide

- At all
- Frivolous
- A badass
- “Us” as a subject
- To kill two birds with one stone
- An out
- To bow out
- Why, thank you
- To hint at
- A placeholder



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: You're listening to the Culips English podcast. To download the study guide for this episode, which includes the transcript, detailed vocabulary explanations, real-world examples, and a quiz, visit our website, Culips.com, C-U-L-I-P-S.com.

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'm doing pretty well, and actually I'm pretty happy right now, for kind of a silly, **frivolous** reason. But I bought a new pair of slippers today and I'm wearing them and they feel really comfortable. I love wearing new slippers, so I'm in a good mood right now.

Morag: No, I would say that is not silly, that is, say, a real joy.

Andrew: It's a real joy. How are you, Morag?

Morag: I'm OK. I just tried indoor rock climbing for the first time yesterday.

Andrew: Wow.

Morag: Yeah.

Andrew: So are your muscles really sore right now?

Morag: Yeah, my forearms are super sore. It was really fun, though. You get up so high, but definitely for my first time it was the forearms that were the limiting factor. They were what stopped me from being able to do more and more difficult things, more difficult climbs. But I'm actually pretty darn proud of myself because I did a couple that were much more difficult than the easiest ones you can do. So I feel like a **badass**.

Andrew: Well, good for you. I haven't done indoor rock climbing since I was really young, a kid even. But I loved it—it's really fun, isn't it?

Morag: Yeah, it's really great and it's a bizarre activity, but really fun.

Andrew: That's awesome, I'm glad to hear that you enjoyed that new activity.

And Morag, I think we should hop right into today's episode because we've got a lot of information to share. Today, actually, we are going to do part two of our Catch Word series with the expression **at all**. Now in the previous Catch Word episode, we took a look at how to use **at all**, OK? A-T A-L-L, **at all**, with negative statements and questions. And today we are going to take a look at how to use **at all** with conditional "if" statements and with positive statements.

Now, before we really, really get started, I think we should tell everybody about how they can download the study guide for this episode. Morag, how can our listeners download the study guide to accompany this episode?

Morag: Well, it's pretty easy. All you have to do is go to Culips.com and get more information from there. It's all available on our website, and I would definitely recommend the study guide for this pair of Catch Word episodes. **At all** is a deceptively difficult little phrase.

Andrew: Very difficult. And included in the study guide is the transcript, detailed vocabulary explanations, real-world examples, and a comprehension quiz. Like Morag said, this is super helpful, and we make them with love to help you guys become more fluent in English. So yeah, check out Culips.com for all the deets about the study guide.

So, Morag, in the previous episode we talked about how **at all** is an intensifier, and when you incorporate **at all** into your spoken English, it really makes your English sound polished, more advanced, and more like a native speaker's. And actually, **us** native speakers, we use **at all** the time, don't we?

Morag: Oh absolutely, it's definitely a common, almost unconsciously commonly used statement.

Andrew: Last time we explained that when you ask a question, **at all** means even a little bit. And when you make a negative statement, it means not even a little bit.

And today our first category that we're going to look at is conditional "if" statements. So a statement, a sentence using the word if. And, actually, this meaning of even a little bit, or even slightly is also maintained when we make a conditional statement with the word if. OK, so that's all really confusing OK? So let's give them an example, Morag, OK? Pretend that I'm hosting a dinner party, OK, and I want to invite you.

Morag: That's very nice, that's very nice, thanks.

Andrew: Very considerate. I really want Morag to come to this dinner party. But, Morag, I know that you work a lot and you don't have a lot of free time. So I understand if you don't wanna come to the party, OK? It's cool.

Morag: OK, thank you.

Andrew: But, I still wanna invite you, but I don't wanna pressure you, you know? I don't wanna make you feel like you have to come. So a nice way that I could achieve this goal of, it's kind of **killing two birds with one stone**, right? I'm inviting you to the party, but also giving you a way to decline the invitation at the same time. What I could do is, I could say, hey Morag, I'm having a dinner party on Saturday night and if you wanna come **at all**, just let me know and I'll set a place for you, OK? If you wanna come **at all**, just let me know and I'll set a place for you.

