

## Catch Word #212 – Get in the zone

### Episode description

Andrew and Suzanne are really getting their creative juices flowing in this Catch Word episode! Tune in to learn some useful phrases about creativity and focus.

### Fun fact

Sleep is extremely beneficial for creativity. Therefore, if you are struggling to get those creative juices flowing, take a short nap before tackling your project again. Creativity also hinges on one's experiences and ability to think outside the box, so make sure to get out of the house, try something new, or meet new people. You'll be full of great ideas in no time!

### Expressions included in the study guide

- In the zone
- To put on one's thinking cap
- Sluggish
- To turn [someone] down
- To get the juices flowing
- To jam out





## Transcript

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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.

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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.

Suzanne: And I'm Suzanne.

Andrew: And you're listening to Culips.

Hello, Suzanne.

Suzanne: Hey, Andrew, how's it going?

Andrew: I'm doing great. I'm so happy to be back with another Catch Word episode. It's been a really long time since we've released a Catch Word episode, hasn't it?

Suzanne: It has, I know, and I feel like our slang brain kind of was turned off. So we need to get back into our game.

Andrew: We need to slang that slang. I'm sorry.

Suzanne: That's funny.

Andrew: For all of our listeners who don't know, Catch Word is our series about vocabulary where we teach you interesting expressions, useful slang, all of the words and phrases and sometimes even phrasal verbs, anything related to vocabulary that you need to know if you really want to understand English like a native speaker.

And the theme for today is creativity and focus. So we're going to introduce and teach you two expressions that you can use when you're talking about creativity or focusing or working hard.



Andrew: But just before we talk about these expressions in more detail, I would like to tell everyone that there is a study guide for this episode. It includes a lot of really awesome study materials that you can use to study along with us here today, such as, a transcript, detailed vocabulary explanations and examples, as well as a quiz, and there's also some prompts that you can use for writing practice or speaking practice. The study guide is a really valuable resource, we believe, and you can download it from our website, Culips.com. So if you are interested in studying along with us a little deeper here today, then just visit our website to download that study guide.

OK, so, Suzanne, let's get into it.

Suzanne: Yes.

Andrew: Let's get **into the zone**. How about that?

Suzanne: How about that, yes. We're totally getting **into the zone** right now.

Andrew: Getting **into the zone**, so let's think about this for a second. In this expression to get **into the zone**, what is the zone, what are we getting into here when we're talking about the zone?

Suzanne: That's a really good question. So the zone is kind of the space or the headspace in which you're creating something or working on something, right? Like, there's so many distractions, right? We have the internet and Facebook and Twitter and everything and friends and procrastination. So when we have a project or a goal and we kind of get focused, right? We get kind of into the headspace of being focused on a task, we're getting **into the zone**, and that usually has to do with the creativity, kind of like we're **putting on our thinking cap**. We're really focusing our energy into this task.

Andrew: Yeah, I totally agree. For me, when I think of the zone, I think of it as being focused or concentration on a task. So when we say this expression, "Oh, I wanna get **into the zone**," or even maybe you are already **in the zone**, you are focusing and concentrating on a task very well, it just means that you're working well, right? You're focused and you're not distracted at all.

Suzanne: Absolutely, and I also think, Andrew, I've heard this expression used in motivation, you know, like, for even like sports teams or, you know, maybe halftime, at halftime or something like that, you know, before the second or third period in hockey or, you know, in soccer they might have a meeting, you know, with all the players, kind of huddle up and say, "All right, let's **get into the zone**, let's really focus, you know, do our plays."



Suzanne: And it's kind of sometimes a form of rallying up the troops and really getting everyone together in the same zone, in the same goal, fixed into the same focus. So, yeah, I think it can also be used in a kind of physical sporting way, you know? Maybe if you go running or something, "All right, let's get **into the zone**, let's focus."

Andrew: In fact, sometimes I will tell my friends when we're working on a project or even when I go running with my buddies, it's like, "Wow, let's get **into the zone**," you know? Let's try our best. It's totally common to use it like that. You're right. Suzanne, before we flow away too far here, I think we should give some examples with **in the zone**.

Suzanne: That sounds great.

