

Catch Word #215 – I totally blanked

Episode description

What's the topic today? It totally slipped my mind. Oh, that's right! Today's topic is forgetfulness. In this Catch Word episode, Andrew and Suzanne provide useful phrases to express forgetfulness when our mind goes blank and we can't remember what we wanted to say. Enjoy!

Fun fact

Did you know there's a world record for memory? When he was 10 years old, Nischal Narayanam won a Guinness World Record for memorizing 225 random objects in 12 minutes. Several people can even boast the ability to memorize the order of an entire deck of 52 cards, including the correct number and suit. How brilliant is that?

Expressions included in the study guide

- Handy
- Fuzzy
- To slip [one's] mind
- To pick up [something]
- To go blank
- To make fun of [someone]





Transcript

Note: The words and expressions that appear in **bold text** within the transcript are discussed in more detail in the Detailed Explanations section that follows the transcript.

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

Hey, everybody. My name is Andrew.

Suzanne: And I'm Suzanne.

Andrew: And you're listening to Culips.

Hello, everyone. You are listening to Catch Word episode #215, and today I am joined by my trusty sidekick, Suzanne.

Hey, Suzanne, how are you?

Suzanne: Hey, Andrew, I'm great. How are you doing?

Andrew: I'm doing really well. And, Suzanne, today we are going to teach all of our listeners some really useful English expressions about forgetfulness and forgetting something.

Suzanne: Nice.

Andrew: If anyone is like me, they'll find these really, really **handy**, because I forget stuff all the time.

Suzanne: Oh my gosh, so do I.

Andrew: Yeah, so what is our topic again, Suzanne? No, I'm sorry, I mean, I can remember that at least.

Suzanne: I'm sorry, are we doing a podcast? I forgot.

Andrew: We're not that bad, guys, but, yeah, I do tend to forget things often. So we have some great English expressions regarding this situation and that's what we will study today.



- Andrew: But just before we do that, I do wanna let all of our listeners out there know that, guys, we have a study guide available for this episode. It's jam-packed full of really great exercises that will help you to level up your English. So in the study guide, you're going to find the transcript, as well as a bunch of other activities like, well, some detailed vocabulary explanations, and there's a quiz, there's lots of good stuff in there, like I said. So just visit our website, Culips.com, to give it a download.
- Suzanne: You know, Andrew, I was thinking these expressions are gonna be so good, especially for when you're learning another language or second language and you can't think of that word, right? You can't think of that phrase.
- Andrew: I know that feeling so well.
- Suzanne: Yeah.
- Andrew: Sue, I have this problem all the time, and maybe you have this too when you're speaking French, is that you know a word exists, you've seen the word written down, you've heard the word before. You know it exists, but your knowledge of that word is kind of **fuzzy**. Like it happens to me when I haven't really fully learned the word yet. I think the first step in learning a word is just knowing that it exists and that it can be used in some situations that are unique.
- Suzanne: Yeah.
- Andrew: And this happens to me all the time, I'll be talking with my friends in Korean and I'll be like, oh, what's the word that I should use here. I know there's a word, I know it, and then I have to ask them and they say something and I'm like, no, not that one, different one, what is it? What is it? It's very frustrating but, yeah, you're right, all of these expressions that we'll look at today could be used in that context.
- Suzanne: Totally.
- Andrew: So, yeah, what's our first one today?
- Suzanne: So the first expression to express forgetfulness that we have on the docket is it **slipped my mind**. It **slipped my mind**.
- Andrew: It **slipped my mind**. OK, it **slipped my mind**. And, yeah, this is used when we talk about something that we forget.
- Suzanne: Exactly, whatever that thing is, it **has slipped your mind or my mind**. It means that it has literally fallen out of your head, like it's slipped out of your head, right?

Andrew: Like the thing you're trying to remember is really slippery and it just slid right out of your brain.

