

Catch Word #205 – Whatever floats your boat

Episode description

In this week's episode, Andrew and Jeremy teach you two new idioms about preferences. These idioms do not describe your own preferences, but rather are phrases you can use when describing other people's preferences, interests, and quirks. Let's find out what they are!

Fun fact

Do you know why boats float? It's because of a phenomenon called displacement, discovered by the Greek scientist Archimedes a couple thousand years ago. When an object is placed in water, it pushes water out of the way to make room for itself—this is called displacement. If the weight of the object is less than the weight of water displaced, the object will float. Boats float because the water they displace weighs more than the boats themselves. Cool, right?

Expressions included in the study guide

- Whatever floats your boat
- To each their own
- Stupendous
- To be into [something]
- Can't stand [something]
- Nuts



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 there, Jeremy, how's it going?

Jeremy: It's going pretty well for me, Andrew. How about yourself?

Andrew: I'm doing OK, but I have an annoying mosquito bite on my ankle that's kind of driving me crazy.

Jeremy: Yeah.

Andrew: It's mosquito season.

Jeremy: Those mosquitos will get ya.

Andrew: They will get ya, yeah.

Jeremy: Always out for blood.

Andrew: Yeah, they love it, and I'm kind of a buffet for mosquitos. For whatever reason, they're really attracted to me. And I go jogging by a little stream in the evening, and I think I'm gonna have to find a different place to jog because it's just crazy right now. There are too many mosquitos at the stream.

Jeremy: That's unfortunate. Have you tried using mosquito repellent?

Andrew: I think that's the next step. I'm always a little bit hesitant with that kind of thing. You know, I always think this can't be good for me, for my body, to be absorbing this kind of chemical. But it's probably better than a mosquito bite, right? Save myself the pain.

- Jeremy: Maybe, yeah. Some of them are better than others, like lemongrass. Things with lemongrass in it are good—mosquitos don't like lemongrass.
- Andrew: OK, good tip. I'll try it out and I'll let you know how it goes.
- Jeremy: Yeah, maybe one of our listeners can give you some better tips for fighting off mosquitos.
- Andrew: Yeah, that's a great idea. So, everyone, if you have a home remedy or special tip for keeping mosquitos at bay, keeping them away from you, let us know. I would be super interested to find out any special techniques for getting the mosquitos to stop biting me.
- Jeremy: Save Andrew, everyone. Save Andrew.
- Andrew: Help me.
- Well, Jeremy, let's change the subject completely, because today we're actually doing a Catch Word episode.
- Jeremy: Catch Word.
- Andrew: Yeah, for people who don't know, Catch Word is our vocabulary series where we teach interesting and useful idioms, phrasal verbs, and expressions. And the topic, actually, for this episode is that we'll teach everyone how to use two English expressions that can be used when you're talking about other people's preferences or things other people like. But maybe you don't necessarily like it, but other people enjoy it. So how we can express this idea in English using two idiomatic expressions.
- But just before we get into it, I want to let everyone know that there is a study guide available for this episode. And if you'd like to study along with that guide, just visit our website, Culips.com, and you can find all the information there about how to access the study guide and what's included. It's a really awesome way to study with Culips and we highly recommend it. So definitely visit our website, Culips.com, for information about that study guide.
- Jeremy: All right. So, what are our expressions today, Andrew?
- Andrew: Well, our first expression is **whatever floats your boat. Whatever floats your boat.**
- Jeremy: Wouldn't that just be water?

Andrew: Yeah, literally it would be water. But we use this expression a little differently than that, it's not a literal expression, it's an idiomatic expression. And when we say **whatever floats your boat**, we're talking about something that makes someone else happy. Someone else's preference, someone else's belief, OK? It's not necessarily something that you like or that you support or that you believe in, but something that somebody else believes in or supports or makes them happy. That is **whatever floats your boat**.

Jeremy: So maybe if someone doesn't believe that lemongrass will deter mosquitos and I tell them that it does, maybe they could say this to me?

