

Catch Word #216 – Cabin fever

Episode description

Have you been cooped up inside all day? Why don't you go out and enjoy the sunshine while listening to a brand-new Culips episode? In this Catch Word episode, Andrew and Jeremy introduce two useful expressions that one can use when experiencing boredom and restlessness.

Fun fact

There are various types of boredom in our lives; some are useful for our growth and imagination, while others are detrimental to our health and well-being. "Searching boredom" is useful, because it makes one feel restless, giving them a desire to discover new things, meet new people, and look for healthy challenges. However, "reactant boredom" and "apathetic boredom" are prevailing problems in today's society. These two types of boredoms cause anger, grumpiness, loss of feeling, and listlessness.

Expressions included in the study guide

- Sidekick
- Cooped up
- Stir-crazy
- To hit the nail on the head
- All-nighter
- Cabin fever
- Hustle and bustle



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.

Hello, everyone, welcome back to another Culips episode. Today we have an addition of our Catch Word series for you, which is the series where we teach you all of the really interesting and important English slang, idioms, and vocabulary. And today I'm joined by my trusty **sidekick**, Jeremy. Jeremy, how's it going?

Jeremy: Pretty good. I am happy to be your **sidekick** for this episode.

Andrew: Awesome, glad to hear it. So, Jeremy, today we have two expressions that we're going to teach everyone, and these expressions are related to feeling trapped or **cooped up**.

Jeremy: Mmhmm, **cooped up**, that's a good one.

Andrew: **Cooped up**. Yeah, you can imagine, like, a home for a chicken, we call a chicken coop, right?

Jeremy: Yeah, yeah, or even a small car, also, I've heard that before.

Andrew: It's a different spelling, though, I think. That one is C-O-U-P-E. This one is C-O-O-P.

Jeremy: Ah.

Andrew: But the image is the same, right?

Jeremy: Yeah, it's a small car.

Andrew: A small car or a small confined space where a chicken lives. If you're **cooped up**, you're kind of trapped in that space.



- Jeremy: Yes, in a small space.
- Andrew: All right, so today we're going to teach everyone these two cool expressions to talk about being trapped, even though that's not a very cool feeling at all.
- Jeremy: Just in case any of you are ever feeling trapped, you can use these expressions.
- Andrew: That is right. But just before we get into the nitty gritty of today's show, I wanna let everyone know that there is a study guide for this episode. It's available on our website, Culips.com. So, guys, if you're interested in studying along with that, and we do suggest that you try it out, just visit Culips.com to give it a download.
- OK, Jeremy, what's our first expression for today?
- Jeremy: Our first expression today has a dash in the middle of it. A dash.
- Andrew: A dash, like a line.
- Jeremy: A short line. The expression is **stir-crazy**. So stir, like you stir a soup or stir a hot coffee when you put cream or sugar in it, and crazy. So **stir-crazy**.
- Andrew: **Stir-crazy**. And I did a little bit of research about this expression, **stir-crazy**, and I learned that it was originally used to describe a psychological condition that prisoners feel. So if you're stuck in a prison cell for a long time without any interaction from the outside world, then you can go **stir-crazy**. I'm not exactly sure of why we say stir for **stir-crazy**. The first image that popped into my head was maybe of a prisoner, like, walking around in his cell and you get that sort of rotation that kind of looks like a stirring image. But, yeah, I could also think of maybe somebody deep in thought, right? Thinking the same thing over and over, maybe something stirring in their mind, yeah.
- Jeremy: Yes. Yeah, I think there must be a connection there, because when I hear this phrase, to me, it relates to boredom or extreme boredom. So when you have nothing to do, sometimes people do very repetitive activities like twiddling their thumbs or, you know, bouncing their leg or something like that. So, to me, that's the image that comes to mind.
- Andrew: So I think you **hit the nail on the head** there with boredom. Because these days, when we use **stir-crazy** in more of a conversational context, we can use it to talk about prisoners, of course, but we can also use it just to talk about our own personal feelings when we feel bored or when we feel like we've been trapped at home for too long. You know, maybe you've been at home for a couple days and you just wanna get out there and see your friends or do something social, you could say, "Ah, I'm going **stir-crazy**."

