

## Catch Word #224 – Take the wind out of your sails

### Episode description

When you're feeling down, it is still important to express yourself. In this episode of Catch Word, Andrew and Jeremy define two phrases that are used during those low moments in life.

### Fun fact

Most sailboats have two sails: a mainsail and a headsail or jib. A sailboat is any boat that moves through the water using sails. The wind blows against the sails and pushes the boat.

### Expressions included in the study guide

- The highs and lows
- To take the wind out of your sails
- To shoot it down
- To kick you when you're down
- In a bad place



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## 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. The transcript has been edited for clarity.

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**Andrew:** Hello, everyone. My name is Andrew.

**Jeremy:** And my name is Jeremy.

**Andrew:** And you are listening to Culips.

**Andrew:** Hey, everyone, welcome back to Culips. Today, we've got a Catch Word episode for you. Catch Word is our vocabulary series where we teach you interesting and useful English vocabulary, could be slang or phrasal verbs or idioms. We teach you all sorts of different vocabulary. But, guys, the common thread about all the vocabulary we teach you in this series is that it is essential for understanding English. And today, joining me is my cohost, Jeremy. Jeremy, hello.

**Jeremy:** Hello there, Andrew. Thanks for calling me today.

**Andrew:** Yeah, it's great to have you here. Jeremy, I am a bit sorry, though, because we have some kind of negative expressions to teach our listeners today.

**Jeremy:** Oh, come on, man.

**Andrew:** Well, you know life is happy and sad and so, of course, there is vocabulary to represent **the highs and lows** of life. And today we're going to look at some of the low vocabulary. We'll look at two idiomatic expressions about being demotivated or discouraged or disappointed. All of these, kind of, let down emotions.

**Andrew:** And don't forget you can get the study guide for this episode on our website, Culips.com. It's a great resource and it is the best way to study with us. So just visit Culips.com and you can download it.

**Andrew:** Jeremy, the first expression is to **take the wind out of your sails**. **To take the wind out of your sails**. This is the active way to say it. You could also say it passively, like **I had the wind taken out of my sails**.

**Jeremy:** So, the "your sails" can be anyone. My sails, his sails, her sails. And here, sails is spelled S-A-I-L-S.

**Andrew:** Good point.

**Jeremy:** It's not S-A-L-E, which would be, like, when you're selling an item. This one is a sail, which is the cloth part on a boat that allows the boat to move with the wind. So the wind blows the sail and pushes the boat along the water. So if someone took away that wind, then the boat cannot move, right? So that sort of gives us a hint as to the meaning of this expression.

**Andrew:** Right. So if **you had the wind taken out of your sails** or if somebody **takes the wind out of your sails**, it just means that you're discouraged or you're demotivated.

**Jeremy:** You lost your motivation to do something. In this analogy, your motivation to do something is like the wind. Motivation is wind. So if someone takes away that wind, **takes the wind out of your sails**, then you have no motivation to do what you are doing. You can't go forward.

**Andrew:** I think probably everybody has had this happen to them at some point, where they're, you know, super excited about an idea or super excited about doing something and you want to share that idea with your friend or a colleague, and then their reaction is just very blasé and then you become demotivated. You're like, ah, I was so excited, but my friend said that's a bad idea.

**Jeremy:** Or, like, one thing that comes to mind for me was, when I was in elementary school, there was this, this movie that I really wanted to see, and I was so excited to see. And so, I went to my friends and said, "Hey, guys, guess what? I'm gonna go see this movie on Friday." And my friend said, "That movie's stupid." And I felt like, oh, man. So, in a way, he **took the wind out of my sails**. I was all puffed up and moving around and excited. And then he said that and then I sit down and I'd be quiet and put my head down. Yeah.

**Andrew:** Yeah, it sucks. And it's, it's a bad feeling when **you have the wind taken out of your sails** 'cause, you just feel a little bit down. But I think we've defined this expression sufficiently, so why don't we listen to a couple of examples with it now?