So if you wanna come **at all** means even slightly, even if you want to just a little bit, you know, let me know, it's OK, it's no problem. I'll set a place for you. I'll reserve a seat for you at the table. Morag, here you know this gives you a nice **out**, right? It doesn't put pressure on you to attend. It's only if you want to, even just a little bit, if you want to.

Morag: You could even go one further and say **if you have the time at all**.

Andrew: **If you have the time at all**, yeah. Even if you have just a little bit of time to spare, you could come for just 30 minutes or something.

Morag: In that one it's: if you have a little bit of time, but I understand you may not. In the example that you said earlier, it's: if you wanna come, but I understand that you may not. With this statement, **at all**, there's already been some understanding that there might not be a lot of whatever it is, interest, time, you know?

Andrew: Exactly, so this is really an advanced way to invite somebody, right? A basic way to invite somebody to a dinner party would be, "Morag, do you wanna come to my dinner party?" OK, but as we progress in English we can understand the nuances and how we can phrase things differently to achieve different goals. And this is a perfect example of how we can manipulate the language to achieve two goals at once, inviting you and also giving you a way **to bow out** of the invitation if you want to.

Morag: Very nice and polite. It's great.

Andrew: All right, so, I think we can listen to a couple of more conversation examples using **at all** in these conditional "if" statements, OK? I think we're ready for the first example, so let's take a listen to that right now.

Friend 1: Do you have any plans this weekend?

Friend 2: No, not really. I'm probably just going to chill at home and take it easy.

Friend 1: Oh yeah, that's cool. Well, you know, some friends and I are going to check out a movie on Sunday afternoon. If you wanna join us **at all**, you're welcome to.

Friend 2: Oh cool, yeah, good to know. I'll send you a text on Saturday morning and let you know.

Friend 1: OK, sounds good.

Morag: So, in this example, a guy invites his friend out to see a movie on Sunday. He uses a conditional statement, something like: if you wanna go **at all**, let me know. When **at all** is used in these "if conditional" sentences, it means even slightly or even just a little bit. So let's listen to the invitation from this example a couple more times.

Friend 1: If you wanna join us **at all**, you're welcome to. If you wanna join us **at all**, you're welcome to.

Morag: So if you wanna join us **at all**, you're welcome to means: if you want to see the movie with us, if you are just a little bit interested or more, you are welcome to come with us.

Andrew: Exactly, very, very nice explanation there Morag.

Morag: Oh, **why, thank you.**

Andrew: Let's listen to one more example.

Friend 1: Hey, how's packing coming along? Are you all ready for the big move?

Friend 2: Barely, there's so much to do, and so little time.

Friend 1: Well, if you need any help **at all**, just let me know.

Friend 2: You know what? I actually might take you up on that, thanks.

Friend 1: Of course.

Andrew: In this example, a woman offers to help her friend move. She says that if he needs any help **at all**, just let her know. Actually, you know what? Let's listen to that part of the conversation again.

Friend 1: Well, if you need any help **at all**, just let me know. Well, if you need any help **at all**, just let me know.

Andrew: So in a conditional sentence that starts with if, **at all** means even just a little bit. OK? So, if the friend needs even just a little bit of help, he should let her know. And she'll be there to help him. Any help **at all**, even just a little bit of help, she will be there.

And, that's a good friend, that's the type of friend you want. Not a friend like me that won't volunteer to help you.

Morag: I'm sure you have other helpful qualities, Andrew.

Andrew: It's true, it's true. On to our next and final way that we're gonna look at using **at all** today. And this is when making positive statements, positive sentences, OK? And, actually, this is not a very common way to use **at all**. I think the negative statements, the "if conditional" statements, the questions, these are common ways to use **at all**, but we don't use it too frequently with positive statements. But you still can and sometimes it happens, so we're gonna talk about it.

