

Catch Word #217 – Spittin’ chiclets

Episode description

He got into a fight and now he’s spittin’ chiclets? What on earth does that mean? Well, if you played hockey in Canada, you would certainly know the answer. In fact, the sport of hockey has many interesting expressions. In this Catch Word episode, Andrew tests Jeremy’s knowledge of these unique sayings.

Fun fact

On November 1st, 1959, hockey goaltender Jacques Plante changed hockey forever. He put on a face mask! At the time, no goalie in the league wore one. He was tired on getting the puck in the face and spittin’ chiclets!

Expressions included in the study guide

- Spittin’ chiclets
- To roughhouse
- To chirp
- A sniff
- -ski
- Like it’s nobody’s business



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.

Hi, everyone, welcome back to another addition of our Catch Word series, which is the Culips series where we teach you interesting and useful English slang, idioms, phrasal verbs, and vocabulary. And, today, I am joined by my cohost Jeremy. Jeremy, how are you doing?

Jeremy: I'm doing good today, Andrew. I heard that we're gonna talk about hockey.

Andrew: Yeah, today's episode kind of breaks the mould from our regular Catch Word episodes, because usually what we do here is we deep dive into one or two English expressions. But today, we're gonna look at a host of expressions that I recently heard while I was listening to a hockey podcast. And I thought it was so funny the way that the hockey speakers were talking. They have their own kind of English that was really unique, I thought.

And I thought, well, other people don't really talk this way. This is really specialized hockey slang and hockey vocabulary. And I know, Jeremy, you are an American and I just have the gut feeling that you're not a hockey fan. Is that true?

Jeremy: That is true. I have gone to a couple hockey games in my life. There is a very famous hockey team in my hometown but, other than that, I haven't watched it on TV or I've never played it, either. No, I'm not a big fan.

Andrew: OK, so this is perfect, because what I thought would be interesting to see is your reaction to some of these specialized hockey slang expressions. Can you use your native speaker intuition to understand what they mean, or are they completely foreign to you? This is the experiment that we're going to do here today.

- Jeremy: Oh, boy. So I'm going to be tested?
- Andrew: Yeah, I'm sorry you're in the hot seat today. You're gonna be tested.
- Jeremy: All right. I'm ready.
- Andrew: OK. And, to all our listeners, I do wanna say that I'm sorry, because these expressions maybe aren't extremely useful to you in your everyday life. I don't think you'll be able to use what you learn here today regularly. So you can kind of just sit back and relax and enjoy this episode, don't feel like you really have to study and memorize the expressions that we will talk about today.
- Jeremy: Unless you really love hockey.
- Andrew: Unless you really love hockey, then you're going to want to learn them. But nonetheless, we still have made a study guide for this episode that includes a transcript and some detailed explanations and examples of some of the other expressions that you'll hear Jeremy and I use today. It's a great resource. It's available on our website, Culips.com. So if you're interested in studying along with that, please visit the website to download it.
- OK, Jeremy, let's get into it here. The first expression that I wanna run by you is a very funny one and it is **spittin' chiclets**. **Spittin' chiclets**. This is actually the name of the podcast that I was listening to, **Spittin' Chiclets**. Yeah, do you have any idea what this could mean?
- Jeremy: Well, you gave me a hint there, that it's the name of the podcast. I know that spitting is often shortened to spittin' as it is here, and spitting is sort of a [spitting sound] shooting something out, that motion. I also know that chiclets is often a term used for gum, little pieces of gum that are sort of like pellets, and so it makes me think that it means hitting pucks. Hitting hockey pucks, spittin' like hittin', like spitting them out, and chiclets, little puck-shaped objects. So it makes me think hitting hockey pucks would be the meaning.
- Andrew: Good guess, but unfortunately you're wrong.
- Jeremy: My goodness. What does this mean? I'm curious now.
- Andrew: OK, well, you know a major component of ice hockey is fighting, OK? It's one of the only sports where two players can legally, in the middle of the game, just start hitting each other in the face, OK? Maybe boxing and some sort of martial arts you can do this, but you can also do this in hockey.

Andrew: It's a very popular part of the game and a very common part of the game. In fact, each team will have players called enforcers, and their job really is just to go out there and **roughhouse** and fight with other players. And it's become kind of a legendary part of the game. Some players are immortalized for their fighting skill.

And so what **spittin' chiclets** means is spitting your teeth out after a fight, because the teeth are white squares, right, essentially, and chiclets, the gum that you mentioned, they are also white squares. They kind of resemble teeth. So after the fight, if you're kind of [spitting sound] spitting your teeth out, you're **spittin' chiclets**.

Jeremy: So it's a metaphor for the fighting aspect of the game of hockey?

Andrew: Exactly, exactly.

