

Catch Word #200 – Beats me!

Episode description

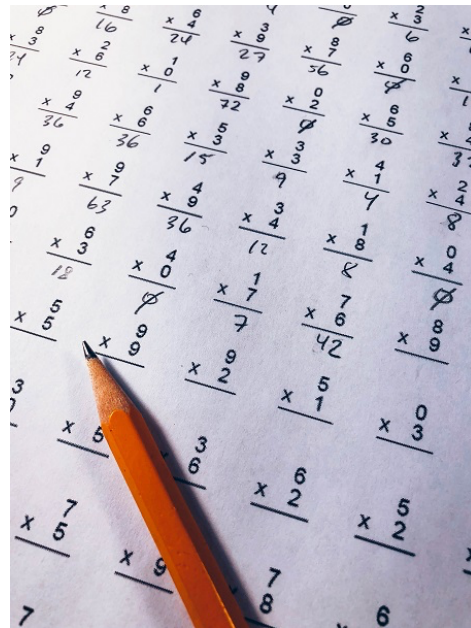
Nobody likes admitting they're no good at something. But if you must, in this episode of Catch Word, Andrew and Jeremy explore two sayings that will help you express yourself: beats me and to not have a clue.

Fun fact

Clue is the name of a movie from the 1980s, based on the board game of the same name. The film was remarkable in how it had three different endings!

Expressions included in the study guide

- Beats me
- To not have a clue
- You may or may not know this
- Milestone
- To run [something]
- To be terrible with [something]
- Will do



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 word examples, and a quiz visit our website Culips.com C-U-L-I-P-S.com.

Hello everybody. My name is Andrew.

Jeremy: And I'm Jeremy.

Andrew: And you're listening to Culips. Hey Jeremy.

Jeremy: Hey Andrew.

Andrew: How are you doing today?

Jeremy: I'm doing pretty well, it's a nice day. How about you?

Andrew: I'm doing pretty well, as well thank you. And today actually, I'm pretty excited to record this episode because **you may or may not know this** Jeremy, but this Catch Word episode is our 200th Catch Word episode.

Jeremy: Wow. 200th.

Andrew: Yeah, 200th. Actually that's a difficult word to pronounce, isn't it?

Jeremy: I was just thinking that, I was just thinking that. 200th th th th. That sound is important though right?

Andrew: Yeah it tells us it's an ordinal number.

Jeremy: Yeah.

Andrew: That we are counting something. 200th so I'm pretty stoked, this is a big **milestone** for the Catch Words series. So it's a day to celebrate over here at Culips.

Jeremy: Wow, I'm happy to be a part of it.

Andrew: And we're happy to have you be a part of it. But let's get into the episode. So today we are going to look at a couple of causal English expressions that you can use when you don't know something or you don't understand something, or maybe even you don't know the answer to a question. So that's the topic for today.

Jeremy: All right, let's do it.



Andrew: OK, and actually you know, just before we get started I do wanna remind everyone that there is a study guide for this episode that can be downloaded from our website, Culips.com and the study guide includes a transcript, detailed vocabulary explanations, real word examples, a quiz and also a new feature that we just added to the study guide, which is discussion questions or writing prompts. You can actually use these to write or to speak it's up to you. So yeah, the study guide is available right now, on the website Culips.com. So go check it out.

OK, so Jeremy what's our first expression for today? Could you introduce it for us?

Jeremy: **Beats me.**

Andrew: You don't know?

Jeremy: No, that's the expression.

Andrew: Oh! That's the expression. OK.

Jeremy: **It beats me**, that is the expression.

Andrew: And I like the way that you said it, Jeremy because that's actually the stress, the intonation that we use often with this expression isn't it? **Beats me.**

Jeremy: **Beats me.**

Andrew: Yeah, or sometimes we even say, **it beats me.**

Jeremy: Yeah **it beats me.** If we just mentioned that thing, then we say it. Right? **It beats me.**

Andrew: OK, **beats me**, this an expression about fighting or beating somebody up? That's what originally popped into my head.