Morag: I use the second sort of phrase we're going to talk about a lot more often, so stay tuned.

Andrew: As Morag **is hinting at** here, there are two different ways you can use **at all** with positive statements, and I agree with Morag, the second is more frequent. So, let's get the first one out of the way. And the first way that we can use **at all** in a positive statement is with a fixed expression, OK? And that fixed expression is this: **the only reason I [verbed] at all is because of [something]. The only reason [verbed] at all is because of [something].** When I say verbed, that's just a **placeholder**. You can insert any verb you like in to that fixed expression. So, for example, Morag, maybe I could say something like, "The only reason that I drove there **at all** is because it's freezing outside." OK? "The only reason that I drove there **at all** is because it's freezing outside."

Morag: This is a very useful construction for having arguments with a boyfriend or a girlfriend. "The only reason I did that **at all** is because you wanted me to." Very useful.

Andrew: Very useful, very common. I think I've heard that a lot and probably said it a lot too.

Morag: Yup.

Andrew: To go back to that example, “The only reason I drove there **at all** is because it’s freezing outside.” What this sentence means is that originally you didn’t intend to drive but then, because it was cold outside, you changed your mind and you decided to drive there. You drove.

Morag: Yeah, so in the other example, in the relationship fight example it would be: “The only reason I cleaned the bathroom is because you told me to, right?” So the person would not have initially—same way they would not have initially intended to clean the bathroom—but they did it for the other person because they were told to. So this phrase is all about changing your mind and doing something for a very particular reason.

Andrew: So let’s listen to one conversation example, using this fixed expression, **the only reason I [verbed] at all is because of [something]**.

Friend 1: Hey, you came!

Friend 2: Yeah!

Friend 1: But I thought you said you weren’t gonna come to the party?

Friend 2: Well, I mean **the only reason I came at all is because there’s free food and drinks.**

Friend 1: Well, anyway, I’m happy you’re here.

Andrew: In this example, we hear two friends talking at a party. One of the friends says that the only reason she came to the party **at all** is because of the free food and drinks. Let’s hear her say that again.

Friend 2: **The only reason I came at all is because there’s free food and drinks.**
The only reason I came at all is because there’s free food and drinks.

Andrew: So in other words, she didn’t wanna go to the party, but then because of the free food and drinks, she changed her mind and decided to go. So when we use **at all** in this fixed expression, right, **the only reason I [verbed] at all is because of [something]**, well, we say that the only reason we’re doing something is because there’s a benefit attached to doing that thing—like free food and drinks at a party, if it wasn’t for the free food and drinks, that woman wouldn’t be at the party. Morag, will free food and drinks get you out to a party?

Morag: Yup, that happened a little while ago. There was a work party and I was like, “I don’t know if I wanna go ... Free food and drinks, OK.”

Andrew: I’m there, I’m there.



- Morag: Yeah, I'll show up, I'll show up.
- Andrew: The final way that we will look at how to use **at all** today is in positive sentences, paired with words that contain the word "any," OK? So like anywhere, anytime, anyplace, anyone. We can attach **at all** to these words, and when you see **at all** attached to an "any" word it means absolutely. It's a very positive intensifier when paired with an "any" word.
- Morag: Yeah.
- Andrew: So you could say, like, **anywhere at all, anytime at all**, this kinda thing.
- Morag: The best way to think about it for me is, if you say **anywhere at all**, it is the same as saying absolutely anywhere.
- Andrew: Mmhmm. Mmhmm.
- Morag: Yup, so anytime **at all** is exactly the same as absolutely, anytime. And both of those are just ways of intensifying the statement anywhere and anytime. Just really making that clear.
- Andrew: Exactly. OK, Morag I think we are ready to listen to a conversational example, our final example for today using **at all** paired with an "any" word.

