

Catch Word #227 – Get the picture

Episode description

There are many expressions in English that use the imagery of pictures. A common one is to ask someone, “Do you get the picture?” Listen to this Catch Word episode with hosts Andrew and Jeremy to find out the many ways to use this expression.

Fun fact

Humans have been painting pictures for millennia. Some of the oldest surviving pictures are found in caves throughout the world. Many of them are over 40,000 years old!

Expressions included in the study guide

- To get the picture
- To land [something]
- To cut things short
- If you catch/get my drift
- To spell [something] out
- To get it together



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. The transcript has been edited for clarity.

Andrew: Hello, everyone. My name is Andrew.

Jeremy: And my name is Jeremy.

Andrew: And you're listening to Culips.

Andrew: Hey there, everyone, this is a Catch Word episode. And if you're not familiar with Catch Word, it is the series where we teach you English vocabulary that is very useful or interesting or good to know, and we explain it and give you examples of how to use it.

Andrew: Today, we are going to explore and learn about two expressions that are related to understanding. And I know that's a kind of vague introduction, but you'll be able to see the full picture, **get the picture** here, in just a moment. And here to help me teach these expressions today is my cohost Jeremy. Jeremy, hey!

Jeremy: Hello, everyone. So today we are going to learn about two expressions that are related to understanding, meaning if there is some difficult topic or difficult information, and if you understand that thing, then you can use these expressions in that situation.

Andrew: Right on. So we'll get to those two expressions in just a moment. But before we get started everyone, remember that there is a study guide for this episode. You can download it from Culips.com and follow along as you listen to us here today. It's a great way to study with us, and it's available on Culips.com. So check it out.

Andrew: All right, Jeremy, what's the first expression we got lined up for everyone?

Jeremy: The first expression for today is **get the picture**. **Get the picture**.

Andrew: **Get the picture, get the picture**. OK. So what in the heck does this mean, **get the picture**?

Jeremy: Well, I imagine this expression being used after a long explanation. So, for example, if I am explaining some difficult math concept to you, and you are very bad at math, for example.

Andrew: True, it is true.

Jeremy: It's true? OK. After the long explanation, bla bla bla bla bla bla bla, I say a long explanation, I can say, **get the picture**? Do you **get the picture**, Andrew? And you might be like, uh, no.

Andrew: I think, yeah, **get the picture**, just to reduce it to a very simple definition, means to understand. To understand. And the way that I conceptualize this expression in my head is when somebody is explaining something to you, describing something to you, you're kind of making a mental image, right? The details of that situation, of that story are all being compiled in your head to create a picture in your head that allows you to see the situation clearly. So the person who is explaining the situation, right, is using their words, is using maybe diagrams on a whiteboard. They're communicating information that they can understand clearly, they can see clearly in their head, and they are trying to transmit that information so that the receiver can also compose this image in their own head, as well, and see the picture clearly.

Jeremy: So if I see something in my head and I explain it to you very clearly, then you will see the same picture in your head, the same picture that I am seeing in my head. So I give you the picture, therefore, you **get the picture**. So when we explain things, we are always trying to pass information or give information to other people. So we use **get the picture** to mean, basically, understand. Now, it isn't super commonly used, like the word understand, but it is quite common.

Andrew: Yeah, I think if our listeners keep their ears open while they're watching YouTube or Netflix, then they will be able to hear this expression quite frequently. You're not, you're not wrong, it's not one that I use every day. But it is common enough that I think it's important to know and it is a little bit strange, right? **Get the picture** means understand.

Jeremy: Who sent me a picture? I didn't get any mail today, what is going on?

Andrew: So it's difficult in that sense. And I think we can really clear things up for everyone by listening to some examples. So why don't we take a listen to an example conversation right now.

Friend 1: What's that noise?

Friend 2: It's my upstairs neighbour. She must be working out again.

Friend 1: She sure is loud.

Friend 2: I know, I told her that when she works out, it causes a lot of noise in my apartment, but I guess she just doesn't **get the picture**.