- Jeremy: Yeah, like especially if you've had surgery recently, like on your foot or your knee or something. So you can't walk or move very easily, but you have to stay inside.
- Andrew: Right.
- Jeremy: That's a good situation to use this expression.
- Andrew: Or if you're Canadian like I am and you're stuck inside during a blizzard.
- Jeremy: Yes, yes, exactly.
- Andrew: The weather is terrible and you can't go outside. It doesn't have to be snow, it could be heat or any kind of weather that keeps you indoors.
- Jeremy: I imagine if someone had the flu, for example, a very bad case of the flu, I don't think they would use this expression because when you're sick, you physically feel bad, so you need to rest. But if you had knee surgery, for example, your mind is awake and alert. You feel fine. You just can't move. And in that situation, like a prisoner in jail, right? They're totally consciously awake, but they can't move so they go **stir-crazy**. We often use this expression with go.
- Andrew: Right. Go **stir-crazy**. And that's an excellent point, it's all about desire, right? It's a desire to get out of the house, but you can't because of some reason. So, exactly, if you're sick, you don't really desire to go out, you just wanna stay home and take it easy.
- Jeremy: Yeah.
- Andrew: OK, Jeremy I think we are ready for some usage examples with this expression. So let's take a listen to the first one.

- Friend 1: Dude, we've been playing video games now for like 5 hours. It's such a nice day out. Let's go grab some fresh air.
- Friend 2: Good call, man, I'm starting to go a little **stir-crazy** in here.
- Friend 1: Yeah, cool. All right, well, let's go to the park and throw the ball around.
- Friend 2: Yeah, man, let's do it.

Andrew: In this example, we heard two friends talk about how they're going **stir-crazy** because they've been sitting inside all day playing video games. And because they're going **stir-crazy**, they wanna get some fresh air. They wanna go outside, so they decide to go to the park and play catch, throw the ball around. Jeremy, this may have been inspired, this example, from my teenage years.

Jeremy: I was going to say, this sounds like a real-life example.

Andrew: Where I would play video games for hours on end.

Jeremy: Yes, I did that, too. All night, once or twice.

Andrew: I'm sure I had a couple **all-nighters**, as well.

Jeremy: So in this example, both of these people have the ability to go outside. But there is something keeping them inside, and that is the power of the video game. The magnetic power of video games.

Andrew: Yes, the addictive power, yeah.

Jeremy: So should we listen to one more example?

Andrew: Let's do it, OK.

Coworker 1: Hey, you wanna grab a beer after work?

Coworker 2: I'd love to, but I gotta head right home so I can take my dog for a walk.

Coworker 1: Oh, I didn't know you had a dog.

Coworker 2: Yeah. He's awesome, but he goes a little **stir-crazy** staying at home all day. If I don't give him some exercise, he'll rip my house apart.

Jeremy: In this example, two coworkers are talking about going to get a beer after work. One of them says he can't go because he has a dog stuck in the house at home going **stir-crazy**. So you can see here that even animals can go **stir-crazy**. They have the ability and the desire to go outside, but something is not letting them, and in this case it's the owner who hasn't unlocked the door.

Andrew: And, listeners, this example was actually inspired by a real-life event because I was recording with Suzanne, our other Culips cohost, recently, And she has a dog, she has a duck tolling retriever, I believe is the type of dog. So this is a very active dog.



- Andrew: And while we were recording—the dog’s name is Skoshi—Skoshi started scratching at the door and was kind of going **stir-crazy** to be let outside. So Suzanne told me, “Oh, Andrew, hold on one minute, I gotta let my dog out. He’s going **stir-crazy**,” and then I had the idea for this episode.
- Jeremy: There we go. Nice.
- Andrew: I brought it all together. So, thank you Skoshi and Suzanne for the inspiration.
- Jeremy: This episode brought to you by Skoshi. Skoshi the retriever.
- Andrew: Skoshi the retriever. A very cute dog, I must say.
- Jeremy: So we have one more expression that means something very similar, pretty much the same thing, right?
- Andrew: **Cabin fever. Cabin fever.**
- Jeremy: A cabin is like a small house, usually made of wood and often in the forest area or somewhere away from a major city. You can’t have a cabin in the middle of a city.
- Andrew: No, you wouldn’t see a cabin in the city. It’s always, yeah, in the forest, in the woods, in the mountains. In a remote place.
- Jeremy: However, sometimes I’ve seen restaurants that are cabin themed. So the building looks like a cabin, a log cabin, we often say, if the cabin is made of logs.
- Andrew: Exactly.
- Jeremy: But, in general, these are outside of the city, far away from the **hustle and bustle** of the city.
- Andrew: Yeah, in Canada, many families own a cabin that they will visit in the summer for vacation. So, you know, camping is a little bit uncomfortable sometimes, sleeping in a tent. So you can have a cabin near a lake, it’s kind of like a little vacation home. But they’re quite basic, they’re small. They’re not as fully equipped as a home.
- Jeremy: I imagine just a square house, no special rooms or hallways or stairways, usually. When I think of cabin, I just think of a small, square house.
- Andrew: Exactly. Small, square, basic house that is in the forest.
- Jeremy: So this is important, because similar to how a prisoner can go **stir-crazy** in a jail cell, which is a small, square space, right?