Friend 1: How was your weekend? Wait, didn't you have a race on Sunday?

Friend 2: Yeah, I had a 10-k race on Sunday, but it didn't really go very well, actually.

Friend 1: Oh no, what happened?

Friend 2: I don't know, I didn't sleep well on Saturday night and I just felt **sluggish** the whole race. I just couldn't get **into the zone**.

Friend 1: Yeah, man, that stinks. Well, better luck next time.

Andrew: In the example that we just heard, two friends were talking about a race that one of the friends had participated in on the weekend. And his result wasn't very good. He wasn't pleased with his result. Why? Well, he said that he felt **sluggish**. **Sluggish**, of course, means that you're tired and you just don't have very much energy. So he felt **sluggish** and he said that he just couldn't get **into the zone**. So he couldn't find that sweet spot where he was focused on his running and he felt that he was running his best race, he just didn't get into that state. He couldn't get **into that zone**.

Suzanne: Yeah, and you know what, Andrew? I was thinking many of our listeners could use this expression maybe in regards to a test, right? Like when you're taking a test and if it doesn't go the way you wanted, you prepared, much like the character in our example with the race, they prepared but maybe they didn't sleep well the night before and they just couldn't get **into the zone** of the test, you know? It's just the headspace, right, was off, so that could be used in that situation.

Andrew: I've been there many times myself.

Suzanne: Me too.



Andrew: Suzanne, let's listen to one more example using this expression to get **into the zone** or **in the zone**, and then we'll move on to the second expression for today.

Suzanne: Sounds good.

Sarah: Hello?

David: Hey, Sarah, it's David. I was just wondering if you wanted to grab coffee this afternoon, are you free?

Sarah: Oh, yeah, I would love that, really, but I'm writing this paper for English class and I'm really **in the zone**. So I don't really wanna stop and grab a coffee right now. Sorry.

David: No worries. Yeah, we can meet up some other time.

Sarah: Yeah, when I'm done I'll definitely need a coffee.

David: OK, well, I'll talk to you later.

Sarah: OK. Bye.

David: Bye.

Suzanne: In this example, we heard one friend call up another friend to go out for coffee. But she was busy writing her paper. And she used the excuse that she was really **in the zone** with her paper and, as we know, that can be difficult to write a paper for English class, so she was really focused and didn't want to interrupt her process or flow and decided to **turn him down** for a later date.

Andrew: Yeah, and I understand this, especially when you are a student and you're **in the zone**, you don't wanna stop and break your focus, right? That can be really difficult, so I think she made the right choice in continuing to work on her paper.

Suzanne: Yeah.

Andrew: All right, well, Suzanne, let's move on to our second expression for today. It's kind of a fun one as well, it is **to get the juices flowing. To get the juices flowing.**

Suzanne: Yeah, that is a fun one.



- Andrew: Much like the last example, we're relying on a key word in this expression, and that is the juices. We're not talking about fruit juice like apple juice or orange juice.
- Suzanne: No.
- Andrew: What are we talking about? What kind of juice is this?
- Suzanne: It's the creative juice, right? It's your creative juices in your brain, in your heart and soul.
- Andrew: Yeah, it's interesting we talk about the creative juices and, of course, this is not a real thing in the body, there is no fluid that controls creativity. But it's a metaphor that English speakers use quite often and so, when the creative **juices are flowing** or the **juices are flowing**, it means, well, pretty much the same thing, that you're **in the zone**, that you're concentrating, that you're focused, and that, especially, you're really quite creative.
- Suzanne: Yes. Unlike the previous expression, this one has more to do with your creativity and your work and not so much with, like, say, a sporting event or, you know, a physical activity. It's more about a mental activity, I would say, or creative, yeah.
- Andrew: That's a good distinction. So, for example, if we were to take a look at the two previous examples that we listened to, you could use it to talk about writing a paper and say, "Oh, I'm writing this paper for English class, **the juices are flowing** right now, I don't wanna stop" because you're creating something, you are writing something, you're making something. But if we're to take the example of running in a race and you are to say, "Oh, I was not happy with my performance 'cause I felt **sluggish** and **the juices weren't flowing**," then that sounds quite strange, doesn't it?
- Suzanne: Yeah, for sure.
- Andrew: 'Cause you're not creating anything when you're running a race.
- Suzanne: Goodness, when you're running, we hope your **juices are flowing** inside of you so that you can physically move.
- Andrew: Your blood.
- Suzanne: But in this sense, right, we hope so. But in this sense, it really has more to do with the creative mind, your mental juices.