Andrew: So in this example, we heard two friends talking about a noisy upstairs neighbour. And even though this neighbour was told many times that when she works out, it's really loud in the downstairs apartment, she still does it anyways. She just doesn't understand that she is causing an inconvenience to her downstairs neighbour. She just doesn't **get the picture**, she doesn't understand.

Jeremy: So she's probably doing jump rope or making some loud noises with her feet in this situation.

Andrew: Burpees.

Jeremy: And, yeah. And, honestly, in this dialogue, I could have said but I guess she just doesn't understand. The meaning is the same. But when we use this expression she doesn't **get the picture**, it's sort of emphasizing that the message that I want to send, the image in my head, has not made it across to her head. So it's used to sort of emphasize the fact that she just doesn't get it. She just doesn't understand.

Andrew: And here, I think the tone is a little bit resentful. It's like she's being a jerk. She knows, she's been told, that her exercising causes a problem, but she just doesn't understand this situation. And so because of that, she's a bit of a jerk. She doesn't **get the picture**, right?

Jeremy: Yeah, the speaker using this expression is usually a little bit angry or annoyed, right?

Andrew: Yeah. It's, like, why don't you understand? It's so obvious, why don't ... Just **get the picture**? Come on. Yeah. I think that's the nuance that's embedded in this expression.

Jeremy: Annoyance.

Andrew: Yeah.

Jeremy: Sort of. So let's look at another example.

Andrew: Yeah, let's do it.

Friend 1: Hey, dude. What's new these days?

Friend 2: Nothing much, man.

Friend 1: Are you still looking for a job?

Friend 2: Yeah, it's stressful. You know, I spend every day searching for new job listings, applying for work, writing cover letters. I could go on, but I'm sure you **get the picture**.

Friend 1: Yeah, man, believe me, I know what you're going through. Just keep at it and you'll **land something** soon.

Jeremy: In this dialogue, two friends are talking about job searching. One friend says, "I could go on, but I'm sure you **get the picture**." So after explaining the process of looking for jobs and applying for jobs, he knows that no further explanation is needed because his friend probably already fully understands the process of looking for jobs. So he says, "But I'm sure you **get the picture**." So the mental image has already been delivered, I'm sure.

Andrew: Yeah, this is another way that English speakers use this expression. It's to, like, sort of, cut through a long explanation. When both speakers obviously know about all of the details of something, like searching for a job, this is something that every adult goes through. So we don't need to talk about all the details of the process, all of the stress, all of the worry, right? Because both guys in this conversation already know about this. So we could say I'm sure you **get the picture**. I'm sure you understand. I'm just gonna **cut things short** and save us some time.

Andrew: And in the last line of that conversation, we heard you'll **land something** soon, you'll **land something** soon. I'm sure you'll **land something** soon. Keep at it. And that's a reference to the expression **to land a job, to land a job**. And that just means to get a job. So if you **land a job**, you were successful in your job search and you got a job.

Andrew: All right, let's move on to our second expression for today, which is **if you get my drift. If you get my drift. If you get my drift**, and drift is spelled D-R-I-F-T, drift.

Jeremy: Drift. We also often say **if you catch my drift**.

Andrew: Yup. Both of them are totally fine to use, **if you catch my drift** or **if you get my drift**. In this expression drift, Jeremy, what does it mean, drift?

Jeremy: I mean, drift isn't a super common word, but, for example, there is something called driftwood, which is wood that has floated around on the ocean and eventually made its way in to shore. So, to me, drift sounds like something that was pushed in a certain direction, in this case by wind. But when we say this, if you **if you get my drift** or **if you catch my drift**, I think what we're really saying is if you understand where I am going with what I'm saying, what my intention is with what I'm saying here. Do you understand my intention? Do you **catch my drift**? I think these are essentially the same meaning, but we usually don't say do you understand my intention?

Andrew: Right. So, here, we could think of the drift then as being the general message that you want to communicate without having to say all of the details. And, now, we use this expression a lot when we're talking about something that's, like, rude, or controversial, or taboo. Yeah, and, you know, it might be a little bit–

Jeremy: Inappropriate?

Andrew: Yeah, **to spell out all of the details**. So we want to skip the details, but, like, you know what I mean, I know what I mean. **You catch my drift**, right? We talk like this, so.