Suzanne: Yeah, so it's like it literally—you have a slippery brain, right? Like a slippery brain or a slippery memory, and it just went “flonk,” right out of your head.

Andrew: Totally. And, actually, speaking of totally, we can strengthen or intensify this expression, it **slipped my mind**, by using totally or completely, right? It's often used with these intensifiers, so you could say it totally **slipped my mind** or it completely **slipped my mind**.

Suzanne: I like that. Should we listen to an example of **slipped my mind**?

Andrew: Let's do it, let's listen to one right now.

Husband: Did you get the milk at the grocery store today like I asked?

Wife: Oh, shoot. I'm so sorry, honey, it completely **slipped my mind**.

Husband: That's all right. I'll go get some now. I have a few other things I wanna **pick up**, too.

Wife: Sorry.

Andrew: So, Sue, in this example, a husband asked his wife **to pick up some milk** on the way home from work, but she forgot to do it. So she said that it **slipped her mind**, right? She forgot.

Suzanne: Yeah, completely. Completely forgot.

Andrew: Completely slipped out of her brain and caused her to forget **to pick up the milk**. And I think this is a great example, because it really shows how native speakers use this expression every day, and that is as an excuse. We use it as an excuse all the time. Did you do this? Did you wash the dishes? Ugh, completely **slipped my mind**, totally forgot to wash the dishes, sorry. Is it true all the time? No, we use it as an excuse often.

Suzanne: I hope most people are not lying. But, yes, you're right, it could be just a lie. But I actually just did this today, and it did **slip my mind** to get the milk at the store. So there you go, this is a very common thing.

Andrew: It happens in reality, too.

Suzanne: Art imitates life.



- Andrew: All right, let's move on to our next expression for today. And, actually, there are several very closely related expressions that we can use to talk about forgetfulness, centred around the word blank. OK, blank. Of course, blank means empty, right? This kind of idea, right?
- Suzanne: Like a page, right? Like a blank page.
- Andrew: Like a blank page, or a whiteboard, something with no writing on it, it's empty and clean. So the expressions are **I'm blanking** or **I'm drawing a blank** or even, if you're talking about a situation in the past, you could say my mind **went blank**, OK? Or I **went blank**, that's not really as common as my mind **went blank**, though—I think that's the best. So I think in all of these situations, if you're **blanking** or **drawing a blank** or if your mind **went blank**, it's like your mind was completely empty, your mind was erased and there's nothing there. It's like you totally forgot everything that you were trying to remember.
- Suzanne: Yeah, and you can also, like we did in the other expression, we can use completely and totally, right? I'm **completely blanking**, I'm **totally blanking**.
- Andrew: Oh, yeah, so that's an interesting thing there, Suzanne. You said I'm **completely blanking** or I'm **totally blanking**. And when you're using the expression **drawing a blank**, you could say I'm **totally drawing a blank** or I'm **drawing a total blank**. I'm **completely drawing a blank** or I'm **drawing a complete blank**.
- Suzanne: Right.
- Andrew: There's different ways to modify it, but all of them are correct.
- Suzanne: Yup, my mind just **went completely blank**.
- Andrew: Exactly. So there's not too much more to explain, we just use these when you can't remember some information, I feel like especially in the moment, right? You're trying to remember a fact or a detail and it's just not coming, you know it's in there somewhere but you just can't think of it, then this is when we use these expressions.
- Suzanne: Yeah, like someone's name, that always happens to me, right? Names.
- Andrew: Yes, names. I had a really embarrassing situation happen the other day. I lost my bank card, which is a whole long story in itself. But I had to call the bank to cancel my card and I **blanked** on my phone number. They asked me what's your phone number and I **blanked**.



Andrew: And afterwards my friend was **making fun of me**. She said you're calling the bank in Korean, you're talking to them in Korean, you can't even tell them your phone number, and I said it wasn't an issue of language, I just **blanked**. Even in English I couldn't have told you my phone number in that moment.