Andrew: Exactly. And so anytime that you're making something new, you're writing something or could even be working on a project or making a video or writing a song, anything like this, then we can use this expression, **to get the juices flowing**, or to **get the creative juices flowing**.

Suzanne: Yup, exactly.

Andrew: Well, I think we should listen to a couple of examples using this expression, how does that sound?

Suzanne: Sounds good.

Friend 1: By the way, I've been meaning to ask you, how is that script that you've been working on going? Have you finished yet?

Friend 2: Oh, man, no, I haven't. I still have, like, one-third left to write. It's just been so frustrating. I feel like **my juices aren't flowing**, you know? Like they've all dried up. It's been so hard to get it finished.

Friend 1: Oh, just hang in there, I'm sure it'll come to you eventually.

Andrew: In this example, we heard two friends talking about a script. One of the friends has been writing a script, but she is having some problems finishing the last third of the script. She can't seem **to get the creative juices flowing**. She said that she felt like those creative juices are all dried up and they're just not flowing very well. And, Sue, this actually reminds me of the expression writer's block.

Suzanne: Yes, totally.

Andrew: Writer's block, yeah, when you're trying to write something **but the juices aren't flowing** and you have no ideas about what to write—we can call this writer's block. So I think the woman in this example has writer's block.

Suzanne: I think so too. If you think of the creative juices are, like, you know, like a river, like a flowing river, right? They're juices, they're nice and supple and then you have this block or this, like, dam, in a way, that stops the flow, right? And it just kind of dries things out. So, yeah, it's a good metaphor or a way to kind of look at those idioms in a physical way.

Andrew: Cool. Well, let's move on to the final example for this episode.

Suzanne: Great.

Friend 1: You know, I've been listening to your album on repeat all weekend.

Friend 2: Oh, really?

Friend 1: Yeah, yeah. It's so good.

Friend 2: Oh, thanks.

Friend 1: Aren't you guys due for a new album soon?

Friend 2: Yeah, actually, we were in the studio **jamming** last night and, I gotta tell you, **the juices were really flowing**. I think we came up with three or four good new ideas that hopefully we can turn into some new songs. So maybe a new record is, like, right around the corner.

Friend 1: Wow, three or four songs, that does sound like **the juices were flowing**.

Suzanne: In this example, a guy talks about his band practice the night before and **the juices seem to be flowing** because they wrote three or four songs—halfway on their way to an album, almost. So the creativity was really flowing, **the juices were really flowing** in the rehearsal.

Andrew: That is right, they were able to come up with a lot of new ideas, create a lot of new ideas. And this is exactly the kind of situation where we can use this expression **the juices are flowing**, when there is just an outpouring of creativity.

Suzanne: Yes, exactly, an outpouring of creativity, that's a really, really good way to describe **the juices are flowing**.

Andrew: Suzanne, that brings us to the end of today's episode. I wanna thank everyone for listening and, one more time, remind everyone about our website, Culips.com. It's the place where you can download the study guide for this episode and also check out all of our past episodes. There's hundreds of episodes that you can browse through and listen to on our website. So definitely check us out on Culips.com.

Suzanne: Also, search for us on Facebook, Twitter, Instagram, and YouTube by just searching Culips English Podcast and you will definitely find us. So that's C-U-L-I-P-S English Podcast.

Andrew: That's right, we're all over the place on social media.

Suzanne: If you guys have any expressions or idioms that you hear that you would like us to cover on a future Catch Word episodes, just send us an email, [contact@Culips.com](mailto:contact@Culips.com), and we'd love to include it in some of our future episodes.





Andrew: That is a great idea, definitely send us your suggestions. We'll be back soon with a new episode and we'll talk to you then. Bye.

Suzanne: Bye.