Andrew: Yeah, exactly, that's a great example. So, let's pretend that you have a conviction, a strong belief that lemongrass repels mosquitos. So the lemongrass keeps the mosquitos away, but I think that's a kooky idea. I think there's no way that can be true, all right? So maybe, Jeremy, you tell me, oh, Andrew, you need to try lemongrass, it's really effective. I could say, no way, man, but **whatever floats your boat**. Like, you believe that, that's OK, but it's not for me—that kind of context, we can use this expression in.

Jeremy: So when someone says this, usually they are disagreeing with the other person?

Andrew: Yeah, there's an element of disagreement, right? It's a disagreement, but you're not arguing, you're open-minded, right? I don't agree with you that lemongrass is effective for repelling mosquitos, but that doesn't mean I'm anti-lemongrass right? It's fine, I don't hate lemongrass, I just don't think it's for me. It's not something that I will believe in.

So, actually, you hear this expression used often in debates and conversations about topics that are very divisive or that can divide people. So topics like politics, topics like religion, philosophy, lifestyle, right? In North America where we have very multicultural countries, there are lots of different people mixed together that have different belief systems, different ways of living, different ideas. But we all have to live together, so, you know, your neighbour might do something differently, maybe they eat a food that you think smells funny.

Jeremy: Kimchi.

Andrew: Yeah, OK. Like maybe you have Korean neighbours and they're eating kimchi and you've never tried kimchi before. So you're like, wow, that's weird, why would they wanna eat that, smells funny. You're like, **whatever floats your boat**, like, if you enjoy it, that's fine, I'm not gonna eat it. But that's fine, that kind of idea.

Jeremy: Or you could change the word your to their if you're talking about a group of people, **whatever floats their boat**.

Andrew: Right, right.

Jeremy: **Whatever floats his boat**. His boat, her boat, their boat. You can change the pronoun there.

Andrew: Absolutely. That's a good point. So, just to summarize, when you say the expression **whatever floats your boat, whatever floats their boat, his boat, her boat**, etc, you're saying that someone else's preference or belief or lifestyle is different from yours and you don't necessarily agree with it, but you're open-minded and accept that it is appropriate for that person, just not for you.

And with that being said, Jeremy, I think we can move on to the examples with this expression, **whatever floats your boat**. So let's take a listen to example number one.

Jeremy: All right.

Friend 1: Hey, Roy, your birthday's coming up soon. How would you like to celebrate?

Friend 2: Actually, I'm not really sure what I wanna do, Charlie.

Friend 1: It's your birthday, we can do **whatever floats your boat**.

Friend 2: Um, well, then, how about a big backyard barbecue party?

Friend 1: Sounds **stupendous**. Let's do it, man.

Andrew: In that example, two friends, Roy and Charlie, talk about Roy's upcoming birthday party. Charlie says that Roy can do **whatever floats his boat**, it's his birthday, it's his party. He can do what he wants to. OK, so this means when Charlie says that Roy can do **whatever floats his boat**, this means whatever he likes, he can celebrate his birthday in any way he likes.

Jeremy: All right, let's listen to the second example for this expression.

Friend 1: I heard Jared just bought a new tractor for his farm.

Friend 2: Wow, he must be excited.

Friend 1: Yeah, he was talking about it all day.

Friend 2: Yeah, that guy sure **is into farm equipment**, isn't he?

Friend 1: Yeah, it's kind of strange. I don't really get the appeal, but **whatever floats your boat**, right?

Jeremy: In this example, two friends talk about an acquaintance of theirs named Jared. Jared is really interested in farm equipment and actually just bought a new tractor for his farm. Although the two friends don't understand or share Jared's obsession with farm equipment, they acknowledge that it's a totally fine hobby by saying **whatever floats your boat**. This means that even though the friends don't get excited about farm equipment, they realize that it does make Jared happy and there is nothing wrong with that.

Andrew: Do you happen to know anybody in your personal life that has an obsession or a hobby related to farming equipment?

Jeremy: No, not really. I know one person who is a farmer. So he may be interested in farm equipment, but I don't know anyone who **is into farm equipment** as a hobby. Do you?