Jeremy: I guess maybe originally, it had that meaning. If you ask me a question and I fight with that question and I lose then the question beats me.

Andrew: Right.

Jeremy: Right?

Andrew: Yeah so there is that element of getting defeated like some fact or some knowledge or an answer is defeating you because you don't know it.

Jeremy: I guess yeah. It's like the question is a challenge and I lose.



- Andrew: Right. So when we say, **beats me** it just means I don't know.
- Jeremy: Yeah, yeah. I don't know.
- Andrew: I don't understand.
- Jeremy: Yeah, usually if someone asks you for some information like where is the nearest you know, convenience store then you say **beats me**. I don't know.
- Andrew: I don't know. Check Google Maps.
- Jeremy: Yeah.
- Andrew: And so what's the difference in saying simply I don't know, or **beats me**? Is there a usage difference, when would we use I don't know, and when would you use beats me?
- Jeremy: I think **beats me** is a little bit informal, if someone asked you a question on the street and you don't know them then this might be a little bit rude, it depends right? It depends on your tone or your facial expression or something. But it could be rude.
- Andrew: Yeah, it's very direct.
- Jeremy: Yeah I think so.
- Andrew: Yeah. But among friends or people you're close with I think it's a fun expression to use.
- Jeremy: Yeah I agree.
- Andrew: So one usage note with this expression, it's a fixed expression, all right? It's always **beats me** or **it beats me**. I think it would sound really unnatural to talk about a problem in the past and say *it beat me*. Do you agree with that Jeremy? Like for example, if I had a math test that I wrote yesterday, or we both wrote it OK? And then after the test, we were discussing question ten, we were like ah man it was so difficult, I didn't know the answer, *it beat me*. It would sound strange to say that, right?
- Jeremy: It's too literal, almost.
- Andrew: Yeah.
- Jeremy: It's only really in the present tense, I think, that we use it.
- Andrew: Yeah, only in the present tense. So keep that in mind when you are using this expression, everyone.



Jeremy: Yeah, please do.

Andrew: All right Jeremy, I think we're ready to listen to some examples, with this expression **beats me**.

Friend 1: Wanna watch the game tonight?

Friend 2: Yeah, sounds good. But I have some plans later on. Do you have any idea when it will end?

Friend 1: **Beats me**. Probably around 9:30. Is that OK?

Friend 2: Oh yeah, that shouldn't be a problem.

Andrew: OK, we just heard an example where two friends decided to watch the game after work. One of them wants to know when the game finishes, but his friend doesn't know. He says beats me, to answer this question. So remember if you say it beats me or beats then it means you don't know something. So this friend here he doesn't know what time the game ends and actually let's listen to that response just a couple more times.

Beats me. Probably around 9:30.

Beats me. Probably around 9:30.

Andrew: OK, let's listen to one more example with beats me before we move on to our second expression for today.

Co-worker 1: Where did you get that donut?

Co-worker 2: Oh, someone left some donuts in the break room. You should go grab one before they're gone.

Co-worker 1: That's nice, I wonder who left them.

Co-worker 2: Beats me, but they sure are delicious.

Jeremy: In this example, two co-workers talk about some donuts that were left in their office break room. One of them asks who left the donuts and the other replies it beats me.

In other words, he doesn't know, it's a mystery. Let's listen to the co-worker answer that question again.

Beats me, but they sure are delicious.

Beats me, but they sure are delicious.

Jeremy: So, when you don't know the answer to a question, you can say **beats me** or **it beats me**. Just like the office worker from this example.

Andrew: Right on. Jeremy, I don't know what this situation is like in the states but in Canada, leaving a box of donuts in the break room for your co-workers to enjoy is something that probably happens more often than it should.

Jeremy: I think it happens in the US also.

Andrew: Very cool, OK. So let's move on to today's second expression.

Jeremy: Second expression, cool.

Andrew: Yeah, second expression and you'll have to put your detective hat on for this one, maybe. Or maybe take it off because this expression is: **to not have a clue**. To not have a clue, clue C-L-U-E, clue. To not have a clue, OK. **To not have a clue**.