Jeremy: Wow. Geeze, very violent.

Andrew: Very violent. Yeah, it's a rough one. But this kind of expression is something that you could hear in Canada when somebody's bragging about a tough hockey player, you know? Maybe, for example, you might hear a sentence, like, let's say there's a hockey player with the last name Smith, OK? And it's also very common in Canada to give everybody a nickname by adding a Y to their last name. So Smith would be Smithy, OK?

Jeremy: I see.

Andrew: So you might hear an example like, "Smithy played in the third period even though he was **spittin' chiclets**," or "even after he was he was **spittin' chiclets**." So even after he fought and lost some teeth, he still played in the game in the third period.

Jeremy: Wow.

Andrew: All right, let's move on to the next one. I think this one's easier, Jeremy. I think you'll be able to guess this one.

Jeremy: OK.

Andrew: We kind of use this in other aspects of English, too, it's not purely a hockey expression.

Jeremy: OK.

Andrew: So it's a verb, **to chirp** or to squawk, OK, **to chirp** or to squawk. And maybe if I give you an example it will help you decipher.

- Jeremy: It probably will, yeah, but the first thing I think of is **chirp** is small and squawk is big. **Chirp** is a small bird's sound and squawk is a bigger bird's sound. These are words for bird sounds.
- Andrew: Yes, exactly. It's the **chirp** is like maybe a small chickadee or small song bird, like "**chirp, chirp, chirp.**" And squawk is like a big, maybe a crow or a raven or a goose or a bigger bird.
- Jeremy: So what's the situation?
- Andrew: Yeah, let me give you a situation. For example, maybe you could say—we'll go back to Smithy, the example of the player named Smithy—could say "Ah, Smithy **was chirping** at me all game." "Smithy **was chirping** at me all game."
- Jeremy: Got it.
- Andrew: What do you think this means?
- Jeremy: The first expression that comes to mind is one with a curse word in it that we use often, but talking S-H-I-T, this is the equivalent in basketball, which is my sport of choice, but trash talking we would say. Trash talking.
- Andrew: Exactly. So **to chirp** or to squawk is really to taunt and annoy other players, right? You're trash talking them, it's a big part of any sport, I think, is talking to the opposition to try and get under their skin. To try to get them off their game, right? Distract them so that they're not focused on the game. And this is a good strategy for trying to win the game. And so I heard this. This is one of the most common expressions I heard in the podcast. The guys were continuously talkin' about **chirpin'** and squawkin', and this just means trash talking, exactly.
- Jeremy: I see.
- Andrew: The next two expressions that I have for you are not really related to hockey, but I heard hockey players use them a lot. First one is **a sniff**, OK? **A sniff**. And maybe you could explain what this word **sniff** means and then I'll give you the context.
- Jeremy: It's what you do when you breathe in through your nose to check the smell of something. If you want to check if a carton of milk has gone bad, you can open it and **sniff** near the opening to check if it is rotten or not. So it's a small [sniffing sound], this action.
- Andrew: Yeah, investigating with your nose.
- Jeremy: Yes, yes.

- Andrew: OK so the context I heard a hockey player use this expression, he was talking about his career and how his team made the finals one time, OK? But then he said after that we never made the finals again, not even **a sniff**.
- Jeremy: I think it means they didn't get close enough to even smell the food, so to speak. Or it means they didn't get close to it because you have to be close to something to **sniff** it.
- Andrew: Exactly, exactly. So here he's using this word **sniff** to talk about being close to reaching the finals again. They did it one time and then the team was nowhere close to doing it again. It was a one-time-only thing. They were not even close enough to smell that final game. I think we could use this in other parts of English. It's kind of a specialized slang expression, but it wouldn't sound too strange to me to talk about other things as well.
- Jeremy: With all of these, actually, if I actually heard them in context, I would be able to figure out what they mean, I think.
- Andrew: And there's one final one. And I'm interested in your insights to see if Americans talk like this or if this is purely Canadian slang, OK? But the context that I heard this final expression in was these hockey players were talking about getting pumped up for a game in the locker room. So they were talking about how they like to throw on some **tuneskis** in the locker room before they get started, some **tuneskis**.
- Jeremy: OK.
- Andrew: What is a **tuneski**?
- Jeremy: It is a song.
- Andrew: Yeah, exactly.
- Jeremy: We do talk like that sometimes. There's probably some historical linguistic roots here to some Nordic language or something, but we do say that, some **tuneskis**, a **brewski**, people say for a beer, a **brewski**.
- Andrew: We say that as well, pass me a **brewski**. I can't think of any other words that we shorten that way. I know tune changes to **tuneski**, brew changes to **brewski**.
- Jeremy: Sometimes **broski**.
- Andrew: Bro to **broski**.
- Jeremy: Bro becomes **broski**.