**Jeremy:** Let's do it.

**Coworker 1:** So I ran that new idea I had by my boss.

**Coworker 2:** Nice. I'm sure he loved it, right?

**Coworker 1:** Nope. He **shot it down**.

**Coworker 2:** What, why? It would have saved the company a ton of money.

**Coworker 1:** Yeah, that's what I thought, too, but I don't know. Anyway, it really **took the wind out of my sails**.

**Andrew:** So in this conversation, we hear two colleagues talking about an idea that would have saved their company a ton of money. And when it was pitched to their boss, **it was shot down**. OK, **it was shot down**, which means that it was rejected. When the guy who pitched this idea, who told this idea to his boss, **was shot down** and rejected, it **took the wind out of his sails**. So he felt demotivated to continue working hard and thinking of new ideas for the company.

**Andrew:** All right, let's move on to example #2.

**Friend 1:** So, are you all pumped up for the camping trip this weekend?

**Friend 2:** I don't know, man, I might have to bail. I'm not sure I still wanna go.

**Friend 1:** What? Come on! If you bail, then others might, too. Don't **take the wind out of my sails** like this. We've been planning this trip for weeks.

**Friend 2:** All right. All right. I'll go.

**Friend 1:** Yeah, there we go.

**Jeremy:** In this example, two friends are talking about going on a camping trip the following weekend. One friend says that he might have to bail. And bail means to cancel or to decide not to go. His friend responds by saying, "Don't **take the wind out of my sails** like this." Meaning, don't do this to me. Don't discourage me. I'm very excited for this trip right now. Don't take that away from me.

**Andrew:** Yeah, that guy sounds like a bad friend, like they've been planning that trip for weeks and then at the last moment, he decides to bail. Bad friend, bad friend.

**Jeremy:** Geez, Andrew, you need to reflect.

**Andrew:** It's not me.

**Jeremy:** It's a character.

**Andrew:** It's a character. All right.

**Andrew:** Let's move on to our second expression, which is **to kick you when you're down**. **To kick you when you're down**.

**Jeremy:** Or **to kick me when I'm down**.

**Andrew:** Yeah, well, I don't want **to kick you when you're down**. I don't want **to kick anyone when they're down**, to be honest with you.

**Jeremy:** But I'm sure we've all seen a movie in which there is a scene where some character gets **kicked while they are down**. There are lots of scenes in movies like this.

**Andrew:** Exactly. So maybe people are thinking that this literally means to kick somebody, but it's not physical kicking.

**Jeremy:** It can be, but it usually is not.

**Andrew:** Right. I mean, it could be physical kicking. But, most of the times, it's a kind of metaphorical use of the word to talk about damaging somebody or hurting somebody or doing something bad to someone when they're already **in a bad place** or a bad state.

**Jeremy:** So let's say that I borrowed Andrew's car for the weekend. And, after borrowing his car, I go see him and he tells me that he lost his job. And I say, oh, I'm sorry, man. Well, I should tell you, I crashed your car. Maybe you could say, come on, man, don't **kick me while I'm down**.

**Andrew:** Right. That's a perfect example, because, you know, I'm already in that negative mindset of being depressed because I lost my job. And then you have the audacity to go and crash my car and **kick me when I've down**.

**Jeremy:** Yeah. It means to add damage, to hurt, or to do something negative to a person when they're already suffering from something else.

**Andrew:** Exactly. So it's this, kind of, stacking of bad things.

**Jeremy:** Yes, like stacking on.

**Andrew:** And often we say, oh, life is really **kicking me when I'm down**. It's not about somebody, but life in general. You know, like, sometimes maybe you lose your job and then you break up with your partner and then you get sick and then you run out of money or something, right? You just have bad news, bad news, bad news. This kind of stacking of bad things happening again and again, then you could say, oh, life is really **kicking me when I'm down**.

**Jeremy:** Like not again.

**Andrew:** Not again. OK.

**Jeremy:** So let's look at some examples for this one to help you all understand a bit better.

**Andrew:** Great.

**Friend 1:** Hey, man, remember that money I lent you last year? I'm gonna need to get that back.

**Friend 2:** Oh, hmm. Could it wait a bit?

**Friend 1:** Sorry, dude. I'm in a bind. I need it, like, now.

**Friend 2:** Ah, gosh. Life is really **kicking me when I'm down** right now. I lost my job last week, my girlfriend dumped me, and now this.