## Detailed Explanations

### In the zone Idiom

To be **in the zone** is to be in a perfect state of mind, with a boost of intense focus, skill, and energy. If you're **in the zone**, you're able to focus completely on a task you're trying to accomplish and you're able to do well at it.

To get **in the zone** means that one is aiming to reach a state of being **in the zone**. It is often difficult to get **in the zone**, into that perfect mind-set. It requires focus and concentration and a determined mind to get completely **in the zone**.

This phrase is used in any domain that requires intense focus for success, such as sports, musical performances, public speaking, or art.

Here are a couple more examples with **in the zone**:

Hector:	OK, team. We have 10 more minutes left in the game and we're down by 2. Now is the time to really get <b>in the zone</b> and show the other team what we're made of.
Gregorio:	Sounds like a plan, Captain. Lions on 3! 1, 2, 3 ...
Team:	LIONS!!!

Rhonda:	Why didn't you answer my call earlier?
Flo:	Sorry, girlie. I was painting and I was really <b>in the zone</b> . I didn't hear the phone ring.
Rhonda:	Painting, really? Can I check out what you've been working on?
Flo:	Yeah, it's not finished yet, but come on over here and have a look. It's still a work in progress, but I'm proud of it.

## To put on one's thinking cap

### Idiom

**To put on one's thinking cap** is to begin to seriously think about a problem that needs to be solved or a question that needs to be answered. You cannot literally put on a hat that allows you to think more clearly, but this phrase means that you should imagine putting on that special hat and start focussing on the problem at hand.

Here are a couple more examples with **to put on one's thinking cap**:

Zachariah: How are we gonna raise enough money for our trip to Canada this year?

Remmy: I have no idea. We didn't collect nearly as much money with our car wash fundraiser as I thought we would.

Zachariah: Well, we can't give up now. Let's **put on our thinking caps** and come up with a great plan to get that money!

Remmy: I like the positive attitude—yeah, let's do it!

Michelle: I've got a slight problem. I have an interview for my dream job on Friday, but it happens to be the same day as Cathy's wedding. What should I do?

Lorelai: Wow, an interview? That's great news! You worked so hard on the application.

Michelle: Focus, Lorelai! I need some helpful suggestions, so if you could **put your thinking cap on**, I'd be grateful.

Lorelai: Oh, right. Well, are they at exactly the same time? Can't you just go to the interview and then come to the wedding?

Michelle: No, the interview is over 2 hours away from the wedding location. Ugh! I just can't decide what to do!

## Sluggish Adjective

**Sluggish** is an adjective meaning slow, tired, and lacking energy. It is common to feel **sluggish** after waking up from a long nap or after taking cold medicine.

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

Terese:	Hey, Gina, are you OK?
Gina:	No, it's this new anti-depressant medication I'm taking. It makes me feel so lifeless and <b>sluggish</b> . I don't know which is worse, the depression or the side effects of the medicine I'm taking.
Terese:	I've heard those kinds of drugs often have bad side effects. Maybe you should ask your doctor for an alternative medicine.
Gina:	Yeah, that's a good idea. I'll make an appointment on Monday morning.

Roger:	Wanna grab a burger after work?
Phil:	No, I'm off fast food. It always makes me feel <b>sluggish</b> and bloated.
Roger:	You? You're the king of fast food!! You could eat it for breakfast, lunch, and dinner.
Phil:	Not since last week. I've quit it entirely, and life couldn't be better. I've felt so energetic these last few days. You should try it.
Roger:	Wow, people really can change. Good for you, man!



## To turn [someone] down

Phrasal verb

**To turn [someone] down** is a phrasal verb meaning to refuse an offer or request. For example, a person might **turn down** a job because it requires too many hours, or a girl might **turn down** a guy who asked her on a date because she isn't attracted to him.

Here are a couple more examples with **to turn [someone] down**:

Yenny: Did you hear what happened to Keith?

Victoria: No, what?

Yenny: He asked Janessa to marry him, but she **turned him down**.

Victoria: What? Really? They've been dating for 5 years. Why would she do that?

Yenny: I heard she never really wanted to get married. When he asked her, she got really angry and told him that he'd ruined everything.

Victoria: Well, I'm not totally surprised. Janessa has always been kind of a free spirit.

Ming: Did you get the promotion?

