

Catch Word #204 – A buzzkill

Episode description

Is there someone in your life who is boring and pessimistic, and ruins all of your fun? Have you ever wondered what you could call that type of person in English? Well, look no further! In today's Catch Word episode, Andrew and Jeremy give you some perfect expressions to use.

Fun fact

Buzz is an example of an onomatopoeia, a word that resembles the sound it describes. Some other examples are slap, zoom, and flap.

Expressions included in the study guide

- Buzzkill
- To suck the air out of the room
- Downer
- Peer pressure
- Drop a line
- Wordy



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.

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's it going?

Jeremy: Pretty good. You know, I have a question for you.

Andrew: Shoot.

Jeremy: Does anyone call you Drew in your family?

Andrew: Yeah, how did you know?

Jeremy: Well, I have a couple friends named Andrew and I call them Drew, usually.

Andrew: OK. Yeah, my sister especially calls me Drew, and my mom sometimes. None of my friends call me Drew, though. Some of my friends call me Andy.

Jeremy: Andy, that's another one.

Andrew: I get Andrew, Drew, Andy, all three are good to me. I will respond to all three.

Jeremy: You know, I'm curious since our listeners are probably from different countries all over the world, I wonder if other people in other countries, in other languages, make nicknames like this. If they shorten the name or if they use a certain part of the name to make a nickname.

Andrew: That's a good point. I have no idea, I think probably nicknames are universal, though. Maybe.

Jeremy: Maybe if our listeners out there would like to go to our Culips Facebook page, they can let us know if there are nicknames in their language, their culture, and how that works. I think that would be interesting.

Andrew: Yeah, we would love to hear about your nicknames, too, listeners, if you have some. So our Facebook page is [Facebook.com/CulipsPodcast](https://www.facebook.com/CulipsPodcast), and we look forward to your comments.

But today our episode topic—it's actually a Catch Word episode that we'll do today, and we will teach you two expressions you can use to describe people who are boring, or people who are unpleasant to hang around.

Jeremy: Unpleasant.

Andrew: Unpleasant, yes. So, before we get started, just a quick reminder that the study guide for this episode is available on our website, Culips.com, and it's great. It's a very nice way to study along with this episode, and we think you'll find it very helpful. So if you're interested in downloading the study guide, just visit Culips.com and you can do that.

Jeremy, what's our first expression for today?

Jeremy: Our first expression today is, well, a word we could say, is **buzzkill**. Or to be a **buzzkill**. So, he is a **buzzkill**, oh, what a **buzzkill**. That kind of thing.

Andrew: **Buzzkill**. B-U-Z-Z-K-I-L-L.

Jeremy: **Buzzkill**. Now, maybe people might want to know what buzz means?

Andrew: Yeah, buzz. Buzz, kind of like a good vibe or energy. Positive energy, it's the buzz. You know, sometimes we could say that an atmosphere feels electric, right? It's kind of alive and popping.

Jeremy: Zzz, that sound.

Andrew: It's like Zzz. If you go to, you know, a party or a gala and there's just a special feeling in the air. This is a buzz.

Jeremy: It's also the sound that a bee makes, right? A bumblebee.

Andrew: Yeah, lots of energy, right? You can imagine the bee buzzing around everywhere. Quickly moving from plant to plant and just being really busy, this hecticness, this energy abuzz.

Jeremy: So when is this expression used, mostly?

Andrew: So if a buzz is this positive energy, then a **buzzkill** is somebody that kills this positive atmosphere, this pleasant atmosphere. We usually use this when we're talking about social situations, like a party or a dinner party, or a gathering of people. And a **buzzkill** is somebody who is just a **downer**, who makes the mood negative because, well, that person is just a negative person or they're depressed. They just kill the good vibe.

Jeremy: It's interesting that you say that, because maybe I misinterpreted this expression, but sometimes we also say, if you've been drinking a little bit, so you're not very drunk, but you have a buzz. We say if I drink, you know, one beer, I have a little buzz. Meaning I'm a little bit intoxicated, I feel a little bit drunk and I always thought that a **buzzkill** is someone who ruins that feeling of buzz. But maybe it's the same thing, it's good vibes, good vibrations.