- Friend 1: So I'm thinking about getting my grandma her first smartphone.
- Friend 2: Oh really?
- Friend 1: Yeah, I think it would be cute to send her text messages.
- Friend 2: Yeah, that'll be cute. You know what? You should get her an iPhone. They're really easy to use.
- Friend 1: Yeah, I've heard that.
- Friend 2: Anyone **at all** can use them.
- Friend 1: All right, good tip—thanks.

- Morag: In this example, a woman tells her friend that she wants to buy her grandmother a smartphone. The friend recommends that she should buy an iPhone because they are so easy to use. In fact, they are so user-friendly that anyone **at all** can use them. Let's hear the friend say that part again.

- Friend 2: Anyone **at all** can use them. Anyone **at all** can use them.

- Morag: So, anyone **at all** can use them means that absolutely anyone can use them, any person. So when you hear **at all** used in a positive sentence, like this with an “any” word, as we said before, anyone, anywhere, anytime, remember that it means absolutely. And again, here **at all** is used to intensify and add flavour to the statement. So, you’re not just saying anyone can use a smartphone, but anyone **at all** can use a smartphone, absolutely anyone.
- Andrew: I’d like to recommend a song for everyone, actually. The great singer Roy Orbison has a song called *You Got It*. Yeah, it’s a really good song, really catchy, really nice. And he uses this construction **at all** to mean absolutely many times in the course. So if you wanna practice listening to this expression in a real-, real-, real-world situation, head on over to YouTube, look up Roy Orbison *You Got It* and get ready to enjoy yourself for 4 or 5 minutes because it’s a great song.
- Morag: Oh, you’ll be enjoying yourself all day because it’s gonna to get stuck in your head, like I’m already singing it.
- Andrew: Me too, it’s stuck in my head, too.
- Morag: Oh man.
- Andrew: All right, Morag, well, I think we should wrap it up here so that we can go listen to Roy Orbison.
- Morag: It’s a good idea.
- Andrew: Thank you for listening, everyone. And if you have any comments, questions, or suggestions for future episodes, make sure to send us a message. You can do that via our Facebook page, [Facebook.com/CulipsPodcast](https://www.facebook.com/CulipsPodcast), or by sending us an email to contact@culips.com. And, again, special thanks to our listener Pedrosa for requesting the topic of this episode. It was a great question about how to use the expression **at all**.
- Morag, remind us of how to get the study guide for this episode, how can everyone download that?
- Morag: Well, Andrew, you can download the study guide by going to our website, Culips.com.
- Andrew: That is right. OK, that’s it for now. We will be back with another episode shortly, so stay tuned. Bye.
- Morag: Goodbye.



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Detailed Explanations

At all

In this episode, Andrew and Morag talk about the expression **at all**. They highlight three ways it's commonly used:

1. With “if conditional” statements
2. In the fixed expression, the only reason I [verbed] **at all** is because of [something]
3. With “any” words

Let's review what these mean and how to use them.

When **at all** is used with an “if conditional” statement, **at all** means even just a little bit or even slightly. Here is a dialogue example with **at all** in an “if conditional” statement:

Rhonda:	I'm going to be in town next week for a business trip.
Sara:	Oh really? That's fantastic.
Rhonda:	Yeah, so if you'd like to get together at all —for coffee or something—let me know!
Sara:	That sounds great. I'm free Tuesday evening. How's that sound?
Rhonda:	Perfect!

When **at all** is used in the fixed expression, **the only reason I [verbed] at all is because of [something]**, it is used to give an explanation for why you did something that you initially didn't want to do or weren't planning on doing.

Here's an example with **the only reason I [verbed] at all is because of [something]**:

Cheryl:	What are you doing up so early? I thought you said you were going to sleep in.
Tom:	The only reason I'm up at all is because of my dumb phone. I forgot to turn my alarm off.
Cheryl:	Well, the good news is I'm making coffee. Feel like a cup?