Andrew: No, I don't know anybody, either. But I saw a little video on YouTube about a guy that collects vintage farm equipment. **He's really into antique tractors** and vintage—I don't even know the name of the different machines that people use on farms, plows and hoes, all of those fun things. And I think that was the inspiration for this example.

Jeremy: Yeah, that makes sense. I can't imagine someone piling up farm equipment in their garage.

Andrew: Yes, it's hard to imagine. But there's gotta be that guy out there. There's a real-life Jared somewhere in the world, I'm sure of it.

Jeremy: Jared, if you are out there listening to this episode, please let us know if you exist and send a picture of your favourite piece of farm equipment.

Andrew: Right on. Let's move on to the second expression for today's episode, and that is **to each their own. To each their own.**

Jeremy: This is a very, very useful one.

Andrew: And actually it's quite similar to **whatever floats your boat**, isn't it?

Jeremy: Yes, it's basically the same meaning but, to me, it feels like the nuance is a little different. Do you agree?

Andrew: Yeah, I agree. When you say **whatever floats your boat**, you are open-minded to someone else's ideas or opinions or beliefs, but they're just not for you. But when you use **to each their own**, it's the same idea, you're saying that different people like different things, but I think when you use **to each their own**, you kind of disagree with the other person's decisions. What they like, what they believe, you're saying it's different from me and I don't really like it.

Jeremy: That's a good point. It's almost like saying I disagree, but **to each their own**. Meaning, I disagree, but it's OK, whereas **whatever floats your boat** seems more like if it makes you happy, that's OK, I respect your happiness.

Andrew: **To each their own** is a fixed expression, it can't be changed. It's always **to each their own**.

But I think one of the best ways for our listeners to get to understand the nuance of this expression is to listen to some examples. So why don't we listen to a couple of examples and we can explain the expression after listening to them.

Jeremy: Sure. Good idea.

Roommate 1: I'm cookin' chicken feet for dinner tonight, want some?

Roommate 2: Come on, man, you know I **can't stand eating chicken feet**.

Roommate 1: Why not? They're delish.

Roommate 2: I tried them once, I just don't like them. Sorry, man.

Roommate1: OK, OK. **To each their own**, I guess.

Andrew: In this example, two roommates are talking about dinner, and one of the roommates is going to eat chicken feet for dinner. The other roommate thinks chicken feet are gross, he doesn't like them. However, he realizes that his roommate is allowed to like chicken feet if he wants, so he says, **to each their own**, OK? So you can use the expression **to each their own** whenever somebody thinks differently than you do and you realize that that lifestyle, that preference, that opinion, that like is OK, but it's not for you. You don't wanna take part in it, so the roommate says eating chicken feet is fine, but I'm never gonna do it myself. And I think I hold this belief, Jeremy. Do you like chicken feet? Are you a chicken feet fan?

Jeremy: No, I do not.

- Andrew: I've tried chicken feet several times, never been able to get into them. Don't know what it is.
- Jeremy: Maybe it's the fact that they are chicken feet.
- Andrew: I think that's the main motivation behind my decision there, yes.
- Jeremy: Yeah, same here. Same here.
- Andrew: Let's listen to the last example for today's episode.

- Brother 1: Hey, let's go hiking tomorrow morning.
- Brother 2: That could be fun. What time are you thinking?
- Brother 1: I don't know, like, maybe 6 a.m.?
- Brother 2: What, are you **nuts**? 6 a.m.? There's no way I'm getting up that early.
- Brother 1: But mornings are the best time to go hiking. You can see the sunrise and everything.
- Brother 2: Thanks, but no thanks. Sorry.
- Brother 1: OK, **to each their own**.