Andrew: Yeah, actually, I think you are absolutely right that this expression can also be expanded to that category, right? Where you have one or two drinks, you're feeling a little buzzed, and then somebody does something to take away that slight drunken feeling that you have. I could say, hey, man, stop killing my buzz, come on.

Jeremy: I think an easy way to remember a **buzzkill** is if you have been drinking a little bit, you feel good, and then someone pours cold water on your head. That is a **buzzkill**.

Andrew: Now that's a **buzzkill**, yes.

Jeremy: That's a **buzzkill**.

Andrew: That's a **buzzkill**.

All right, Jeremy, let's listen to a couple of examples using this expression, to be a **buzzkill**.

Friend 1: I think it's time for me to head home. It's getting pretty late.

Friend 2: What are you talking about? It's only 10 p.m. Stop being a **buzzkill**. Have another drink.

Friend 1: OK, fine. But after that I'm definitely going home. OK?

Jeremy: In this example, a guy wants to leave a party but his friend convinces him not to leave by calling him a **buzzkill**. Let's listen to that part again.

Friend 2: Stop being a **buzzkill**. Have another drink.
Stop being a **buzzkill**. Have another drink.

Jeremy: So, a **buzzkill** is someone who ruins a positive, social environment. I think here, if he leaves, he will ruin the positive, social atmosphere for his friends. Maybe his friends won't have anyone to hang out with, or maybe they really enjoy his company and if he leaves then that will ruin their positive situation. So his friends are applying some **peer pressure** to keep him there by calling him a **buzzkill**.

Andrew: That's right.

Jeremy: **Buzzkill**.

Andrew: And maybe every time you call somebody a **buzzkill** to their face, you have to be careful because it could be offensive.

Jeremy: When I was younger, if I was having a party when my parents were gone and then my parents come home, that's a **buzzkill** for everyone 'cause no more party. The party is over.

Andrew: Party's over. Absolutely. OK, let's listen to one more example using the expression **buzzkill**.

Friend 1: Who should we invite to the dinner party next week? Do you have any ideas?

Friend 2: Whatever you do, don't invite Darren, OK?

Friend 1: Why not Darren?

Friend 2: That dude is such a **buzzkill**. He's seriously the most depressing person to be around.

Friend 1: Yeah, he actually kind of is. OK, no Darren this time.

Friend 2: All right, good.

Andrew: In this example, two friends decide not to invite Darren to their dinner party. They think that Darren is a **buzzkill**, he's depressing, and he ruins good vibes. OK, let's take a listen again to one of the friends describing Darren.

Friend 2: That dude is such a **buzzkill**.
That dude is such a **buzzkill**.

Andrew: So, because Darren is a **buzzkill**, because he's depressing to be around, he won't get invited to this dinner party this time. Sorry, Darren.

Jeremy: Poor Darren, he needs some help, maybe.

Andrew: I hope things improve for him. Hope he stops being a **buzzkill**.

Jeremy: Good luck, Darren. We wish you the best.

Andrew: Indeed.

All right, let's move on to today's second and final expression. Jeremy, could you let us know what it is?

Jeremy: The second expression is **to suck the air out of the room**.

Andrew: Like a vacuum cleaner.

Jeremy: Yeah, so I guess the air is kind of similar to the environment, right? We say there was an air about the room, or there was, you know, we use that expression sometimes. It's not very common. So the air can kind of be equivalent to vibes?

Andrew: Yup, the atmosphere. The electric feeling that a room or an event can have. So, if we can imagine somebody sucking up all the air out of the room, what would happen to everybody else? If you're sitting, let's say, around a dinner table at a dinner party and one person breathes all the air, that means that person is doing very well and everybody else is suffocating, right? They're not doing well, they're dying.

Jeremy: Yeah, all the air is gone.