Suzanne: You had a complete language blank.

Andrew: Yeah, I **blanked** in both languages, and it's embarrassing. So that was a situation, sometimes when I have to remember my phone number, my mind **goes blank**, that's what I wanted to say.

Suzanne: So should we take a look at some of these examples of these expressions?

Andrew: Yeah, we have a couple of examples here, so let's take a listen to example number one.

Suzanne: All right.

Friend 1: Hey, Stacy, what's the name of that bakery that Molly likes so much? I'm **drawing a blank**.

Friend 2: Oh, the one with the amazing cinnamon buns, right?

Friend 1: Yeah, yeah. That's the one.

Friend 2: It's called Pattie's Pastries.

Friend 1: Ah, Pattie's Pastries, that's it. OK, thank you.

Suzanne: In this example, we have two friends and one of them is asking for the name of the bakery because they've completely **drawn a blank**, right? He says I'm **drawing a blank**. It's in that moment he really needs that information and it's just not there. It's not in the filing cabinet, he's **drawing a blank** and the other friend has it right there. Yup, I remember, it's this one, thanks, and maybe he has to run off and go buy those cinnamon buns or something. But it's in that moment that he forgot, and in that moment he needed that information.

Andrew: Often when you **draw blank**, it's really frustrating, but you'll remember later. In the moment, you can't remember, you're **drawing a blank**, and then as soon as you don't need the information, you can remember it completely.

Suzanne: Totally. It's so annoying.

Andrew: Brains are weird, let me tell you.



Suzanne: Yup.

Andrew: All right, Sue, we have one more example, so let's listen to it right now.

Suzanne: OK.

Friend 1: How'd the interview go?

Friend 2: Ugh, it was awful.

Friend 1: Oh no, why? What happened? You were so prepared.

Friend 2: I know, but I got in there and my mind just **went totally blank**. I couldn't remember anything that I wanted to say. The interviewer probably thought I was a complete idiot.

Friend 1: I'm sure it wasn't that bad.

Andrew: In this example, two friends are talking about a job interview. One friend says that he totally messed up the interview because his mind **went totally blank** when he was asked a question. So it's like your mind is completely empty, all of the information that was inside, all of the prep that he had done, just vanished out of his mind.

Suzanne: Oh no.

Andrew: And sometimes this happens in high-pressure situations, like a test or an interview, right? Your mind **goes blank**, or even when you're making a presentation sometimes, I've had this happen to me before.

Suzanne: Oh, yeah, for sure.

Andrew: Gotta improvise.

Suzanne: Yeah, that's scariest thing, right? Or if you're being timed for something, right? Like you only have 5 minutes to do, like, a quick pitch or something and you're like, oh my gosh, don't forget it, you know?

Andrew: Yeah, again, this is one of those situations when after you finish the test or the interview or the presentation, then you're like, oh why did I **blank** at that moment, I should have said this. I was planning to do that and I didn't do it. You can sort of in retrospect remember information that in the moment you **blank** on.

Suzanne: And, also, just to mention we have some other phrases here about forgetfulness that are pretty fun. One is it's on the tip of my tongue.

- Andrew: Yeah, it's on the tip of my tongue. This is a very common expression that we use when we forget something. And another one is I've lost my train of thought, or I lost my train of thought. When your mind **goes blank**, you could say this.
- Suzanne: Yeah, and one of my favourites is brain fart. I'm having a brain fart.
- Andrew: It's a funny one.
- Suzanne: As if your brain could actually fart. You can find more info and more details about those expressions in which episode is it, Andrew?
- Andrew: It is in Catch Word episode #165. These expressions we've actually defined before in the past, everyone, so just check out Catch Word episode 165, 165, to learn about those expressions.
- Sue, that wraps it up for us today.
- Suzanne: All right, that's great.
- Andrew: Yeah, well, thank you for listening, everyone. If you have any comments, questions, or suggestions for future episodes, hit us up. You can message us by sending an email to us directly at contact@Culips.com.
- Suzanne: Or you can also connect to us via our Facebook page at Facebook.com/CulipsPodcast and, of course, you can find us on Instagram and Twitter as well, just search Culips and you'll find us.
- Andrew: That's right, everyone, we'll be back soon with another brand new Culips episode. So we'll talk to you then. Bye.
- Suzanne: Bye.