- Jeremy: In this example, two brothers talk about going on an early-morning hike. One of the brothers wants to start the hike at 6 a.m. and the other can't understand why someone would ever want to wake up that early. We hear one of the brothers say **to each their own** in this example. He means that even though his brother doesn't want to get up early to go on the hike, he can understand why some people don't like waking up early, even though he himself prefers to get up early in the morning. So both these examples show this expression being directed at the other person. But we mentioned that it is always in the third person form. In fact, I think originally it was to each his own and this their or, you know, the possessive form of they, came about when gender equality, equality between men and woman, became more important in societies that spoke English.
- Andrew: Yeah, I think that's a trend that we've seen in English over the last 50 years, maybe, is the use of they and their and the different derivative forms of they to be a gender-neutral pronoun in English.
- Jeremy: And it is not plural, although normally is it a plural pronoun. We use it now to indicate a single third person who could be a man or a woman. So it's just a nonspecific gender pronoun, basically.

Andrew: Yup, it's a pronoun for everybody.

Jeremy: Exactly. They.

Andrew: That about wraps it up for today. I want to thank all of our listeners for tuning in, and we hope you learned a lot. And we encourage you to add these two expressions that we discussed today, **whatever floats your boat** and **to each their own**, to your English vocabulary, because it will really make your English stand out, sound more natural, and more like a native speaker's.

Once again, the study guide for this episode is available on our website, Culips.com, and that's also the place you can hear our back episodes, our previous episodes. So if you wanna dive deeper into our archive, our library, just visit Culips.com to do that. And if you'd like to get in touch with us, just send us a message. Our email address is contact@Culips.com. We're also on social media, on YouTube and Facebook and Twitter, so just search for Culips English podcast and you can find us that way.

All right, everybody, that is it for today. We will talk to you next time. Bye.

Jeremy: Take care, everyone. Bye.

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Detailed Explanations

Whatever floats your boat Idiom

Whatever floats your boat is an idiomatic expression that means to do whatever makes you happy. You might say this to someone when you don't agree with his opinion or preference, but you just want him to be happy. This is a very informal phrase, so it's best to use it only in casual situations.

Here's one more example with **whatever floats your boat**:

Rochelle:	I think I'm gonna dye my hair pink.
Monica:	Like, all of it?
Rochelle:	Yeah, why not? I think it'll be fun.
Monica:	Well, whatever floats your boat . I hope you don't regret it afterwards.

To each their own Idiom

To each their own is used to say that people like different things and that is all right. Fred might like spaghetti with red sauce, and Mike might hate spaghetti with red sauce and only like it with white sauce. In this case, you can say no problem—**to each their own**. This phrase means that each person has their own opinion and preference, and there is no problem with that.

Here's one more example with **to each their own**:

Matt:	Do you see that girl over there? She's a 10.
Jacques:	Really? A 10? I'd give her a 7. I'm not really into redheads.
Matt:	To each their own , dude. She's, like, one of the most beautiful girls I've ever seen!

Stupendous

Adjective

Stupendous means amazing, impressive, remarkable, or extraordinary. This is an informal word that is used in casual situations to describe something that is really great and wonderful.

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

Cheryl:	This chocolate cake is stupendous !
Martha:	I know! I could eat the whole thing in one sitting.
Cheryl:	We'll have to remember this restaurant and come back for Charlotte's birthday.
Martha:	Excellent idea!

Mike:	These birthday decorations are stupendous ! How long did it take you to put them up, honey?
Lisa:	About 3 hours. I want everything to be perfect for the twins' birthday party.
Mike:	Don't worry, it's gonna be a hit! You did an amazing job.
Lisa:	Thank you, sweetie. Now, let's check the list one more time.
Mike:	Ha ha, yes, ma'am!

To be into [something]

Idiom

To be into [something] means to be really interested in something. **Into [something]** is usually used when describing hobbies or other things that one likes or that one is really interested in at the moment.

In this episode, Andrew says that he's never been **into chicken feet**. In other words, Andrew has never really liked chicken feet, even though he tried them a couple of times.

Here are a couple more examples with **to be into [something]**:

Franky:	Hey, what are ya doin'?
Hector:	I'm just looking at this website. I'm really into gadgets these days, and this site talks about all of the latest tech you can buy and what to add to your wish list.
Franky:	What kind of stuff do they talk about?
Hector:	You know, flying cars, hover boards, waterproof phones, the latest virtual reality devices, stuff like that.
Franky:	Ha! You can wish for that stuff, but you're gonna have to win the lottery or rob a bank to be able to pay for anything like that!