Kang: Yeah, I did, but I had to **turn it down** in the end.

Ming: What? Why?

Kang: I really wanted it, but they told me I would have to relocate to California if I took it. I can't do that to my family.

Ming: Man, that sucks. Still, I'm proud of you. Let's get drinks after work to celebrate and drown your sorrows at the same time!

## To get the juices flowing

### Idiom

**To get the juices flowing** is to become inspired with greater creativity, energy, or productivity. In this phrase, “the juices” refers to creativity, so the phrase is often reworded as **getting the creative juices flowing**, as well.

Sometimes it is hard to focus or come up with interesting ideas; our brains have a mental block. When that happens, we need to do something new to jumpstart our creativity, to **get the juices flowing** once again.

Here are a couple more examples with **to get the juices flowing**:

Christine:	I always feel so tired and sluggish the first hour of work. Do you have any advice to boost my productivity in the mornings?
Danette:	As a matter of fact, I do. I’ve found that a morning run really helps to <b>get the juices flowing</b> . I come to work every morning feeling energized, with new ideas buzzing in my brain.
Christine:	A morning run, huh? I hate running.
Danette:	Well, with that kind of attitude you’ll never fix your problem. A morning run is a great way to calm your mind and get a good workout in. Try it!

Dongik:	What are you doing?
Kate:	I’m just trying to write this essay, but I am failing miserably. I just can’t seem to <b>get the juices flowing</b> .
Dongik:	How about some relaxing music? I find that some light background music helps relax my mind when I’m overthinking something.
Kate:	OK, it’s worth a try. I’ll try anything that this point. Thanks for the help.



## To jam out

Verb

**To jam out** is a slang verb that is always used in relation to music. A musician **jams out** when he is performing music enthusiastically and with all his spirit. For example, a guitarist **jams out** on stage in front of his adoring fans.

A person who is not a musician and is simply listening to music enthusiastically can also be **jamming out**. When people **jam out** to music, they really connect with the music, often dancing and singing along with the musician.

Here are a couple more examples with **to jam out**:

Mom:	Jared! Turn that music down. I can barely hear myself think!
Jared:	C'mon, Mom. This is my favourite song! I can't help but <b>jam out</b> when it comes on.
Mom:	OK, well, when you finish <b>jamming out</b> or whatever it is you're doing in that room of yours, turn the volume down or I'll go crazy.
Jared:	You mean crazier than you already are?
Mom:	Jared!

Dustin:	That concert last night was amazing!
Joel:	Totally! They were seriously <b>jamming out</b> on stage. It was probably the best concert of the year.
Dustin:	Yeah, and the crowd was <b>jamming</b> right along with 'em. There was enough energy and raw emotion running through that place to light New York City for a week! Man, I wish it never ended.
Joel:	At least we got to experience it. I mean, poor Jeff got sick and had to stay home, remember?
Dustin:	Oh, yeah, sucks for him. He seriously missed out.

## Quiz

**1. In the phrase in the zone, what is the zone?**

- a) a state of intense focus, skill, and energy
- b) an inability to focus or remain on task
- c) a feeling of intense drowsiness with zero energy
- d) a feeling of confusion and doubt

**2. When a person listens and dances to a song enthusiastically, he is:**

- a) freaking out
- b) jamming out
- c) going berserk
- d) lighting up

**3. In the phrase to get the juices flowing, what are the juices?**

- a) blood
- b) electricity
- c) creativity
- d) strength

**4. When we need to brainstorm ideas, we use the phrase to put on one's thinking \_\_\_\_\_.** What word goes in the blank space?

- a) shoes
- b) glasses
- c) cap
- d) jacket

**5. Which does NOT have the same meaning as sluggish?**

- a) drowsy
- b) slow
- c) lethargic
- d) zippy



## Writing and Discussion Questions

1. Are you a creative person? What creative projects are your favourite?
2. What do you do when you're trying to get in the zone?
3. Similarly, what do you do when you're trying to get your creative juices flowing?
4. Have you ever turned someone down when they offered you a job? Why?
5. What is your favourite song to jam out to and why?



## Quiz Answers

1.a    2.b    3.c    4.c    5.d

### Episode credits

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