- Andrew: Confined.
- Jeremy: Confined space. With this expression, one can get **cabin fever**. So we use this with the verb get. To get **cabin fever** or have **cabin fever**. Like it's an actual disease, an actual fever of some kind.
- Andrew: Just like an illness, yeah, that's how we use the expression.
- Jeremy: And a very closely related expression, pretty much the same, actually, is island fever. I have a friend who lived on the island of Hawaii for a couple years and is now in the process of moving out, moving away from the island.
- Andrew: OK.
- Jeremy: Because she got a case of island fever. This is the same concept, but on an island, because you can't go anywhere else, you can only be on that island. There's this fever they say that people get, or a feeling of being confined. A frustration, sort of, that people who live on an island can get. So it's the same expression, just a different version.
- Andrew: Just a different context, but the same feeling, that you're trapped. And, Jeremy, I should mention that **cabin fever**, the origin of this expression is related to being stuck in a cabin during the winter. So hunters would go into the forest to hunt and have to stay in the cabin during a snowstorm, and sometimes the snowstorm lasted for days and days and days and they couldn't leave the cabin. You know, there's no electricity, there's no internet, nothing to entertain yourself with. So you get a case of **cabin fever**. You'd go **stir-crazy** at the same time, actually.
- Jeremy: Yeah, these are used in pretty much the same situation, but **cabin fever** to me relates more to a situation where you are confined in a small space.
- Andrew: Right.
- Jeremy: But **stir-crazy**, like in our first example, can be caused by a video game keeping you inside. I wouldn't say, "We've been playing video games all day, I'm getting **cabin fever**."
- Andrew: I think you could, though. I think you could.
- Jeremy: But that sounds to me like I'm tired of being stuck inside.
- Andrew: Right.
- Jeremy: Whereas **stir-crazy** is just kind of like I'm tired of doing the same thing. I'm tired of doing the same thing.

Andrew: I think that's a good distinction, but I think it's probably important for our listeners to know that I don't think native speakers think these too deeply.

Jeremy: They don't.

Andrew: I think when we're using these expressions most of the time, they're interchangeable.

Jeremy: Agreed.

Andrew: So, with that being said, Jeremy, why don't we get to a couple of examples using **cabin fever**?

Jeremy: Let's do it.

Andrew: All right.

Friend 1: How was your day today?

Friend 2: It was good, it was good.

Friend 1: Yeah, what did you get up to?

Friend 2: I just worked on editing a video for most of the day, but then I started having a bit of **cabin fever**, so I went out for a walk.

Friend 1: A little bit of fresh air takes care of that, no problem.

Friend 2: Yeah, exactly. Anyway, I should get back to my video.

Friend 1: Yeah, for sure. See ya.

Andrew: So in this example, we heard two friends who ran into each other while they were out for a walk and they exchanged pleasantries, you know? Hey, how's it going? I'm good, how are you? And then we heard the conversation start with how was your day today? And one of the friends had spent all day inside doing some video editing and, because of this, he felt like he was getting a case of **cabin fever**. He felt like he needed to go outside and get some fresh air, just because he was a little claustrophobic from staying inside all day. So he went out for a walk, and that's where he met his buddy and they had that conversation.

Jeremy, I've had **cabin fever** from doing audio editing all day before.

Jeremy: Yup. In fact, yesterday I spent probably 7 hours in a cafe working on a video.

Andrew: Oh my gosh.

Jeremy: For a project.

Andrew: So you know what this is all about.

Jeremy: This is how I felt yesterday.

Andrew: Let's move on to the final example for today.

Jeremy: All right.

Cousin 1: Dude, did you hear about Lisa's accident?

Cousin 2: No, what happened?

Cousin 1: She fell off her bike and broke her leg.

Cousin 2: Ouch.

Cousin 1: Yeah, she'll be OK, but she can't get around very easily right now. So she's just resting at home. I'm worried she'll get **cabin fever**, so I was thinking about stopping by to visit her. You wanna come?

Cousin 2: Yeah, that's a great idea. I'll come with you.

Jeremy: In this example, two cousins are talking about one of their other cousins, Lisa, who broke her leg. She can't move around very well and is stuck in the house. So these two decided to go pay her a visit.