Jeremy: It's kind of a way of saying I don't need to say any more for you to understand, right? It's kind of saying can I just stop here and not say any more? You get it, right?

Andrew: Right. We have the expression wink, wink, nudge, nudge, which is kind of, like, you can imagine two friends standing beside each other and you're kind of, like, hey, you know, we know what we're talking about, but we just can't say it directly, because it's rude.

Jeremy: Yeah. Or other people might hear us and think that, oh, well, those two people, what are they talking about?

Andrew: So scandalous, yes.

Jeremy: Yeah, exactly. So let's have a listen to our first dialogue.

Andrew: Yeah, let's do it. And I think our listeners will understand the meaning of this expression clearly after listening to it.

Friend 1: Did you see Paul? He's wearing a brand-new suit and he's been using a new laptop.

Friend 2: Yeah, I know. He's not rich, but he sure acts like he is, **if you get my drift**.

Friend 2: Yeah, I hope he's not getting into too much debt or anything.

Friend 1: Yeah, me neither.

Andrew: All right. So in this example, we heard two friends talk about a guy named Paul who is dressing really flashy and using new technology and so has obviously been spending a lot of money these days. But the two guys talking know that Paul is not a rich guy. And they're worried about him. We hear the line, "He's not rich, but he sure acts like he is, **if you get my drift.**" So here, **if you get my drift**, the implied meaning behind this is that Paul has maybe been using his credit card too much. He's been spending money that he doesn't really have. And so because of this, the friends are concerned that he's maybe going into debt to keep up looking like he's rich.

Jeremy: Yeah, and sometimes you don't want to say that outright or out loud. You don't want people to hear you saying, oh, Paul, he thinks that he is rich and he is using his credit card. And sometimes talking about credit card debt can be a sort of taboo subject. It's something that's private. So in this dialogue, Paul is a friend of the two speakers. So they are trying to be careful with what they say about him.

Andrew: Right. If they say directly, oh, Paul is using his credit card way too much these days, we are worried. It's just something we can't say in English. It's too uncomfortable to talk about finances directly like this. So this is exactly why we would use this expression **if you get my drift.**

Andrew: All right. Let's listen to our final conversation example for this episode.

Brother 1: I heard Uncle Hank got fired again.

Brother 2: Yeah, well, he dropped out of rehab again recently. So he probably wasn't exactly sober, **if you catch my drift.**

Brother 1: I feel so bad for the guy. He's a good dude, but he just can't seem **to get it together.**

Jeremy: In this example, two brothers are talking about their Uncle Hank, who got fired from his job. One of them says that he recently dropped out of rehab, meaning that previously he had a drug problem or a drug addiction. After that, he says, "So he probably wasn't exactly sober, **if you catch my drift.**" Sober is the state of not being on some sort of drug or substance. By following this expression with **if you catch my drift**, the two brothers are sort of saying he was probably under the influence of a drug and that's why he got fired, but we shouldn't say this out loud, because he is our uncle and we know we should try to protect him with our words. So let's just say **if you catch my drift.**

Andrew: Right. And, also, maybe they're not 100% sure, right? If this uncle has a history of drug abuse, and then he drops out of rehab, and then he gets fired, maybe it's logical to think that he started using drugs again. But it might not be the case. So they're just speculating. So another situation where we can use **if you get my drift** or **if you catch my drift** in.

Jeremy: Another useful expression mentioned in this dialogue is **to get it together, get it together**. And this sort of means to get organized, to get his life organized, meaning to live properly, or to live in a good way, to stop making mistakes and do what he should do, what he's supposed to do. So, for example, if Andrew was recording this podcast and his computer was falling apart, his battery died, his mic is having problems, his internet, his connection is bad, I could say, "Come on, Andrew, **get it together**."

Andrew: Right, **get it together**. Or sometimes they say get your act together, right? It just means behave properly, live an organized life without any problems. This uncle here that we heard in the conversation, he's a good guy, right? He's a kind guy, but his life is just ruined by drug use or abuse, and he can't get organized and live a normal life. He can't **get it together**.