Andrew: All the air is gone. One person is lively and active and the other people are dying. And so, actually, there's two nuances to this expression, OK? So the first context, **to suck the air out of the room**, it means one person is dominating a social event, all right? One person is very lively, speaking all the time, telling all the jokes, telling all the stories, and nobody else can participate in the conversation. This is **sucking the air out of the room**.

And in the second context, **to suck the air out of the room** means that you are consuming all the air, everybody else is suffocating, they're dying in the room, but why? Not because you're so lively, because you're so boring, all right? It's like, oh my god, this guy's **sucking all the air out of the room**, he's just so boring.

Jeremy: He's wasting the air by being alive in the room.



Andrew: That's right, that's right. So, yeah, it can mean those two different nuances. Somebody who's dominating in a bad way, dominating a social event. He or she or they are taking up too much space at the event. Could be emotional space, physical space, conversational space. They're just being greedy, OK? **Sucking the air out of the room.** Or they're being extremely boring. This is **sucking the air out of the room.**

Jeremy: I actually don't use this expression too much. I've heard it before.

Andrew: It's common to hear, but I also don't use it every day. It has to be in a very specific context. I think the context that I would maybe use this expression in relates to a very boring speaker. So maybe not at a party but, you know, if I watched a TED Talk and the speaker was just not charismatic, very dry, dull, boring.

Jeremy: Monotone.

Andrew: Monotone. I would say, that guy **sucks the air out of the room**, maybe in regards to a performance or a speech, something like that. A politician, even, could **suck the air out of the room.**

Jeremy: Yeah, definitely they do, some of them. I think for people who are learning English, they don't have to use this expression, but they can learn about the way English speakers make analogies or metaphors. So here the air is used to mean sort of the ambience, the environment, the feeling in the room. Not oxygen necessarily, right? So in that way, this kind of expression is helpful.

Andrew: Yeah, and when I was doing some research on this expression and I Googled it, many of the results were from English learners saying what does this mean?

Jeremy: Oh, interesting.

Andrew: What is the nuance to this expression? So, I think it can maybe be confusing to some learners if they encounter it the first time. So, yeah, it's a good one to know for comprehension and, like you said, Jeremy, to get into the mindset of an English speaker, definitely.

I think we can move on and listen to a couple of examples now. So, let's get to it. Let's listen to an example.

Roommate 1: Where are you going?

Roommate 2: I'm going to go see a talk by Dr. Brown. You wanna come? It's about 20th century art, should be interesting.

Roommate 1: Ugh, no way. Dr. Brown is so boring. He **sucks all the air out of the room**. I took his class last semester and seriously wanted to kill myself.

Roommate 2: Yeah, he is a little bit dry, but he knows his stuff. Anyway, I guess you won't be coming along. I'll see you later.

Jeremy: In this example, two roommates talk about one of their university professors, Dr. Brown. One of the roommates likes him, the other says that he **sucks the air out of the room**. In this context, this means that Dr. Brown is boring. Figuratively, he **sucks all the air out of the room**, which leaves no oxygen for other people to breathe. So they suffocate and die, metaphorically speaking. Dr. Brown is boring to that extent. Let's listen to one of the roommates describe Dr. Brown again.

Roommate 1: Dr. Brown is so boring. He **sucks all the air out of the room**.
Dr. Brown is so boring. He **sucks all the air out of the room**.

Andrew: All right, so, yeah, Dr. Brown is just a boring guy. He **sucks all the air out of the room** and that's too bad because 20th century art is really fascinating and interesting, but this guy kills the subject. Come on, Dr. Brown, come on.

Jeremy: Many, many professors do that.

Andrew: Yes, unfortunately. I maybe have been inspired from real-life events with this example.

Jeremy: Is this a real professor?

Andrew: No comment, no comment.

Jeremy: Oh, OK. We'll keep Dr. Brown anonymous.

Andrew: Yes, yes. All right, one more example with **to suck the air out of the room**. Here we go.