Andrew: Yeah, because they're worried that she might get **cabin fever**, right? If you have a broken leg, you can't really move around. You're not very mobile. So I think this is a situation where we use this expression a lot, when somebody's sick or they're injured and they can't get out and about.

Jeremy: Usually when they actually want to go outside but can't.

Andrew: Exactly. Exactly.

Jeremy: So if someone had the stomach flu and was throwing up, maybe not.

Andrew: But maybe if somebody had a more serious illness, where they were stuck in a hospital, they could feel **cabin fever**. Maybe if you had cancer or something.

Jeremy: Definitely. Would you say that it's impossible to get **cabin fever** if you're stuck outside?

Andrew: Wow, deep question. No, I would say, yeah, I've never thought about it.

Jeremy: If you're lost in the forest for weeks?

Andrew: Yeah, no, you wouldn't get **cabin fever** in the forest, no.

Jeremy: Right, it's impossible. I think it does have to do with being in a physical place that is sort of small.

Andrew: Yes. Exactly, you need walls around you. You need to have that feeling of being a little bit claustrophobic.

Jeremy: Yes, claustrophobic, good word.

Andrew: Cool.

Jeremy: Claustrophobic is a phobia or a fear of being confined in small or tight spaces.

Andrew: So thank you everyone for listening. We hope that you learned a lot from this episode. Once again, our website is Culips.com, and our email address is contact@Culips.com.

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That is it for us, we'll catch you next time. Bye, everyone.

Jeremy: See you next time.

Detailed Explanations

Sidekick

Noun

A **sidekick** is a friend or person who spends time with someone of more importance and power, offering that person assistance and support. The word **sidekick** is most often seen in comic books to describe the relationship between superheroes and their less powerful friends who help them fight crime or solve problems. Famous examples of heroes and their **sidekicks** include Batman and Robin, Sherlock Holmes and Dr Watson, and Mario and Luigi.

The term **sidekick** is used frequently outside of fiction stories, as well. **Sidekicks** can be found in all areas of society, from the workplace to the schoolyard. In this episode, Andrew addressed Jeremy as his trusty **sidekick** for this Culips episode.

Here's one more example with **sidekick**:

Dad:	Hey, son. Where are you going?
Seth:	I'm heading to the creek to try to catch a fish or two.
Dad:	Sounds fun, but where is your trusty sidekick ? You never go anywhere without that dog.
Seth:	Ah, Mom's inside giving Rusty a bath right now. He rolled in something that smelled absolutely disgusting.
Dad:	Why is Mom doing that instead of you?
Seth:	I don't know. She offered! I wasn't going to say no!

Cooped up Adjective

To be **cooped up** is to be kept in a small, enclosed space for a long period of time. If someone feels **cooped up**, then they feel irritated, bored, and anxious from lack of freedom and fresh air.

Here are a couple more examples with **cooped up**:

Franny:	What are you doing after work?
Ashley:	I have to go home and take my dog out. My dog walker called in sick today, so Buddy's been cooped up inside all day.
Franny:	Oh, poor Buddy! He must be going stir-crazy.
Ashley:	Yeah. He tends to chew things when he's anxious, too. I'm afraid I'll come home to a destroyed house.
Franny:	Well, good luck. Give Buddy a good scratch behind the ear for me.

Dolly:	How has Danice been since the breakup? Is she coping well?
Sandra:	No, not at all. She hasn't left her house in 4 days. She called off work today and yesterday.
Dolly:	Really? It's not good for her to be cooped up like that alone for so long. We should go check on her.
Sandra:	Yeah. Maybe we can convince her to leave the apartment. She really needs some fresh air.



Stir-crazy Adjective

To feel **stir-crazy** is to feel bored and restless from being confined or inactive for a long period of time. This phrase was first used to describe prisoners who become bored and slightly crazed after spending too long in their prison cells. The phrase is now used to describe anyone who feels tense and anxious after being cooped up for too long a period of time.

Here's one more example with **stir-crazy**:

Dash:	Niko, we've been working on this assignment for hours! Let's take a break and shoot some hoops for a bit or something.
Niko:	Definitely. Let's go. I'm getting a bit stir-crazy myself. My eyes are so tired, the words on my computer are starting to blur together.
Dash:	Great! I'll grab the basketball, you grab some snacks. We'll meet outside in 5 minutes.
Niko:	Yeah!

To hit the nail on the head

Idiom

To hit the nail on the head is to be exactly right about something. Someone whose idea about a given problem or discussion is completely accurate is said to have **hit the nail on the head**. For example, in this episode, Jeremy gave a very accurate description of the phrase stir-crazy, and Andrew said he really **hit the nail on the head**. In other words, Jeremy's definition of stir-crazy was 100% accurate.