- Andrew: Yeah, it kind of sounds almost like a Polish ending.
- Jeremy: Could be, that would make sense. It can't be anything, though; I can't just say, "Can I borrow a **penski**?" Actually, you could say that, could I borrow a **penski**, that doesn't sound too bad.
- Andrew: Doesn't sound too bad, it's not standard. It would be kind of unique if you talked like that, but I could understand, right? You know, sometimes we change the way that we refer to objects just to lighten the mood a little bit. Of course, I would never talk like this if I had a meeting with my boss. That would be using a very informal expression in a very formal setting. But when you're with your friends and you're joking around, it's fun to use some of these alternative expressions to talk about things. And, yeah, like we mentioned, the two most common, I think, are **tuneski** and **brewski**.
- Jeremy: Unfortunately for English learners, though, sometimes being around native English speakers who do these kinds of things for fun, who make up new words for fun just to lighten the mood, sometimes they do that not knowing that they are making it more difficult for the English learner to understand what's going on.
- Andrew: Yeah, what's really interesting is in the hockey league, the National Hockey League, there are a lot of foreign players from Europe and from Russia and other countries. And when some of these guys start playing, they already have high levels of English, but some of them don't. Some of them can't speak English at all.
- And it's fun to watch their progress over the years because, after 10 or 15 years in the league, their English is really good because they're in a totally immersive environment talking with these hockey players all day long, talking with the coach all day long, et cetera.
- And it's funny, by the end of their careers when you watch them in an interview, they're speaking perfect English and using these expressions **like it's nobody's business**. So I guess it's just you need lots of exposure to them, but they're very hard, I agree, to understand at first. And some people might not realize that, like you mentioned.
- Jeremy: So if you're interested in hockey or sports in general, perhaps you found this episode helpful today. And each sport has its own set of these kind of words, different idiomatic expressions, phrasal verbs, things like that, that are used. So maybe you can tell us about some that you've learned through your time watching sports and you can share them with us on Facebook or via social media.

Andrew: Yup, we're on Instagram, YouTube, Twitter, or Facebook. Our email address is contact@Culips.com. So if you'd prefer to contact us through email, please do it at that address.

Jeremy, this was fun, maybe next time we can do this with basketball. You can throw some basketball expressions at me.

Jeremy: Yeah, let's do that.

Andrew: We'll see how it goes.

Thank you for listening, everyone. We will be back soon with a brand-new Culips episode, and we'll talk to you then. Goodbye.

Jeremy: Bye.

Detailed Explanations

Spittin' chiclets

Phrase, informal

Spittin' chiclets is losing some teeth, whether it is because of a fight or any other kind of accident. Chiclets used to be a chewing gum brand name. The individual pieces of gum were white and resembled human teeth. For that reason, chiclets is sometimes slang for teeth.

Here are a couple more examples with **spittin' chiclets**:

Yolanda: Do you still compete in kickboxing?

Hyeongmin: No, not anymore.

Yolanda: I thought you really liked it.

Hyeongmin: I did, but I wasn't really all that good. After all, you get tired of **spittin' chiclets**.

Yolanda: I totally understand.

Dana: Hey! Move away from behind that horse!

Larry: OK, OK. What's the matter?

Dana: The matter? That horse was about to kick you in the face.

Larry: Oh.

Dana: Yeah. That's super dangerous. A horse kick like that, you'd be **spittin' chiclets** in no time.

To roughhouse

Verb

To roughhouse is to act in a rough manner. You could be fighting for real or just play fighting with a friend. **Roughhousing** is often associated with children and how they sometimes fight and push each other around.

Here are a couple more examples with **to roughhouse**:

Son:	Mom, can I go out and play with my friends at the park?
Mother:	Who else is going to be there?
Son:	I don't know.
Mother:	Is Timmy going to be there?
Son:	Maybe.
Mother:	I don't like you hanging out with him. You always end up roughhousing with him and coming home with a bloody nose. Stay away from him!

Veronica:	What happened to you? Is that a black eye?
Blake:	Yeah.
Veronica:	Did you get into a fight?
Blake:	Not really. Me and the boys were roughhousing a little. Someone's elbow caught me in the eye. No big deal.

To chirp

Verb

Chirping is the sound a small bird makes. But in the context of sports, **to chirp** is to taunt or annoy other players with your words. Another term for this is to trash talk.

Here are a couple more examples with **to chirp**:

Bobby:	How was your game last night?
Ethan:	Not bad. We lost, but at least we played well.
Bobby:	Was Jones in the lineup?
Ethan:	Yeah. He was great. He was chirping the whole game. The other team really wanted to kill him.