Jeremy: I don't have a clue, he doesn't have a clue, she doesn't have a clue, right?

Andrew: Exactly, exactly. OK, so to go back to that detective metaphor that I just used, a detective looks for information, looks for clues to help him solve a mystery, right?

Jeremy: Yeah.

Andrew: But if he doesn't have a clue, then he can't solve the mystery so he doesn't have any information. So, he doesn't know something, right?

Jeremy: Yeah.

- Andrew: So, OK if we put all of this together then we can deduce that to not have a clue means to not know something, or to not understand something. Is that accurate?
- Jeremy: Yeah, I agree. I think a similar expression is to have no idea. We also say that also.
- Andrew: Yup, to have no idea, to not have a clue. Totally common and frequent ways to say, "I don't know" in English.
- Jeremy: I think it's even stronger than just I don't know. If I say, I don't know that's maybe normal but **I have no clue** is a much stronger way, I totally don't know.
- Andrew: Yeah, yeah it means a 100%, like not even a little bit do I know the answer to this question. **I don't have a clue**.
- Jeremy: Yeah, yeah.
- Andrew: OK, so if we compare today's two expressions, **it beats me** and **I don't have a clue**, or even I have no idea all of these three. Do you sense a difference between them or are they pretty much the same in your opinion?
- Jeremy: Only in usage, I think the meaning is the same. **It beats me** sounds a quick answer to a question, someone asks you where's the bathroom? Beats me.
- But **I have no clue**, I think you can use it in more situations, when you're talking about something you don't know well about like **I have no clue** how to fix a car, you can say that but you can't say, fixing a car beats me. You can't say that.
- Andrew: Right, right.
- Jeremy: Right? So maybe the usage is the biggest difference. What do you think?
- Andrew: I agree with you. I think in terms of meaning they're all the same. But yeah to not have a clue is used in more situations as well. As we were talking about earlier, **beats me** is very informal right? It's usually used in casual conversation among friends but it would be totally normal to hear to not have a clue used in pretty formal situations like maybe even government debates, like you might hear a congress member say the President doesn't have a clue how **to run this country**, or something like that. That would be acceptable.
- Jeremy: Yeah, I agree with you. That's a good point as well.

Andrew: Well, I don't think there's too much more to explain with this expression so let's move on to some examples.

Jeremy: All right.

Friend 1: Can you give me a hand? I'm trying to delete this app off my phone but, I don't know how to do it.

Friend 2: Me either, I'm **terrible with** technology. **I don't have a clue** how to do that. Sorry.

Andrew: In this example a guy, actually a very old man, he needs a hand deleting an app off his phone, but he doesn't know how to do it. So, what does he do? Well he asks a friend for help, but his friend tells him he also doesn't know how to do it, he says **he doesn't have a clue**. Right on. OK let's listen to the final example for today's episode.

Friend 1: Hey man, have you started working on the assignment for math class?

Friend 2: Yeah, it's pretty difficult. It's going to take me longer than I thought.

Friend 1: Do you have any idea how to answer number 3? **I don't have a clue**.

Friend 2: Check out the notes from last weeks' lecture. I found them really helpful when I worked on that question.

Friend 1: OK, awesome. **Will do**, thanks.

Jeremy: In this example, a couple of class mates chat about an upcoming math assignment. One of the students asks for help with question number 3 because it's really difficult and **he doesn't have a clue** how to solve it. And again here, **doesn't have a clue** means he doesn't know. He doesn't know how to solve the math problem. So, the student's friend suggests reviewing the notes from a previous lecture and trying again.

Andrew: You know Jeremy, when I was in math class and I would ask a friend that question like ah did you get the answer to number 3? It was really tough right? I would hate it when my friends said just check your notes.



Jeremy: Give me the answer.

Andrew: Give me the answer, what I want you to do is give me the answer.

All right, well everyone, that about wraps it up for us today. I want to thank you for listening and if you have any comments, questions, drop us a line. You can send us a message via our Facebook page which is [Facebook.com/culipspodcast](https://www.facebook.com/culipspodcast) or you could email us directly at contact@culips.com.

