

## Catch Word #230 – That’s out the window

### Episode description

Sometimes things go missing. Whether you’ve lost an item, a person, or an idea, there are unique phrases to fit the situation. In this Catch Word episode, Andrew and Kassy explain two phrases you can use to say that something has disappeared.

### Fun fact

The Bermuda Triangle is famous for making planes and ships disappear. This area, also known as the Devil’s Triangle, is between Bermuda, Florida, and Puerto Rico; while there are many theories as to why ships disappear here, no one has been able to properly explain it.

### Expressions included in the study guide

- Out the window
- Vanish into thin air
- Big time
- Lost for good
- Goner
- In my books



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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.

**Kassy:** And I'm Kassy.

**Andrew:** And you are tuned in to Culips.

**Andrew:** Hey, everyone. Welcome back to Culips. This is a Catch Word episode, which is the Culips vocabulary series where we teach you really important idioms, phrasal verbs, and expressions that will really help your English sound more natural and will also help you to understand the English that you hear. Today, Kassy and I are going to teach you two expressions that are frequently used to talk about things that have disappeared.

**Andrew:** And, guys, before we get into this episode, I do want to let you know that there's a study guide available that accompanies what Kassy and I will teach you here today. And it's available to download from our website, Culips.com. So why don't you visit Culips.com, give it a download, and follow along while you listen here to us today.

**Andrew:** So, I've mentioned her name, but I haven't introduced her yet. So I should do that. I'm being rude. Kassy, hello.

**Kassy:** Hello, Andrew. How are you?

**Andrew:** I'm doing pretty good, Kassy, how about you?

**Kassy:** I'm excellent.

**Andrew:** Great! So, Kassy, I mentioned that we are going to teach everyone two expressions that we use to talk about things that have disappeared. And I think as our listeners hear us explain them, they'll notice that they describe things that have disappeared in two different ways, right? We use them in two different situations. But we'll get into that as we go, as it comes up. Maybe we'll start, Kassy, with the first expression today. Do you want to let us know what it is?

**Kassy:** Yeah, sounds good. So expression #1 is, **out the window. Out the window.**

**Andrew:** **Out the window.** Yes, and we can use this expression **out the window** with some different verbs, right? We could use it with go, it went **out the window**. We could use it with fly, it flew **out the window**. We could use it with be verb, right? Something was **out the window**. OK, so if something is **out the window** or went **out the window** or flew **out the window**, what does this mean, exactly?

**Kassy:** It means that it's completely gone or it changed drastically in some way. We're going to look at this more in the examples. But when I hear the phrase **out the window**, the most common example is plans, plans going **out the window**.

**Andrew:** Right. So, for example, maybe you have a plan to meet your friend for dinner. And then, at the last moment, your friend calls you and says, oh, Kassy, I'm sorry, something came up, I can't meet you anymore. Then Kassy, what would you say in reaction to that?

**Kassy:** I would say, ah, our plans are **out the window**. But that's OK. We can meet another time.

**Andrew:** Right. So you could almost visualize, like, your plans sort of running and jumping **out the window** and they're gone. They're not with you anymore.

**Kassy:** Yup, they've run away.

**Andrew:** Or we use this expression also often to talk about wasted money. So money that you spent foolishly or lost or something, it's gone, right? So you could almost imagine somebody just throwing their money **out of the window** and then it's not with them in their wallet anymore.

**Kassy:** Yeah, money **out the window** or even money down the drain, both of those are great expressions to talk about things being wasted or disappearing.

**Andrew:** Oh, that's a good one, down the drain. Yeah, money down the drain is another expression that we use to talk about wasting or losing money. Kassy, maybe we could expand on that expression in a future Catch Word episode. That's a good idea.

**Kassy:** Great idea.

**Andrew:** But, for now, why don't we just get to some conversation examples and hear how this expression **out the window** can be used in a conversational way to talk about something disappearing or being changed very, very drastically.