Finally, when **at all** is used with “any” words, it means absolutely. Here is an example with **at all** used with an “any” word:

Wife:	Hey, hun, can you pick up some flour from the grocery store on your way home from work?
Husband:	Sure, no problem. What kind should I get? Do you want a special brand or something?
Wife:	No, any brand at all is fine, but just make sure it's whole wheat. Get whatever is on sale.
Husband:	All right. Will do.

Frivolous

In this episode, Andrew mentions that he feels happy for a **frivolous** reason. The reason he feels happy is because he is wearing a brand-new pair of slippers and is enjoying how comfortable they are. The adjective **frivolous** describes things that are silly, not serious, or not important. So, Andrew is basically saying that he is happy because of a small thing of little importance: new slippers.

Here are a couple of examples with **frivolous**:

John:	I haven't smoked a cigarette in more than 2 months now!
Linda:	Congratulations! That's awesome. What motivated you to quit?
John:	Aside from the health reasons, cigarettes were just a really frivolous way to spend my money. I'm feeling better and I've got more cash in my bank account. Life's good!

Rita:	I wanted to apologize for what I said to you about your diet last week. It was just a frivolous comment. I didn't mean to offend you and I hope you didn't take it the wrong way.
Tom:	Don't worry about it. I didn't take offence to it at all . It's all water under the bridge*.

* For more information about the expression *it's all water under the bridge* listen to [Culips Catch Word #184](#).

A badass

In this episode, Morag says she feels like **a badass** because she climbed some difficult courses at her rock climbing gym. A person who is **a badass** is tough or intimidating. So, Morag feels like **a badass** because she can handle some of the more difficult climbing routes. She doesn't feel like a rookie climber but rather a veteran, whose experience may intimidate other people.

You can also use **badass** to describe objects and things. When something is **badass**, it means it's cool. For example, you might remark, "Wow that's a **badass** car," after seeing a brand-new sports car drive down the street.

This slang expression is very casual. You should avoid using it in serious or professional settings.

Here are a couple examples with **badass**:

Joel:	Man, Jimi Hendrix was such a badass on the guitar.
Emma:	Totally. He's one of my top 5 favourite players, for sure.
Joel:	Couldn't agree more. He was one of the best.

Chelsea:	Pretty badass leather jacket you got there.
Don:	I know, right? Just picked it up this weekend.
Chelsea:	I like it. It makes you look cool, for once.

"Us" as a subject

In this episode, Andrew uses **us** in a non-standard way when he says, "**Us** native speakers use [**at all**] all the time." Traditional grammar books will teach that this is incorrect and that **we** is the pronoun that Andrew should have used. However, sometimes native speakers break the rules and alter traditional grammar rules for stylistic reasons. This seems to be the case here.

So why did Andrew say **us** instead of we? Well, when you belong to a group, you can express your membership in that group by using **us** as a subject pronoun (even though it is an object pronoun). So, when Andrew says, “**Us** native speakers use **[at all]** all the time,” he not only explains that native speakers frequently use this expression but also that he is a native English speaker (member of the native English speaker group).

This is an example of non-standard English, and you should be careful when making sentences like Andrew’s. Non-standard English is generally OK to use in casual conversation among friends, but should be avoided in formal situations.

Here are some more examples using **us in the subject position**:

Andrea:	Do you have any plans for summer vacation?
Duncan:	Maybe you forgot, Andrea, but I graduated last year. Us workers don’t get to take all summer off like you students do.
Andrea:	Oh, that’s right. I forgot you graduated! I hope you have a great summer anyways.

Abdul:	What’s the longest period you’ve ever gone without sleep?
Eileen:	Probably around 48 hours?
Abdul:	48 hours! That’s insane.
Eileen:	Us gamers know what it’s like to go without sleep. A couple of years ago I used to stay up all weekend playing online games.
Abdul:	I could never do that.
Eileen:	It’s all about the energy drinks!