Friend 1: How's was your family dinner last night?

Friend 2: It was fine, but my uncle **sucked all the air out of the room**, as usual.

Friend 1: Oh, yeah?

Friend 2: Yeah, he just talks and talks and talks. He's a good guy but really **wordy**.

Friend 1: You just have to grin and bear it. Just smile and nod.

Friend 2: That's right, smile and nod. Yup.

Andrew: In this example, we heard about an uncle who dominates at family functions. He talks so much that no one else has an opportunity to speak. And when someone does this, we can say they **suck all the air out of the room**. It's all about them, it's all about that person, and no one else can get a word in, they can't talk. They can't tell stories or joke around.

OK, well, guys, let's recap what we studied today. And today we actually learned two expressions that can be used to describe people who are depressing or boring or unpleasant to be around. OK, the first expression was to be a **buzzkill** and the second was **to suck all the air out of the room**.

If you'd like to practice using these expressions, why don't you head on over to our Facebook page. Check out the Facebook post for this episode and leave some example sentences in the comments, and we're happy to take a look at them for you and give you some feedback on them if required.

All right, Jeremy, that brings us to the end. We did it.

Jeremy: We did it. **Sucked all the air out of the room**.

Andrew: I hope not. I hope people are still listening. Yeah, well, thank you for listening, everyone. If you have any comments, questions, suggestions for future episodes, even, **drop us a line**. You can reach us by email at contact@Culips.com or shoot me a message andrew@Culips.com.

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

Andrew: And we will be back soon with another episode, so stay tuned for that. Bye everybody.

Jeremy: Bye for now.

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Detailed Explanations

Buzzkill

Noun

Buzzkill refers to someone who ruins the good atmosphere in any given situation, usually by acting pessimistic, boring, or standoffish. Another name for a **buzzkill** is a killjoy, which is literally a person who “kills the joy.”

Here’s one more example with **buzzkill**:

Haroon:	Have you met the guy Maira’s dating?
Amar:	Oh, yeah, man. What a buzzkill . The three of us had a few drinks together the other night and he wouldn’t stop droning on about the effects of alcohol on the body. It was awkward.
Haroon:	I’m guessing he was having soda, then?
Amar:	Seltzer and lemon. He really knows how to ruin the mood.

To suck the air out of the room

Idiom

To suck the air out of the room is a pretty straightforward phrase; it means that someone is so boring or so disturbing that everyone is made extremely uncomfortable, as if the air really was being sucked out of the room. The air in this phrase is equivalent to the mood of the room, so when someone **sucks the air out of the room**, they are really sucking the good mood from the room.

Here's one more example with **to suck the air out of the room**:

Cathy:	How was your date with that guy? What's his name again? Deryll?
Charlotte:	Yeah, Deryll. I'm gonna have to break up with him.
Cathy:	What, why? He's intelligent, has a nice job, isn't bad looking—what's the matter?
Charlotte:	It's because he has literally no humour. He tried to tell a joke last week at the dinner party we went to and he sucked the air out of the room . It was embarrassing.

Downer

Noun

A **downer** is very similar to a buzzkill or killjoy. A **downer** is someone or something that brings down the mood by being depressing. Anything or anyone that makes your mood or happiness levels go down is considered a **downer**.

Here are a couple more examples with **downer**:

Justine:	Did you see the news today?
Chen:	Nah, the news is always such a downer . I try to avoid watching it as much as possible.
Justine:	Well, our old high school friend just won the lottery. I saw it on Channel 6.
Chen:	Really? Well, that's interesting, for once! Maybe we should call her.

Jude:	Hey, let's go fishing after school.
Ray:	No, I'm OK.
Jude:	OK, how about checking out the new burger place?
Ray:	No, I'm just gonna go home. I'm not really in the mood to hang out.
Jude:	C'mon, man. Ever since your girlfriend broke up with you, you've been such a downer . You've gotta get over it.