**Kassy:** OK.

**Friend 1:** Everyone's getting together for a poker game on Thursday night. Are you in?

**Friend 2:** No way. Don't you remember what happened last time?

**Friend 1:** Oh yeah, that's right. You lost **big time**.

**Friend 2:** Yeah, before I knew it, all my money was **out the window**. You guys have fun, but I'm gonna sit this one out.

**Andrew:** In this example, we heard two friends talking about playing poker. And one of the friends mentioned that last time she played poker, all her money was **out the window** before she knew it. This means that she quickly lost all of her money playing poker. And because of this, she's not going to participate in the upcoming poker game that's happening on Thursday night. Instead, she's just going to sit this one out. Sit this one out, and this means to not participate.

**Kassy:** Andrew, have you ever tossed your money **out the window** gambling or playing poker?

**Andrew:** No, thank god. I haven't gotten into that trap yet. How about you, Kassy?

**Kassy:** No, I've been quite lucky so far. I have won \$20 before.

**Andrew:** Whoa, that's awesome. That's much better than throwing your money **out the window**.

**Kassy:** Yes.

**Andrew:** All right. Let's take a listen to the second conversation example with **out the window**.

**Friend 1:** Hello?

**Friend 2:** Hey, are you almost ready to go? I'm gonna leave here in about 20 minutes. So I should be by your house in about 30.

**Friend 1:** It's pouring rain outside. There's no way we can go to the beach today.

**Friend 2:** What, really? Oh, you're right. How did I not notice that before? Well, I guess that plan's **out the window**. Wanna just play video games instead?

**Friend 1:** Yeah, sure.

**Kassy:** So, in this example, two friends had made plans to go to the beach. However, it starts pouring rain. Pouring rain means raining really heavily. So they had to throw their plans **out the window**, right? Their plans were changed drastically because of the weather.

**Andrew:** And I think the way that we just heard this expression used is really, really common. It's like a way to react when we learn that our plans or something has been changed and we can't do it anymore. Well, that's **out the window**. I guess that's **out the window**. I think that intonation, that pattern that we say just like that—that's **out the window**—that's a really common reaction to, kind of, this bad news that our plan has been cancelled.

**Kassy:** Yeah, kind of like a sarcastic, well, there's nothing I can do about it, that's **out the window** kind of feeling.

**Andrew:** Yeah, definitely very sarcastic in tone. Exactly.

**Andrew:** Cool. Let's move on now, Kassy, to expression #2 for today, which is **vanish into thin air**. **Vanish into thin air**.

**Kassy:** **Vanish into thin air**. What does that mean?

**Andrew:** Well, it also means to disappear. OK, but in a different sense. When something **vanishes into thin air**, it disappears very suddenly or mysteriously. So we use this expression a lot to talk about people that have disappeared. Unfortunately, sometimes people, for many reasons, disappear. And so that's one of the expressions we use to talk about that. And also when something just suddenly is gone, and you don't know why, like maybe your wallet, right? It's like, oh, it was just here a moment ago and now it's **vanished into thin air**. It's gone. Where'd it go? Like this type of mystery, this mysterious situation.

**Kassy:** Yeah, I feel like I've definitely used that phrase before when I've lost something, and I can't find it.

**Andrew:** What is the image that comes to mind when you think of something **vanishing into thin air**?

**Kassy:** Well, we use vanish a lot when talking about magicians. So, you know, when you watch a magic show, and they use their abracadabra magic to suddenly make something disappear, like a rabbit in a hat or a human in a box. That's what I think of when I hear **vanish into thin air**.

**Andrew:** Yeah, me too. It's, like, it's here one second and then the next second, it's gone. Just like magic.

**Andrew:** Kassy, I was curious, why do we use thin air, right? You know, thin air is usually the air that is higher in altitude than the air at sea level. So, you know, when you're climbing a tall mountain, like Mount Everest, you have to wear oxygen, because the air at the high altitude is very thin and we can't breathe well in that condition, right? The air is too thin, has no oxygen.

**Andrew:** So I was wondering, why do we say thin air and, in researching this expression, I learned that William Shakespeare, the great, maybe the greatest, English poet and playwright of all time, he was the one that coined, he invented this expression in his play Othello. And so, I don't know why he decided to use thin air, but he played with words a lot. He invented many, many new words and expressions. So, I don't think there's any logic to it. It's just poetry.