Here's one more example with **to hit the nail on the head**:

Ravi:	Why am I forever alone? Am I really that ugly?
Padi:	No. You're not ugly, but you have absolutely zero confidence when you talk to girls. You need to loosen up and show the ladies that you're a man.
Ravi:	I think you've really hit the nail on the head here, Padi. I do lack confidence. Maybe I should go out and hire a life coach.
Padi:	That isn't exactly what I meant ... But if you think it will help, then go for it.



All-nighter

Noun

To pull an **all-nighter** is to stay up all night long working on or preparing for something. Students often pull **all-nighters** studying furiously for an upcoming exam.

Here are a couple more examples with **all-nighter**:

Hector:	Wow, you look like a zombie. Didn't get much sleep?
Alec:	None, actually. I pulled an all-nighter finishing the history paper that was due today.
Hector:	Why did you wait until the last minute to start it? You're such a procrastinator.
Alec:	Why? Good question. I guess I really like torturing myself.

Bethany:	Ugh, I am so tired right now. I pulled an all-nighter studying for this exam. I better ace it.
Devin:	What exam?
Bethany:	You know, the chemistry exam? Didn't you study at all?
Devin:	Um, Bethany, the chemistry exam isn't until next week.
Bethany:	WHAT? I lost a night of sleep for nothing!
Devin:	Well, now you'll be super prepared for the test next week.



Cabin fever

Noun

Someone experiencing **cabin fever** tends to be bored, irritable, and restless due to being cooped up indoors for too long a period of time. It is called a fever because people have similar symptoms when experiencing a fever and experiencing **cabin fever**, namely boredom, anger, and restlessness.

Here's one more example with **cabin fever**:

Becky:	How much longer until we land?
Mom:	The screen says we have 4 more hours to go.
Becky:	Four more hours? But we've already been flying so long! I'm dying.
Mom:	Don't be so dramatic. You're not dying. You've just got a bit of cabin fever . Wanna play a game? Maybe that will make you feel less bored.
Becky:	Fine. But I just wanna say that I hate flying, I hate these teeny, tiny seats, and I never wanna fly this far ever again.
Mom:	That's unfortunate, since we'll have to make the return flight home 2 weeks from now.
Becky:	Ugh! Nope, it's official. I'm living in Guam for the rest of my life.



Hustle and bustle

Phrase

Hustle and bustle is a phrase that refers to a situation or place that is full of business, activity, and lots of things going on at one time. The phrase **hustle and bustle** is often used to describe the busyness of city life.

Here are a couple more examples with **hustle and bustle**:

Jerry:	Why don't we get out of the city this weekend and go camping?
Clarissa:	That sounds like a splendid idea! It will be great to get away from the hustle and bustle of it all for just a few days.
Jerry:	It's settled, then. I'll prepare the camping things and you have the kids pack their bags when they get home from school.
Clarissa:	Great! I just checked the weather forecast, as well. There are supposed to be beautiful blue skies all weekend.

Peggy:	What made you decide to quit your cushy investment banking job to move all the way out here?
Daniel:	I needed a change of pace. The constant hustle and bustle of the corporate world gets exhausting after a while.
Peggy:	Well, you can't get much more slow and peaceful than this little town.
Daniel:	Great. That's exactly what I was hoping for.



Quiz

1. Which of the following is not a symptom of cabin fever?

- a) boredom
- b) listlessness
- c) high temperature
- d) anger

2. Which phrase describes the busyness and frenzy of city life?

- a) cooped up
- b) hustle and bustle
- c) stir-crazy
- d) flotsam and jetsam

3. A person who is a friend, confidant, and assistant to someone of more importance is known as a _____.

- a) wingman
- b) secretary
- c) butler
- d) sidekick

4. Why might a dog feel cooped up?

- a) He ate something he shouldn't have
- b) He was in his cage all day
- c) His owner yelled at him and kicked him
- d) He was playing outside all day

5. To be exactly right about something is to _____.

- a) Hit the nail on the head
- b) Bite the bullet
- c) Jump ship
- d) Be caught with your hand in the cookie jar



Writing and Discussion Questions

1. Have you ever been stir-crazy or experienced cabin fever? How so?
2. What do you usually do to relieve boredom?
3. Have you ever pulled an all-nighter? What for?
4. Who is your favourite TV or movie hero and sidekick duo and why?
5. Do you prefer the hustle and bustle of city life or the quiet, peaceful life of the countryside? Why?

Quiz Answers

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

Episode credits

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