Brianna:	We're playing the Toronto team on the weekend.
Jiseon:	Ah, I hate that team!
Brianna:	Seriously? Why do you hate them so much?
Jiseon:	They chirp way too much. They talk the whole game and won't shut up.
Brianna:	Then shut them up by winning!

A sniff

Noun

In this episode, Andrew talks about a player not getting another **sniff** at the finals in his sport. That means he never reached the finals again. In this sense, not **a sniff** means not at all. You can also use **a sniff** to mean just a little. If you have tried skiing just once, you could say you've only had **a sniff** at it. The analogy is that you're close enough to food that you can smell it, but not close enough to eat it.

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

Marcia:	Did you hear Peggy and Brad are getting divorced?
Robert:	No way! Wow. Peggy had a lot of money before their marriage. What do you think is going to happen now?
Marcia:	I don't think Brad will get a sniff of that money.
Robert:	You think he won't get any of her money after the divorce? What makes you say that?
Marcia:	For starters, Peggy is going to hire really good lawyers. Also, Brad cheated on her. It's kind of his fault.

Trish:	You were a pretty good college basketball player when you were younger, right? Did you ever play in the NBA?
John:	Not really. I only got a sniff at it.
Trish:	What do you mean?
John:	I was invited to try out for a team. I even played a pre-season game, but I didn't make the team and then I was never invited back. That's my sad story!

-ski Ending, slang

As mentioned in the episode, putting **-ski** at the end of some nouns is a common way of speaking among friends. The ending **-ski** doesn't serve a purpose other than making a word sound more playful.

Here are a couple more examples with **-ski**:

George: I saw your game on the weekend. Tough loss.

Phil: I know. We really needed to win that one. Frankly, it still hurts.

George: Let's go out for a couple of brews. You've feel better.

Phil: I could definitely go for some **brewskis**. Good call.

Erin: Your husband isn't with you tonight? I thought he would come.

Rita: Actually, he has this kind of unbreakable commitment once a month.

Erin: What kind of commitment?

Rita: Like he says, he gets together with his **broskis** to listen to some **tuneskis** and drink some **brewskis**.

Erin: Oh god! So your husband just hangs out with his old buddies and drink beer?

Rita: Pretty much.

Like it's nobody's business

Idiom

At the end of this episode, Andrew talks about how some athletes from non-English-speaking countries come to North America with few English-speaking skills but, by the end of their careers, they speak near-perfect English **like it's nobody's business**. **Like it's nobody's business** is an expression people use to say something is extreme or not comparable. If someone is fast **like it's nobody's business**, that person is very, very fast! You can also shorten the expression by saying **like nobody's business**.

Here are a couple more examples with **like it's nobody's business**:

Macy:	Do you want to come bowling with us tonight?
Bruce:	Actually, I have tickets for the Metallica concert.
Macy:	Oh, I'm so jealous!
Bruce:	You like Metallica?
Macy:	Since forever! They're awesome. And Kirk Hammett can rock guitar solos like it's nobody's business .
Bruce:	You should have told me. I could have gotten you a ticket.

Collin:	We're going out for a few drinks. Wanna join?
Ian:	Not with you, no way!
Collin:	What do you mean?
Ian:	Every time I go drinking with you, bad things happen. You can drink like it's nobody's business .
Collin:	It's not a competition. You don't need to keep up with me. Just come along and have fun.

Quiz

1. What does spittin' chiclets mean?

- a) to get new teeth
- b) to chew gum
- c) to pick up your teeth
- d) to lose teeth

2. Which of the following is NOT a synonym for to chirp?

- a) to garbage mouth
- b) to squawk
- c) to denigrate
- d) to belittle

3. What does it mean if you say your mother can cook like it's nobody's business?

- a) she cooks very well
- b) she is in the restaurant business
- c) she cooks once a day
- d) she doesn't cook for strangers

4. Would Andrew invite his boss for some brewskis?

- a) Yes, why not?
- b) Maybe, but he wouldn't use that word

5. What is an example of to roughhouse?

- a) to move your house
- b) to live in a bad neighbourhood
- c) to wrestle
- d) to watch mixed martial arts on television

Writing and Discussion Questions

1. In this episode, Jeremy has a hard time guessing the definition of the expressions Andrew brought to him. When you listened to this episode, were you able to guess any of them correctly?
2. When you play sports or games, are you someone who chirps?
3. How do you react when someone is chirping at you?
4. As we heard in this episode, it is common for some people to put -ski at the end of some nouns to make them more familiar among friends. In your native language, what are some ways people change words to do the same?
5. In this episode, Andrew also mentions how people often create nicknames by adding a Y at the end of their real name. For example, Smith can become Smithy. What ways do people usually make nicknames in your native language?

Quiz Answers

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

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