**Kassy:** It sounds cool.

**Andrew:** It definitely sounds cool.

**Andrew:** And Kassy, there's one final thing I want to mention before we get into some examples with this expression, and that is the pronunciation of vanish, vanish.

**Kassy:** That's a good point.

**Andrew:** I know that a lot of our listeners are in Asia, in Japan, and in Korea, and the V sound can be hard for some people, because it's not in every language, right? And sometimes you can get away with replacing V with a B sound, but you have to be careful here, because vanish is a minimal pair with a different English word, banish, which is B-A-N-I-S-H, banish. And banish means to expel or to send away. You can think of, like, the government or, like, a king back in the day, they would banish people to a desert island if they had committed a crime. So, here, what my point is is that the pronunciation of the V in vanish is very important.

**Kassy:** Vanish.

**Andrew:** Right. So be careful about that, everyone.

**Andrew:** All right, Kassy, let's do it. Example time.

**Kassy:** OK, example 1.

**Friend 1:** Have you seen my keys around?

**Friend 2:** Did you check the coffee table? I think I saw them there.

**Friend 1:** Yeah, I did. I can't find them anywhere. They just **vanished into thin air**.

**Friend 2:** Oh, wait, did you check under the sofa cushion? They probably just fell out of your pocket.

**Friend 1:** Oh, yeah, here they are.

**Andrew:** So, in that example, two friends are trying to find a set of missing keys that have suddenly and mysteriously disappeared. They have **vanished into thin air**. So, they check the coffee table, but they're not there and they're stressed out. They're looking for them and they realize, aha, maybe they are under the sofa cushion. And maybe they just fell out of the owner's pocket. But, yeah, I guess that's what happened because they did find the keys under the sofa cushion. A classic location for missing keys, by the way.

**Kassy:** They hadn't actually magically vanished.

**Andrew:** Yeah, so I think why the speaker used this expression here is because she was surprised that they were gone. It wasn't expected that the keys would be missing. They were just there and then suddenly gone.

**Andrew:** Let's take a listen now to our second and final example with **vanish into thin air**.

**Friend 1:** You'll never guess what happened today.

**Friend 2:** What happened?

**Friend 1:** Picasso came home.

**Friend 2:** Picasso? Oh, your cat?

**Friend 1:** Yeah! He just **vanished into thin air** last week. I thought we'd **lost him for good**, but he came back home today.

**Friend 2:** Ah, that's great to hear. You must be so relieved.

**Kassy:** OK, so in this example, we have man who is extremely happy because his cat, Picasso, came home. Apparently last week he **vanished into thin air**. He just disappeared suddenly, and no one could find him. They thought they'd **lost him for good**. That's a really great expression that we could use. What does **lost him for good** mean, Andrew?

**Andrew:** Yeah, **lost him for good** means to lose forever, right? And I can see how this expression could be very difficult for English learners. It doesn't mean good, as in great, excellent, the opposite of bad. It means forever. So we'd **lost him for good** means we'd lost him forever. But good news, Kassy, the cat came back.

**Kassy:** There's actually a song called The Cat Came Back.

**Andrew:** Yeah, "We thought he was a **goner**, but the cat came back. He just couldn't stay away." Classic kids' song, Kassy, The Cat Came Back. Actually, a very old song. It was written over 100 years ago, I believe, this song. But I think a lot of North American kids, maybe every North American English speaker, knows this song, The Cat Came Back.

**Kassy:** It was a car classic when I was a kid. We used to sing it in the car on every road trip.

**Andrew:** If our listeners want to check out this song, just to give it a listen, I would recommend the Fred Penner edition, which is the one that I grew up with. Fred Penner is a famous Canadian singer who sings children's songs. He's a pretty cool guy, **in my books**.