To kill two birds with one stone

To kill two birds with one stone is a very famous idiom that means to do two things with one action or solve two problems with one action. In this episode, Andrew mentions that using **at all** in an invitation **kills two birds with one stone**. Not only do you invite someone to do something, but you also give the person you are inviting a chance to politely decline the invitation.



Here are more examples with **to kill two birds with one stone**:

Maurice:	I'm going to run down to the grocery store to buy some milk. I'll be back in 15 minutes.
Erica:	Oh wait! Could you drop off my coat at the dry cleaners too? I was going to take it down there later this afternoon but if you're going out anyways, might as well kill two birds with one stone , right?
Maurice:	Sure, I don't mind.

Olga:	What's your plan for today?
Evan:	I'm going to return some books to the library because they're due today. I was thinking of doing some studying there too.
Olga:	Killing two birds with one stone! I like it.

An out

An out is a reason for not doing something. In this episode, Andrew explains that using **at all** in an invitation gives **a nice out** to the invitee. If the invitee doesn't want to do the activity they were invited to do, they can easily decline without being rude.

So, **an out** is an excuse, a reason for not doing something, or a way to avoid doing something.

Here are a couple examples with **an out**:

Jackie:	My cousin invited me to a baseball game, but I really don't want to go. I just hate sitting outside in the hot sun all afternoon.
Kevin:	Just tell him you have sensitive skin and can't be in the sun. That's your out .
Jackie:	Do you think that will work?
Kevin:	I don't know. Why don't you try and find out?

Richard: Hey, man, wanna grab a drink Saturday night?

Joel: I'd love to, but I have other plans.

Richard: Cancel those plans and hang out with me instead.

Joel: If I do that, I'll need a good **out**. Any ideas?

Richard: Yeah, just say you have a headache and can't make it. Works all the time!

To bow out

To bow out means to resign, stop, quit, or give up. It's usually used to talk about retiring from a job or resigning from politics. However, in this episode, Andrew uses **bow out** when he talks about declining an invitation. When someone **bows out** of an invitation, they decline the invitation gracefully and politely.

An easy way to remember the meaning of this phrasal verb is to imagine a stage actor taking a bow after a performance. The actor bows, the curtain closes, and the show is over. When an actor bows, it signals their performance is over. When someone **bows out**, it signals that their involvement with something is over. For example, when you **bow out** of an invitation, you politely decline the invitation.

Here are some more examples with **to bow out**:

Kimberly: I just heard the bad news. How is your ankle feeling?

Rodger: I feel OK, but the doctor said I should stay off my feet for at least 6 weeks.

Kimberly: But what about the tennis tournament next week?

Rodger: I'm going to have to **bow out**. There's no way I can participate in this condition.

Earl: Congratulations on your new promotion!

Justine: Thanks! I'm very excited.

Earl: If you don't mind me asking, was there a special reason why you were promoted?

Justine: William **bowed out**. I was the only candidate in the running!

Earl: Well, you can't complain about that! Congrats again!

Why, thank you

In this episode, Morag responds to Andrew's compliment by saying, "**Why, thank you.**" Here, why indicates slight and pleasant surprise. Morag wasn't expecting to receive a compliment from Andrew and so, when she did, she felt a little surprised and thanked him by saying **why, thank you**.

Thanking someone by saying **why, thank you** is slightly old-fashioned. As Morag demonstrates, it is still used to this day but it carries an old-fashioned feeling.

If you watch an old black and white movie, you might hear one of the characters say, "Why I never!" after being offended. Here, too, why indicates surprise. The character wasn't expecting to be offended or insulted and was surprised when it happened.

Or you might hear a character exclaim, "Why, here are my keys!" after searching high and low for their keys and finally finding them in a surprising place. Again, why communicates surprise.

Next time you receive an unexpected compliment, try responding with **why, thank you!**

Here are some examples with the expression **why, thank you**:

Gavin: Looking sharp there, Pete. You get a haircut recently?