Andrew: All right, well, everyone down brings us to the end of today's episode. Thank you for listening. We hope that you learned a lot with us here today.

Andrew: Remember that we have a study guide available for this episode on Culips.com. And if you would like to check it out, you can download it on the website. Stay up to date with Culips by following us on social media. We are on Instagram, Twitter, Facebook and YouTube. So just search for the Culips English Podcast on your favourite social media service and you'll be able to find us.

Andrew: That wraps it up for us. We will be back soon with another brand-new Culips episode and we'll talk to you then. Goodbye.

Jeremy: Bye, everyone.

Detailed Explanations

To get the picture

Idiom

The first key expression in this episode is **to get the picture**. In short, it means to understand something, but the expression can be used in several different ways. After an explanation, you can ask the other person, do you **get the picture**? This is asked to make sure the other person understands what you said. Think of the expression to paint a picture with words. It means you are creating imagery in someone else's mind with words. If you say do you **get the picture**, you are asking if they can clearly see that image in their head. You can use this expression as a question or as a positive or negative sentence, as in I **get the picture** or I don't **get the picture**.

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

Marv: How was the dinner party?

Penny: Not good at all.

Marv: How come?

Penny: The hosts didn't know this, but they had me sit beside my ex-boyfriend. And, well, you **get the picture**, right?

Marv: Oh, yes. That must have been really uncomfortable.

Alana: Are you still training the new employee?

Raphael: Yes.

Alana: How is it going?

Raphael: Not too great. I tried explaining our returns policy. But even after a few hours, I think he still doesn't **get the picture**.

Alana: I see. Let me have a chat with him.

To land [something]

Verb

To land [something] is to be successful in your attempt at something. In one of the example dialogues, one friend was unsuccessful in finding for a job. The other encourages him by saying he'll **land something** soon, meaning he's confident that his friend will successfully get a job. **To land [something]** also means to acquire something you wanted. Imagine you go out to find a great birthday gift for your mother. If you come back with something amazing, you can say you **landed the perfect gift**. **To score [something]** is similar expression.

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

Shauna: Why are you so happy?

Lucien: I got great news.

Shauna: Are you finally going on that golfing trip?

Lucien: Even better. I **landed** my dream job. I'm going to be the director of programming at my company!

Shauna: Yeah, you told me you wanted that job. Congratulations!

Michael: Are you busy on Friday night?

Lily: I was thinking of staying in and watching a movie. Why do you ask?

Michael: I **landed** two tickets to the basketball game on Friday. Do you want to go with me?

Lily: That sounds awesome! I'm there.

To cut things short

Idiom

One reason to use the expression do you get the picture is **to cut things short**. **To cut things short** means to end something early, like a conversation. You can use this expression when your story is going on too long and you want to end it. **To cut a long story short** is a common way of saying the same thing. You can also use **to cut things short** when you have a scheduled event but you want to end it early. For example, if your meeting is supposed to end at 4:00 and you want to finish early, you can say let's **cut things short** today.

Here are a couple more examples with **to cut things short**:

Mischa: Did you meet my friend Mark?

Theo: I did. I don't think he likes me.

Mischa: Why do you say that?

Theo: I told him that story of when I was travelling in France.

Mischa: That's a pretty long story.

Theo: I know. He didn't seem interested. So finally I said, "**To cut things short**, I had a great time." I left it at that.

Maya: Professor, what would Freud say about this theory?

Professor: That's a very good question, Maya. Unfortunately, I forgot that I have a medical appointment at 3:00. I'm afraid I need **to cut things short** today.

Maya: That's too bad.

Professor: Please make sure to remember your question. Ask me first thing next class.

If you catch/get my drift

Phrase

The second key expression in this episode is **if you catch my drift** or **if you get my drift**. This means to understand someone's intention—not just the meaning of the words, but also the intention behind what is said. In that sense, it is different from the expression to get the picture. **If you catch my drift** is frequently used when you are trying to avoid going into great detail to say what you mean. This might be because you don't want to be rude or because you don't want to give a long explanation. A similar expression is **if you know what I mean**.

Here are a couple more examples with **if you catch my drift**:

Samira: I met this interesting guy at the dog park the other day. Do you know Frank Jones?