**Andrew:** All right, Kassy, I think we should wrap it up here, hey? Just to recap what we learned today, we took a look at two different expressions that we can use to talk about things that are gone. I think that is the connection between the two expressions. Use them to talk about things that are gone. So, if something is **out the window**, our first expression, **out the window**, it means that it is gone or that it has been changed so drastically or so differently that it's not even the same thing anymore. And our second expression, to **vanish into thin air**, is used whenever we want to talk about something that is suddenly and mysteriously gone or has disappeared.

**Andrew:** So, thanks everyone for listening today. If you like Culips, if you learn a lot with us, if you find us helpful, then please support us. You can do so in many different ways. First way is that you could sign up and become a Culips premium member. Doing that gives you unlimited access to the study guide library that we have. We make an awesome study guide for each episode of Culips.

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**Andrew:** Our email address is [contact@Culips.com](mailto:contact@Culips.com). We read every single email that you send to us and respond as soon as we can. And, once again, our website is [Culips.com](http://Culips.com).

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

**Kassy:** See you later.



## Detailed Explanations

### Out the window

#### Idiom

When something goes **out the window** or is thrown **out the window**, it is forgotten, disregarded, discarded, lost, or wasted. This idiom can be used when you want to say that you've stopped doing something or stopped using something. The thing that is going **out the window** can be an actual item, a thought, a concept, or a plan—really, anything that can be changed or forgotten.

The phrase comes from the 17th century (or earlier), when people would throw their garbage or waste **out the window**. In the 1900s, the meaning changed from just objects going **out the window** to ideas or concepts also being tossed or thrown **out the window**.

Here are a couple more examples with **out the window**:

**Aaliyah:** Ismail! You have to help me!

**Ismail:** What's wrong? What happened?

**Aaliyah:** My computer crashed! I was in the middle of a huge project and now all that work has gone **out the window**! Please tell me you can fix this!

**Ismail:** I'll try, but I can't make any promises. Bring it by after lunch and I'll take a look.

**Aaliyah:** Oh my goodness, thank you so much! I'll see you in an hour.

**George:** Have you ever noticed how, when people start arguing about politics, all reason is just thrown **out the window**?

**Nina:** I have. I don't understand it, though. You would think politics would be logical and reasonable. Right?

**George:** That's what I think, too. I mean, you can't run a country without logic and reason. But I guess some people just take their political beliefs personally.

## Vanish into thin air

### Idiom

**Vanish into thin air** is a phrase meaning to disappear. Unlike the idiom out the window, **vanish into thin air** is almost always used for objects or people—physical things rather than ideas or concepts. When something or someone **vanishes into thin air**, it's a mystery and there is no trace left behind. You can also say **disappears into thin air**.

Here are a couple more examples with **vanish into thin air**:

**Mae:** Ugh, where are they?

**Veronica:** Where are what?

**Mae:** My students' term papers! I was in the middle of grading them and I got up to get some coffee ... And now they're gone!

**Veronica:** That's impossible. How could they just be gone?

**Mae:** I don't know! I was here, at this table, working. Then I got up. And when I came back, the papers were gone. They were right here!

**Veronica:** It's OK. I'll help you look. We'll find them. I mean, they have to still be in the house somewhere. They couldn't have **vanished into thin air**, after all.

**Mae:** If I lose these papers, I'll get fired. I just know it. I can't believe this is happening.

**Veronica:** Wait, what are those papers under the couch?

**Mae:** Oh my goodness, you found them! Thank you! Thank you! You've saved me.

**Euan:** Did you see that documentary last night about the lost colony of Roanoke?

**Robert:** No, what's that?

**Euan:** It's this whole group of European colonists who disappeared. Their leader or general or someone left them on an island, and when he came back a while later, they'd all **vanished into thin air**.

**Robert:** A whole group of people **vanishing into thin air**? That's impossible.

**Euan:** It's true! They have theories about what happened, but no one really knows.

## Big time

Adverb

**Big time**, when used as an adverb to describe an action, means to a large degree or in an extreme way. When you do something **big time**, you're doing a lot of it, or you're doing it really well. This adverb can also be used to highlight the importance or extent of something that's happened.