**Friend 1:** Yeah, I mean, I'm sorry about all that, but I really need that money.

**Friend 2:** All right. All right. I'll get it to you.

**Andrew:** So in this example, we hear about a guy who is suffering from multiple bad situations at once. He lost his job. His girlfriend dumped him. And now his friend is asking for money. And he's broke, too, right? So it's just a very **bad place to be in**. And because of this, he says, wow, life is really **kicking me when I'm down** right now. So he's **in a bad place**. And this can really make you feel discouraged from even going forward with life. It can be really hard to dig yourself out of a hole like this.

**Jeremy:** It sucks, man. It sucks. That's a common expression, it sucks.

**Andrew:** Straight up sucks. Yes.

**Andrew:** Let's listen to our final example for this episode right now.

**Coworker 1:** We should talk to Gregory about the report. He's gonna need to redo it. We can't submit it like this.

**Coworker 2:** You know what? Just let me do it. He's been under a lot of stress lately, and I don't want **to kick him while he's down**.

**Coworker 1:** Are you sure?

**Coworker 2:** Yeah, I'll just fix it up a bit, and then we can submit it.

**Coworker 1:** OK, I'm sending it to you right now.

**Jeremy:** In this example, two coworkers are talking about a report that Gregory did. Apparently, the report was not done very well. So one of the workers decides to take on the project himself, because he knows that Gregory is under a lot of stress, meaning he is suffering from stress, and he doesn't want **to kick him while he's down**. So he is suffering from something negative now, stress, and giving him more work will be like a kick, adding something negative to an already negative situation.

**Andrew:** Exactly. So being stressed out and then being told that the quality of his work is very terrible will even stress out and make Gregory feel more demotivated, more depressed.

**Jeremy:** Yup. Yeah.

**Andrew:** Poor Gregory.

**Jeremy:** Man, he sure has a very nice coworker. That guy is very nice.

**Andrew:** That brings us to the end of today's episode, everyone. Thanks for listening. We hope you learned a lot.

**Andrew:** Remember, you can get the study guide for this episode on our website, Culips.com. And you can also find us on social media. We are on Instagram, YouTube, Facebook, and Twitter. If you'd like to get in contact with us, maybe you have an episode suggestion topic that you'd like us to cover, or if you have a question or comment, let us know. You can reach us at [contact@Culips.com](mailto:contact@Culips.com). And if you like studying with us and if you learn a lot from us, then please support us. You could do that by leaving a five-star rating and a nice comment on Apple Podcasts or wherever you get your podcasts.

**Andrew:** We will be back soon with another brand-new Culips episode and we'll talk to you then. Goodbye.

**Jeremy:** Bye, everyone.

## Detailed Explanations

### The highs and lows

#### Phrase

**The highs and lows** is a phrase that means the good and bad times—the happy or successful times and the bad or unsuccessful time. This phrase can be used to describe someone’s career, relationship, or any other span of time in someone’s life.

This phrase could be a shorter version of **the high points and the low points**—referring to the peaks and valleys in someone’s life. It is similar to the phrase **the ups and downs**. Both are often used to mean the same thing.

Here are a couple more examples with **the highs and lows**:

**Radio host:** Today we’re talking to Etta, an entrepreneur making her mark with handmade custom-designed jewelry. Etta, tell us a bit about your journey to success.

**Etta:** Well, as with any small business, I had my **highs and lows** as I was building my business. Starting out, not only was I the jewelry designer, but I was also the marketing director, business manager, and accountant. I had to manage all these different aspects of the business. Luckily, people seem to like my work, so I was able to build my business and I can now hire experts for those parts of the job.

**Caitlyn:** Ugh. I feel like all Pascal and I do is argue now. We were so happy when we first starting dating. You and Ken have been together for, like, forever. How?

**Esmae:** You have to stick it out, especially if you think the relationship is worth it. That first year of dating is the high point in a relationship, for sure. But we started to take each other for granted, fighting all the time, and, at one point, we could barely be civil to one another. But we stuck it out because we knew that all relationships have their **highs and lows**. And now we’re closer than ever.