Jeremy: You can find more episodes of the show at Culip.com or wherever you get your podcasts.

Andrew: Remember the study guide for this episode is online now, at Culips.com. Everyone we will be back soon with another episode, so stay tuned for that.

Jeremy: Bye for now.

Andrew: Bye.

Announcer: Do you like listening to Culips? If so, please show your support by leaving Culips a 5-star rating and a review on iTunes or Stitcher. This helps new listeners find the show. So don't delay, rate and review today.

Detailed Explanations

Beats me

Idiom

Beats me is an expression you can say when you don't know the answer to what you are being asked. It's also a fixed expression. You can't say beats you, beats us, or it beat me.

Here's an example with **beats me**:

Barry:	Have you been reading anything interesting of late?
Nancy:	I've been reading this great book on international trade. I'm learning new things.
Barry:	Like what?
Nancy:	Well, I've long known that crude oil is the most traded commodity in the world, but do you know what's number two?
Barry:	Beats me.
Nancy:	It's coffee.
Barry:	Coffee's number two? Wow. I should open up a coffee shop.

To not have a clue

Idiom

To not have a clue is to not know at all, to the extent that you don't even know where to start searching for the answer. It's a pretty extreme form of ignorance, although most people use it with some exaggeration.

Here's an example with **to not have a clue**:

Husband:	What's wrong, dear? You seemed distressed.
Wife:	I am! I'm looking for the warranty on the oven. Do you know where it is?
Husband:	I haven't a clue . You've always been in charge of those documents.
Wife:	I know. That's why I'm not happy. Would you help me look for it?
Husband:	OK. Where have you looked so far?

You may or may not know this

Idiom

The expression **you may or may not know this** is used in two ways: 1) when you want to set up what comes next and you are not sure how much the other person already knows, and 2) to point out, ironically, that everyone already knows what you're talking about.

Here are two examples with **you may or may not know this**:

Karen:	Hey Beth, long time, no see!
Beth:	I know, right? How have you been? Are you still running marathons?
Karen:	Oh, I had to give those up. You may or may not know this , but I had a bit of a health scare last year.
Beth:	That's terrible. How are you now?
Karen:	Much better. Just no marathons.

Bill:	Wait, is that a shopping bag full of chocolate?
Greg:	Now, you may or may not know this , but I really like chocolate.
Bill:	We all know you do, but a whole bag full?
Greg:	Don't judge me!
Bill:	OK, OK, don't worry. Umm, do you mind if I have some?
Greg:	Like I said, I really like chocolate. So... no!

Milestone

Noun

Originally, a **milestone** was a stone on the side of the road that indicated the road's distance in miles. While those still exist, nowadays we use the term **milestone** to mean an important marker in one's life or career, like having your 50th birthday, completing 30 years of service at your company, or graduating from high school.

Here are two more examples with **milestone**:

Vera:	We're having a surprise birthday party for Jack this Friday. We would love for you to come.
Carly:	Sure. But you don't usually have a party for Jack's birthday. Why this time?
Vera:	He's hitting the big five-oh.
Carly:	He's turning 50 this year? Wow, that's an important milestone . How does he feel about that?
Vera:	We'll see on Friday.

Dale:	Let's get tickets for the baseball game tomorrow.
Beth:	Tomorrow? I'd rather stay in and watch it on TV.
Dale:	We really should go to the ballpark. It might be a big night. Perez is one homerun away from 600.
Beth:	Wow, that's a pretty important milestone . Imagine catching that ball.
Dale:	I know! That's why we should get some tickets.

To run [something]

Idiom

In this episode, Andrew gives an example of how a president might not know how to run the country. **To run [something]** is a very common expression used to say you are in charge. Presidents or prime ministers **run** countries and CEOs **run** companies. Even though they do not actually operate everything in the country or the company, **to run** is still a common way of saying they are in charge.