Peer pressure

Noun

Peer pressure means to feel pressured to do something because everyone else is doing it. Young teenagers often feel **peer pressured** into drinking, doing drugs, and engaging in sexual activity because all of their friends are doing it; if they don't do those things, they feel uncool, unpopular, and isolated.

Here are a couple more examples with **peer pressure**:

Jane:	So, when did you start smoking?
Alice:	When I was in high school. I was kind of peer pressured into it. All of my friends were doing it, so I just felt like I should too, you know? Now it's so hard for me to quit. I've tried to quit six or seven times.
Jane:	Yeah, peer pressure sucks. Once, my friends convinced me to shoplift. They said it would be because they'd all done it before. I got caught and my mom had to come and apologize to the store owner.
Alice:	Wow, that sucks.

Francine:	OK, everyone. This is your first day of college. College is a great place for learning, discovering yourself, and making friends. However, I want to caution you not to fall into the traps of peer pressure . A lot of your fellow students will be overindulging in alcohol, drugs, and sexual promiscuity. Don't follow their path. Remember: you are here to get an education.
Max:	Francine, stop being such a buzzkill.
Francine:	I am certainly NOT a buzzkill. I'm simply warning them of the dangers that await them if they try to have too much "fun" rather than studying.
Max:	Francine's got a point, everyone. But also don't forget to let loose a little and try new things!

Drop a line

Idiom

Drop a line means to contact someone, usually with a note, letter, email, or phone call. The word line in this phrase means a few words. So, **drop us a line** means send us a few words or, in other words, contact us. At the end of this episode, Andrew asks listeners to **drop a line** to the Culips email address with any comments, questions, or suggestions.

Here's one more example of **drop a line**:

Jeff:	Hey, Charlie. It was great catching up today.
Charlie:	Yeah, definitely. We talked about going to a baseball game together. If you're free, just drop me a line . I'll get us some sweet tickets.
Jeff:	You got it!

Wordy Adjective

If a person is **wordy**, it means they are overly talkative. **Wordy** people tend to drone on about a topic, boring those who must listen to them. If a piece of writing is **wordy**, it means it is a very dense and boring text; the author uses too many words to express his meaning.

Here are a couple more examples with **wordy**:

Chase: I really don't want to go to history class today.

Miguel: I totally understand. Professor Stump is so **wordy**. It takes him 15 minutes even to answer the simplest of questions.

Chase: Yeah, for sure. I guess it's a good opportunity for me to take a nap, though.

Terrance: Have you read War and Peace?

Melody: Nope, too **wordy** for me. I couldn't read more than a page without falling asleep. I prefer books I can read quickly and easily.

Terrance: Yeah, dense classics aren't for everyone. I will recommend Les Misérables, though. It's also a bit **wordy**, but it's got a really interesting story.

Melody: OK, I'll try it. Thanks for the suggestion!

Quiz

1. What does it mean to drop a line?

- a) to drop a piece of string
- b) to delete a sentence when writing
- c) to contact someone
- d) to lose a friend

2. Which is an example of peer pressure? Choose all that apply.

- a) stressing over a big test
- b) drinking alcohol because everyone else is
- c) wearing a hat backwards to appear cool
- d) getting nervous giving a public speech

3. Which is not another word for buzzkill?

- a) party animal
- b) downer
- c) killjoy
- d) fun-sucker

4. True or false? To suck the air out of the room means to be so hot that it makes it difficult to breathe.

- a) true
- b) false

5. Which is NOT an example of wordy?

- a) a person who talks about the colour blue for 40 minutes
- b) a 700-page book with no pictures
- c) a person who loves learning new words

Writing and Discussion Questions:

1. Do you know anyone who is a buzzkill? Why would you call them that?
2. What kind of person would you describe as being incredibly boring?
3. Is there an idiom in your native language that has a similar meaning to the phrase to suck the air out of the room? What is a rough translation of that phrase?
4. Have you ever experienced peer pressure? How so?
5. Do you like reading dense, wordy books? Why or why not?

Quiz Answers

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

Episode credits

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