**Caitlyn:** So, I should stick it out with Pascal? And it’ll get better?

**Esmae:** I mean, if you think he’s worth it, for sure. Though I should say that Ken and I have been talking a lot more—calmly and in a way that lets us say what’s bothering us without the other getting mad. So try that, too.



## To take the wind out of your sails

### Idiom

As Jeremy and Andrew explain in this episode, **to take the wind out of your sails** means someone took away your motivation for or excitement about something. Usually, the person **takes the wind out of your sails** with an unexpected action or remark. As a result, you end up frustrated, less confident, less energetic, less determined, or unmotivated.

Another meaning is to take away someone's advantage. For example, let's say you are on a sports team and have a star player who scores a lot of goals every game. If the other team were to injure that player early in the game, they would take away your advantage. You could say they **took the wind out of your team's sails**.

There's a third meaning to this phrase: to challenge someone's boast or deflate someone's ego or pride. For example, if your friend is boasting about getting top marks on a test and then the results are announced and it turns out they did not score as high as they'd hoped, then you could say the results **took the wind out of his sails**.

Here are a couple more examples with **to take the wind out of your sails**:

**Cienna:** How did your talk with Matias go? Were you able to tell him you can't go out with him anymore?

**Haley:** Oh, no. I was all ready to tell him that the relationship was over, but then he greeted me with a big bunch of flowers and his handsome smile. He was so excited to see me, it really just **took the wind out of my sails**.

**Cienna:** Oh, honey, I'm so sorry. What are you going to do?

**Haley:** We've got another date this weekend. If it doesn't go well, I'll tell him then.

**Cienna:** I'm here for moral support if you need it. Just shoot me a text.

**Haley:** Thanks. You're the best.

**Haleemah:** I pranked my sister yesterday with a "you won a free trip" letter.

**Anil:** Oh, I've always wanted to try that on my brother. How did it go?

**Haleemah:** She was so happy until I told her it was a scam—she started crying and yelled at me for **taking the wind out of her sails**. It was hilarious!

## To shoot it down

Phrasal verb

The phrasal verb **to shoot it down** means to deny, reject, or refuse to consider someone's idea or opinion. This phrase means that the denial, rejection, or refusal was done in a mean way—usually very suddenly or abruptly. **To shoot something down in flames** is another way of saying this.

In an example conversation in this episode, a man tells his coworker that his boss **shot down** his idea. Andrew explained that the man who pitched the idea was rejected. The boss refused to even consider the idea.

Here are a couple more examples with **to shoot it down**:

**Kyla:** How was photography club today?

**Nisha:** Ugh. Not great. I am so frustrated that I might quit.

**Kyla:** What, why? You love photography!

**Nisha:** We're planning our fundraising campaign and I have so many ideas, but all the members keep **shooting them down**, one after another. It's so frustrating!

**Darren:** I tried to talk to my dad about going camping this summer and he totally **shot down** my suggestion. He stopped listening to me as soon as I said the word camping.

**Fahmida:** Why? Does he not like camping?

**Darren:** I guess not. He said something about how if he wanted to be closer to nature, he would live in the forest and not in the suburbs ... Which is not the point of camping.

**Fahmida:** Well, I guess it makes sense. He probably wouldn't be comfortable sleeping on the ground all weekend. Maybe you can come with my family on our camping trip.

**Darren:** Really? Would that be possible? 'Cause that would be awesome.

**Fahmida:** Let's check with our parents and see.

## To kick you when you're down

### Idiom

The second expression in this episode is **to kick you when you're down**. As Andrew and Jeremy explain, this idiom means to add damage, to hurt, or to do something negative to a person when they're already suffering from something else. In other words, it is to cause further misfortune to someone who is already in a difficult situation.

Usually this phrase is used in a metaphorical sense: you're not actually physically kicking someone. Instead, the kick could be criticism, exploitation, insults, bullying, or even simply giving someone bad news. In order for the person to be down, they must have already suffered a setback, feel defeated, or be in a difficult or unpleasant situation. Ultimately, **to kick you when you're down** means to make things worse for you when you're already having a rough time.