Jen:	Hey, Jazzy. Whatcha listening to?
Jasmine:	Steely Dan. I'm really into 80s' music right now. I can't get enough of it.
Jen:	Ha, you sound like my Dad. He loves that stuff!
Jasmine:	Well, then, he has good taste. I should ask him for some recommendations.
Jen:	Totally. I'm sure he'd love to give you some. Come over on Saturday and we can ask him.

Can't stand [something]

Idiom

Can't stand [something] is the exact opposite of to be into [something]. If you **can't stand [something]**, it means you dislike something a lot and you can't be near it without feeling irritated.

In this episode, in one of the dialogues, Roommate 2 says he **can't stand eating chicken feet**. Hmm ... It sounds like chicken feet is a really unpopular food!

Here are a couple more examples with **can't stand [something]**:

Melissa:	I'm gonna hang out with Trish after school. Wanna come?
Sally:	No, I can't stand her .
Melissa:	What? Why? She seems nice.
Sally:	She is super annoying. She gossips about everything to everyone. Be careful what you say to her or else the whole school will know later.
Melissa:	Ah, I didn't know that. Thanks for the warning! I'll let you know how it goes. Catch ya later.

Seth:	I can't stand math class ! It's so boring. Maybe I'll skip it and go to the nurse's office.
Juan:	Whatever floats your boat. Just remember we have a test on Friday you should probably study for.
Seth:	Oh, man. I totally forgot about that. I'm gonna fail.

Nuts Adjective

Nuts is an informal word that means crazy. If you say a person is **nuts**, you are calling him crazy. **Nuts** cannot be used in the same way as crazy, though. Crazy is an adjective that can go before a noun, like crazy person, crazy party, or crazy life. However, **nuts** cannot go before a noun. You cannot say **nuts** person or **nuts** party; you must say something like “that person is **nuts**” or “did you go the party last night? It was **nuts**!”.

A common phrase with **nuts** is “you are driving me **nuts**!” This has the same meaning as you are making me crazy.

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

Josh:	Hey, Cathy. What are ya doin’?
Cathy:	I’m busy. Leave me alone.
Josh:	C’mon, play with me!
Cathy:	No, I said I’m busy.
Josh:	Please, please, please. Won’t you play with me, please, please, please?
Cathy:	Oh my god, you are driving me nuts ! Go away!

Jim:	Hey, do you wanna try skydiving with me next weekend?
Geoffrey:	What? Are you nuts ? Skydiving? Do you wanna die?
Jim:	C’mon. Tons of people do it. It could be fun.
Geoffrey:	No way, not me. I will not die before I’m even 30 years old.
Jim:	Fine, but you won’t know what you’re missing!

Quiz

1. Which is not a synonym for nuts?

- a) crazy
- b) crunchy
- c) insane
- d) deranged

2. Which is an example of someone who is into animals?

- a) a guy who eats a lot of meat
- b) a guy who has a pet rock
- c) a guy who runs away when he sees a dog
- d) a guy who volunteers at the local dog shelter

3. True or false? A person who can't stand science is someone who is so tired that they aren't able to study science any more.

- a) true
- b) false

4. Which of the below is the opposite of stupendous?

- a) extremely smart
- b) totally amazing
- c) ordinary or insignificant
- d) really small

5. True or false? It's OK to change the pronoun in the phrase "whatever floats your boat."

- a) true
- b) false

Discussion or Writing Questions:

- 1. Do you have an example of something that you prefer that others usually disagree with, such as a unique hobby or style?**
- 2. When you disagree with someone, do you usually argue with the person, or do you casually accept each other's different opinions?**
- 3. What is something that you are into these days? Why are you interested in that thing?**
- 4. What is something that you can't stand? Why?**
- 5. Have you ever been called nuts? Why? What did you do?**

Quiz Answers

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

Episode credits

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