Darcy: Frank Jones? Yes, I've heard of him.

Samira: He was really nice. I'm thinking of asking him out.

Darcy: I don't think that's a good idea.

Samira: Why not?

Darcy: Let's just say that he's quite well known by all the women at the dog park, **if you catch my drift**.

Samira: Oh, I see. He's a bit of a player? That's too bad.

Robyn: I'm sorry. I couldn't get my hands on those concerts tickets you asked me to buy.

Kyra: Don't worry, I'll take care of it.

Robyn: Really? The tickets are sold out.

Kyra: I have friends on the security team. I can get us in, **if you catch my drift**.

Robyn: I suppose so.

Kyra: Just show up at 8:30.

To spell [something] out

Idiom

In this episode, our hosts say that using the expression if you catch my drift is a good way to avoid **spelling out all the details**. **To spell [something] out** is to explain something with a lot of detail. For example, if you are explaining a recipe step by step, you can say you are **spelling it out** for the other person. However, this expression can be used as an insult. During an argument, if you tell someone let me **spell it out** for you, the other person will likely take this as an insult to their intelligence.

Here are a couple more examples with **to spell [something] out**:

Malik: How is the new marketing team doing?

Brent: They're all a little inexperienced.

Malik: That's why you were chosen to lead the team. You have a lot of patience.

Brent: I have **to spell everything out** for them. It takes a long time and a lot of energy.

Malik: Keep up the good work.

Janet: Bret, I'm sorry to inform you that you will no longer be working on the Anderson case.

Bret: What? How come?

Janet: We feel that you're not doing a good job.

Bret: But I can do better.

Janet: You won't have that chance. We're removing you from the case.

Bret: I'll work weekends from now on.

Janet: Let me **spell it out** for you, Bret. It's over. We're putting you on something less complicated. End of conversation.

To get it together

Idiom

In one of the example dialogues, the brothers' uncle couldn't seem **to get it together**. That means the uncle has big problems in his life and isn't living well. This expression is often used in the negative form. For example, if you are constantly late for class and never doing your homework, you can't **get it together**.

You can also use **to get it together** in its imperative form. For example, if your colleague is constantly disorganized, you can tell them, "**Get it together**." A variation on this expression is **to keep it together**.

Here are a couple more examples with **to get it together**:

Anne: How's your friend Dana? Did she find a new job yet?

Saul: Not yet. It's been rough for her.

Anne: Has she been looking for jobs, at least?

Saul: Not really. Her personal life is a mess. She has difficulty **getting it together**. That's affecting her job hunt.

Anne: That's too bad. Give her my number if you think there's anything I can do.

George: I'm sorry I'm late. There was so much traffic.

Christine: This is the third time this week.

George: I know. I'm sorry.

Christine: Do you have the report I asked you to write?

George: Oh, I forgot it at home.

Christine: What? You really need **to get it together**, George. The boss doesn't need much of an excuse to fire you.

Quiz

1. Why would you ask someone if they get the picture?

- a) to confirm that they understand
- b) to see if they bought a painting
- c) to have them take your picture for you
- d) to have them explain something to you

2. Which of the following is NOT an example of landing something?

- a) getting a job you really wanted
- b) buying a prized piece of land
- c) finding a rare book you've been searching for
- d) coming home late

3. True or false? To spell something out always has to do with spelling words out letter by letter.

- a) true
- b) false

4. Which of the following is NOT synonymous with if you catch my drift?

- a) if you get my drift
- b) if you really want to know
- c) if you know what I mean
- d) if you understand what I'm saying

5. What does to cut things short mean?

- a) to get a new hairstyle
- b) to wear shorts instead of pants
- c) to end things earlier than expected
- d) to cut your hand while cooking

Writing and Discussion Questions

1. What is your native language's equivalent of the expression to get the picture?
2. Tell about a time when you really wished people would cut things short.
3. What is something you waited a long time to land? Did you eventually succeed in landing it?
4. Tell about a time in your life when you had to tell someone to get it together.
5. Was there ever a time in your life when someone else had to tell you to get it together? How did you react?

Quiz Answers

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

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