Detailed Explanations

Handy Adjective

Handy is an adjective that means convenient to use or useful. The word **handy** is often used in the phrase come in **handy**. Come in **handy** is used to talk about an object or skill that could be very useful in some future situation. For example, one should always consider carrying an umbrella when it's cloudy, for it will come in **handy** if it starts to rain. In other words, carrying an umbrella in cloudy weather is a good idea, because it will be very useful if it starts to rain.

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

Drake:	How was your trip to Japan?
Mikah:	It was really fun! The weather was perfect and I saw so many cool things.
Drake:	Did you have any trouble getting around due to the language barrier?
Mikah:	Yeah, it was a little difficult, but my translator app really came in handy .

Sally:	I'm gonna go ask the waiter for a bottle opener.
Franny:	No, wait. I have a keychain that has a bottle opener built into it. You can use that.
Sally:	Wow, that's really handy . I should buy one of those, too.
Franny:	Yeah, I love it. I'll give you one for your birthday next week.
Sally:	Thanks, girl!

Fuzzy Adjective

Fuzzy has two very common meanings. The first meaning is hairy or furry, such as a **fuzzy** teddy bear or **fuzzy** sweater. However, in this episode, **fuzzy**'s second meaning is used. **Fuzzy** also means unclear or hard to see, hear, or understand. For example, a **fuzzy** TV is a TV with poor screen quality, making it hard to watch the TV programs. Or a **fuzzy** memory is a memory that someone is unable to remember clearly; the memory is missing some important details.

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

Heather:	Did you see the movie <i>The Imitation Game</i> ?
Denice:	The one with Benedict Cumberbatch? Yeah, I did.
Heather:	Do you remember the name of the character that Cumberbatch played? I can't remember.
Denice:	No, sorry. I saw it a long time ago, so the details are a little fuzzy .
Heather:	Same. Well, I'll just google it and find out his name.

Greg:	C'mon, man. Get your head in the game! You're usually amazing at trivia games. Why are you doing so badly tonight?
Keith:	Sorry, bro. You know my head gets a bit fuzzy after I've had a few beers.
Greg:	Ugh. Why did I let you drink alcohol before playing this game? I bet money on this game!
Keith:	Ha! Really? How much?
Greg:	\$50.
Keith:	OK, OK. Get me a glass of ice water. I'll try to sober up and win this. If we win, though, we split the money 50-50, got it?
Greg:	Yeah, OK. Let's do this!

To slip [one's] mind

Idiom

To slip [one's] mind is to forget something. You can imagine the thought or memory literally slipping out of your brain, causing you to forget. **To slip [one's] mind** is often used as an excuse when one forgets to do something like run an errand, call someone, or do an assignment.

When using the phrase **to slip [one's] mind**, people often add the words totally or completely to add more emphasis to the phrase. For example, if someone says it **completely slipped their mind**, it means that that they completely forgot something; they are emphasizing the fact that they forgot and that they are sorry about it.

Here is one more example with **to slip [one's] mind**:

Neethi:	Hey, Sasha. Why didn't you call me last night? You said you would call after you got home from work.
Sasha:	Oh, I'm so sorry! It totally slipped my mind . I was so tired last night after work that I just went home and fell asleep.
Neethi:	Ah, that's OK. I just wanted to tell you about how my job interview went.
Sasha:	Oh, yeah! How did it go? Tell me all about it!



To pick up [something]

Phrasal verb

To pick up [something] is to buy something. **To pick up [something]** is often used when asking someone to run an errand. For example, in one of this episode's example dialogues, a husband asked his wife to **pick up some milk**. In other words, he wanted her to buy some milk at the store on her way home from work.