Here are a couple more examples with **to kick you when you're down**:

**Ahsan:** Hey, Shana. I was looking over the employee performance review schedule and saw that Quinn's is scheduled for tomorrow. Can we reschedule that one?

**Shana:** Well, yeah. I mean, we can. Can I ask why?

**Ahsan:** His dad was hospitalized yesterday. I think he said it was a minor heart attack. Anyways, I just don't want **to kick the guy while he's down**.

**Shana:** Oh! I'm so sorry to hear that. Of course we can reschedule. Can you let him know?

**Kamil:** I'm so stressed right now. I got a bad mark on my last essay and I have two more due on Monday. Also, my roommate just told me that I need to move out! I'm not even sure why!

**Janice:** Ouch, talk about **kicking a guy when he's down**. If you need a place to crash, you can sleep on our couch until you find a place.

**Kamil:** That ... That would save me, thanks. I just don't know when I'll have time to pack and write my essays! Ugh.

**Janice:** Let me call our friends. We can get the crew together to pack while you write your essays. That'll let you focus on your essays. Everything is going to be OK.



## In a bad place

### Expression

When someone is **in a bad place**, that means they are not doing well mentally or emotionally. They are having a tough time or are in a bad situation. It is not a physical location; rather, it is a metaphorical place. People who are sad, upset, or even depressed could describe themselves as being **in a bad place**.

Phrases similar to **in a bad place** are: **in a bad headspace**, **in a bad mood**, **not in a good place**, and **going through a rough patch**.

Here are a couple more examples with **in a bad place**:

**Kyle:** Hey, dude! I've been trying to call you. Why haven't you been answering your phone?

**Peyton:** Yeah, sorry. I've been **in a really bad place** lately. The weather has been giving me a lot of headaches. Like, real migraines.

**Kyle:** I'm sorry to hear that, man. I guess you won't want to come out hiking on the weekend? We've got a group of us heading to the mountain on Saturday, meeting up at noon.

**Peyton:** Thanks for the invite, but I don't think I'll be able to ... Not if the weather stays the way it's been these last few days.

**Kyle:** All right, dude. Well, give me a call if you change your mind. Hope your head feels better soon.

**Chaim:** I'm really struggling with my art project. It's like I'm just stuck **in this bad place**, creatively, and I can't figure out how to get out.

**Rania:** Well, what have you been doing?

**Chaim:** A lot of staring at my canvas ... And social media.

**Rania:** Maybe you should get out more. Go for a walk. Take your mind off of the work for a bit and let it drift in the clouds.

**Chaim:** Hmm ... I'll take a walk tonight. Hopefully that'll help.

## Quiz

**1. Which of the following phrases would you use if someone made you less excited about something?**

- a) you filled my sails with wind
- b) you took the wind out of my sails
- c) you dropped the anchor out of my boat
- d) you filled my balloon with wind

**2. If you're in a bad place, you:**

- a) are in a different part of town
- b) are somewhere with bad food
- c) showed up for a meeting at the wrong time
- d) are not doing well mentally or emotionally

**3. What does it mean when someone kicks you when you're down?**

- a) they cause further misfortune when you're already in a difficult situation
- b) they kick you after you trip
- c) they kick you in the leg when you're sad
- d) they give you a gift when you are unhappy

**4. Which phrase means to deny, reject, or refuse to consider someone's idea or opinion?**

- a) to rain on their parade
- b) to give them the bird
- c) to shoot them down
- d) to shoot them in the foot

**5. The highs and lows refer to what?**

- a) things that are above our heads and below our feet
- b) the good and bad times in your life
- c) the hills and valleys of a rollercoaster
- d) the sky and the ground

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## Writing and Discussion Questions

1. This episode of Catch Word focuses on phrases for the highs and lows of life. What are some of your highs and lows while learning English?
2. Describe a moment when someone took the wind out of your sails.
3. What was an idea you had that was shot down before you could explain it well?
4. Describe a moment when someone kicked you when you were down.
5. When was the last time you felt like you were in a bad place, and why?

## Quiz Answers

1.b    2.d    3.a    4.c    5.b

### Episode credits

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