Here are two more examples with to run [something]:

Ben:	How have things been at the store?
Laura:	Quite good, especially since Gary started working here.
Ben:	Yeah, I heard he's doing a great job.
Laura:	Great? He's practically running the store.
Ben:	Then maybe you can take the day off every now and then.

Charles:	We have another meeting today.
Harriet:	Who called it?
Charles:	Pete.
Harriet:	Oh, no. He has no idea how to run a meeting. It's going to be awful.
Charles:	I know. I'm thinking of calling in sick.
Harriet:	You can't do that.
Charles:	Why not?
Harriet:	Because <i>I'm</i> going to call in sick!



To be terrible with [something]

Idiom

In this episode, one friend says he is **terrible with** technology. **To be terrible with [something]** is to have no skill or no aptitude with something. You can say you are **terrible with** children because they always cry when you hold them. You can also say you are **terrible at** something, such as mathematics.

Here are two more examples with **to be terrible with [something]**:

Dawn:	Oh, would you mind looking after my little Britney for a few minutes while I run to the bank?
Chandra:	Umm, how long exactly? I'm terrible with children.
Dawn:	Only a few minutes. I'm sure you'll get along fine.
Chandra:	OK. But don't be too long. I might start to panic. And don't tell Britney that!

Colby:	Can you help me for a sec?
Mike:	What with?
Colby:	I'm going over our travel expenses and they don't seem to add up. Here, take a look.
Mike:	Oh, I'm terrible with numbers. I don't think I would be much help.
Colby:	Could you at least take a look? This is your money, too.

Will do

Idiomatic verb

Will do is a very common way of shortening the phrase, "I will do that." Near the end of this episode, one friend says **will do** to the other, confirming he will take his friend up on the suggestion. In more informal settings, you can say **will do** to confirm you will do what has just been asked of you or suggested.

Here are two more examples with **will do**:

Bernadette:	Hey, when you come for supper tomorrow, would you mind bringing those brownie bites you make so well?
Georgia:	Frosted or non-frosted?
Bernadette:	I think my son prefers frosted.
Georgia:	OK then, will do .
Bernadette:	Great, thanks!

Fred:	I think I need new brake pads.
Mechanic:	Alright, I'll check them out.
Fred:	And please change the engine oil afterward.
Mechanic:	Will do .
Fred:	And check the transmission too, please.
Mechanic:	Sure thing. Anything else?
Fred:	If you see anything that needs fixing, let me know. Thanks.



Quiz

1. Which of the following is NOT considered a major milestone?

- a) getting your driver's license
- b) graduating from high school
- c) going to a new Starbucks for the first time
- d) finishing your first marathon

2. If I had difficulty with a question on a test, can I say, "It beat me"?

- a) yes
- b) no

3. Which of the following has the same sense as "to run a country"?

- a) to run a race
- b) to run a company
- c) to run your mouth
- d) to run out of money

4. To not have a clue is to be _____.

- a) clued in
- b) clueless
- c) unskilled
- d) undressed

5. To be terrible with names is to _____.

- a) forget other people's names
- b) not like your name
- c) not care about other people's names
- d) have a nickname



Writing or Discussion Questions

1. Have you ever found yourself in a situation where you didn't have a clue? Describe it.
2. Are you good at math? Which was your best subject at school? Do you think you could still pass a high school test in that subject?
3. How would you use the expression "you may or may not know this" ironically? Is there something that absolutely everyone knows about you?
4. What is something you would be really good at running? (For example, a business, a meeting, a show, etc.).
5. In this episode, the hosts use the expression "shouldn't be a problem," which you might say if you have plenty of confidence. In what kinds of situations do you have plenty of confidence?

Quiz Answers

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

Episode credits

Hosts: Andrew Bates and Jeremy Brinkerhoff

Music: *Something Elated* by Broke For Free, *Step On* by Jahzzar

Episode preparation/research: Andrew Bates

Audio editor: Andrew Bates

Transcriptionist: Heather Bates

Study guide writer: Matty Warnock

English editor: Andrew Bates

Operations: Tsuyoshi Kaneshima

Image: Chris Liverani (Unsplash.com)