Here are a couple more examples with **to pick up [something]**:

Victor:	What are you reading?
Nina:	Oh, I picked this up at the bookstore last week. It's really interesting, actually.
Victor:	What's it about?
Nina:	It's kind of a self-help book. It talks about the benefits of living an minimalist lifestyle and how to go about becoming a minimalist.
Victor:	That's a really great book for you. You have way too much junk in this apartment.
Nina:	It's not junk! These are antiques and collector's items. People pay good money for these things.
Victor:	If you say so ...

Tianqi:	Hey, can you pick up some candy on your way home? It's Halloween tonight and we need some to give to the kids.
Peng:	Yeah, no problem. Do you have a specific kind you'd like me to get?
Tianqi:	Twix! They're my favourite. If there are any left over after trick or treating, I can eat the rest.
Peng:	Ha, good idea! I think I'll pick up a bag of Reese's for myself, as well.



To go blank

Idiom

To go blank is to be unable to remember or think of something. This idiom is easy to visualize. Imagine your mind literally becoming blank, like a empty sheet of white paper: that is an example of your mind **going blank**.

There are many variations to this idiom, such as **to draw a blank**, **to go totally blank**, **to go completely blank**, or simply **blanking**. All variations have the same meaning: unable to recall a thought or memory.

Here is one more example with **to go blank**:

Ruth:	Trivia question: What is the capital of New Zealand?
Alexis:	Oh, I know this! I know this! Agh, what is it? I'm totally blanking right now.
Ruth:	Do you give up? Should I tell you the answer?
Alexis:	No, wait! Let me think ... No, I've drawn a blank . OK, what is it?
Ruth:	Wellington.
Alexis:	Agh, Wellington! I knew that! How could I forget?



To make fun of [someone]

Phrasal verb

To make fun of [someone] is to tell jokes about someone or tease them in such a way that makes the receiver feel upset or uncomfortable.

Here are a couple more examples with **to make fun of [someone]**:

Mom:	Hey, honey. How was your first day of middle school?
Beth:	Terrible.
Mom:	What? Why?
Beth:	Everybody made fun of me because of my haircut. I told you these bangs are ugly.
Mom:	Aw, I'm sorry to hear that. You know your bangs will grow out, right? It's not the end of the world.
Beth:	Yeah, but the kids nicknamed me "bowl-head." I'm gonna be called "bowl-head" for the rest of my life!

Lucy:	Mom! Cody keeps making fun of me! Tell him to stop!
Mom:	What is he saying?
Lucy:	He's making fun of my clothes. He said this dress makes me look like a peacock and he keeps making bird noises at me.
Mom:	Cody! Stop making fun of your sister. Now apologize and go do your homework.

Quiz

1. Which is not a correct variation of the phrase to go blank?

- a) blanking
- b) to draw a blank
- c) to go totally blank
- d) to get blanked

2. Which of the words below is something that cannot be fuzzy?

- a) TV
- b) memory
- c) table
- d) sweater

3. Which sentence is an example of a making fun of someone?

- a) You should study more.
- b) Your glasses make you look like an owl.
- c) You are so cool!
- d) You are so funny!

4. Which of these would not come in handy at the beach?

- a) high heels
- b) a towel
- c) sunscreen
- d) a swimsuit

5. True or false? Totally and completely are often used in the phrase it slipped my mind to add emphasis to the sentence.

- a) true
- b) false



Writing and Discussion Questions

1. Are you a forgetful person? How often do you forget things?
2. Do you have a hard time remembering English vocabulary? How do you help yourself remember?
3. Has your mind ever gone blank before an important test or interview? What did you do?
4. Did you get made fun of a lot when you were a kid? How so?
5. What is one of the handiest things that you own? Why?

Quiz Answers

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

Episode credits

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