Pete: **Why, thank you**, sir. I sure did!

Gavin: I like the new look. Short hair looks good on you.

Pete: Yeah, I like it too. Thanks!

Wendy: I love that sweater! Is it new?
Lola: **Why, thank you!** Yeah, I just picked it up last week.
Wendy: Great! I just love that colour on you!

To hint at

To hint at means to talk about something in an indirect way. In this episode, Morag **hints at** one of the ways **at all** can be used before she and Andrew officially introduce it.

When someone indicates something but doesn't say it directly, they are **hinting at** that thing. For example, a movie producer might **hint at** making a sequel to a hit movie in order to get media attention. Or a politician might **hint at** running for prime minister to see if he has support before officially announcing his candidacy. Or perhaps a teacher could **hint at** giving no homework over the weekend if students behave in class.

So, when you **hint at** something, you talk about that thing indirectly and unofficially.

Here are some examples with **to hint at**:

Tyler: Are you excited for your birthday next week?
Rebecca: I don't know. Should I be? Are you **hinting** at something?
Tyler: I don't know either! But I'm excited and I think you should be too!

Pia: One of the singers from [*NSYNC](#) just **hinted at** the possibility of a reunion concert.
Shawn: I loved them when I was younger. I'd go see that show.
Pia: Me too! If the rumour turns out to be true, let's buy tickets.

A placeholder

A **placeholder** is someone or something that occupies a position temporarily, until a permanent replacement can be found. When explaining the expression, “The only reason I [verbed] **at all**,” Andrew explains that [verbed] is just a **placeholder**. In other words, it appears in the expression just for explanation’s sake. When using the expression in a real-life conversation, you shouldn’t actually say verbed, but rather use an actual verb.

In business and politics, it’s common for someone to assume a **placeholder** position like temporary vice president or temporary general manager while suitable candidates are found.

Here are some examples with **placeholder**:

Erin:	Did you hear that the manager of the New York Yankees just quit?
Cindy:	Midseason? That’s unexpected!
Erin:	Yeah, everybody was surprised to learn about it.
Cindy:	So what will the team do?
Erin:	Well, the assistant manager has been promoted as a placeholder until they find a replacement.
Cindy:	But that might take a long time!
Erin:	Exactly. That’s why all Yankees fans look so concerned these days!

Elias:	I learned in history class today about Kim Campbell , Canada’s first female prime minister. She served for about 6 months in the early ’90s.
Daniel:	It’s true! Some people consider her to just be a placeholder prime minister, but she was an important part of Canada’s social and political development in the 1990s.



Quiz

1. In the expression why, thank you, what does why indicate?

- a) agony
- b) surprise
- c) depression
- d) ignorance

2. Which one is a synonym for an out?

- a) an excuse
- b) a choice
- c) a summary
- d) a direction

3. What does to kill two birds with one stone mean?

- a) to eat two servings of dinner
- b) to hear two good pieces of news during one day
- c) to kill two birds while hunting
- d) to accomplish two things with one action

4. Which person could be described as a badass?

- a) a professor
- b) a gangster
- c) a librarian
- d) an accountant

5. Which activity would be considered a frivolous use of time?

- a) studying
- b) exercising
- c) watching TV
- d) meditating



Writing or discussion questions

1. In this episode, Andrew says he is happy because of a frivolous thing: wearing new slippers. What frivolous things make you happy?
2. Morag mentions that she felt like a badass after going rock climbing. What things make you feel like a badass?
3. Have you ever turned down an invitation? What was your out?
4. Killing two birds with one stone is an effective way to spend your time. Can you think of a time when you killed two birds with one stone?
5. Andrew and Morag explain that **at all** is a very commonly used expression. Try making some sentences with **at all** in the styles discussed in this episode:
 - With “if conditional” statements
 - In the fixed expression, the only reason I [verbed] **at all** is because of [something]
 - With “any” words



Quiz Answers

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

Episode credits

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