Be careful, though, as the meaning changes when it's used in different parts of a sentence. When used as a noun, **big time** means a state of fame or success; for example, you could say, "They hit the **big time**." When used as an adjective, **big time** means greatest, best, or most successful; for example, you could say, "He was a **big-time** lawyer."

Here are a couple more examples with **big time**:

**Johnathan:** My girlfriend and I are heading to the ski hill on the weekend. Do you want to come?

**Hyun:** Chrissy skis?

**Johnathan:** She snowboards and, yeah, she's really into it. Like, **big time**. More than I am, if you can believe that.

**Hyun:** I didn't think it was possible for there to be someone who is more into snowboarding than you are!

**Khadija:** How did your interview go yesterday?

**Adam:** Terrible. I messed up **big time**. I accidentally spilled my drink all over the interviewer and ... Yeah.

**Khadija:** Yikes. Well, maybe they'll overlook that. If not, well, you have another interview next week with a different company, right?

**Adam:** Yeah.

**Khadija:** Maybe don't bring a drink next time.

## Lost for good

### Idiom

**Lost for good**, or **gone for good**, is an idiom that means that something is gone and won't ever return. This phrase is used when someone or something leaves and won't ever come back. For good, in this idiom, means forever.

As we hear in this episode, you can add a pronoun into the phrase between **lost** or **gone** and **for good**. Kassy says, "They thought they'd **lost him for good**." Or you can use the phrase without a pronoun. For example, you could say, "When she got home from vacation, she realized she had left her book on the plane. It was **gone for good**."

Here are a couple more examples with **lost for good**:

**Tomiko:** Sometimes I really miss being in school.

**Laura:** What do you mean?

**Tomiko:** Having a regular schedule. Not having to pay bills. Getting to hang out with my friends during the day. Those were the good old days.

**Laura:** Yeah, I suppose I can understand that. I don't miss homework, though. Or gym class. I'm kind of glad those days are **gone for good**.

**Tomiko:** Homework was the worst part about school, that's for sure. I suppose it's for the best that we don't have school anymore. At least now I can watch all the TV I want without worrying about homework.

**Shiro:** Hello, I'm here to replace my debit card.

**Bank teller:** Not a problem. Do you have your old one with you?

**Shiro:** No, I **lost that one for good** yesterday and I need a new one.

**Bank teller:** Ah, I understand. I will need to see a piece of personal identification so I can pull up your account.

## **Goner** Noun

A **goner** is a person, place, or thing that has no chance of succeeding or continuing to live or exist. The person, place, or thing is doomed and cannot be saved. When something or somewhere is a **goner**, they are ruined, destroyed, and beyond repair. When someone is a **goner**, they are about to die or are in enough danger that nobody can save them.

Nowadays, the term is often used ironically or for emphasis. Someone may say they were a **goner** but, in reality, the situation just seemed really bad for a moment but everything turned out all right.

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

**Yeong-Suk:** Do you know how to patch a hole in an inflatable pool?

**Theo:** Not really. Why, what happened?

**Yeong-Suk:** My son decided to poke his little kiddie pool, repeatedly, with a very sharp stick he found in the backyard while I was doing the laundry. Now he won't stop crying about how he wants to go in it.

**Theo:** How big is the hole?

**Yeong-Suk:** Pretty big, and there are several of them.

**Theo:** Sounds like it might be a **goner**. It'd probably be cheaper just to buy a new one.

**Yeong-Suk:** That's what my husband and I are thinking. Thanks anyways.

**Dominic:** Oh man, I'm still shaking.

**Iris:** What happened?

**Dominic:** I just had a near-death experience on my way over here! I was walking on the sidewalk and this giant squirrel jumped off a branch toward me! I thought I was a **goner**!

**Iris:** What? Did it have rabies? Why would it do that?

**Dominic:** I don't know! I screeched and just bolted away.



## In my books

### Phrase

The phrase **in my books** means you have an opinion, usually a strong one, about a specific thing. The phrase is used to show that your impression of something is different from what others may think. In this episode, for example, Andrew says “Fred Penner is a famous Canadian singer who sings children’s songs. He’s a pretty cool guy, **in my books**.” This means that, regardless of what we may think, Andrew thinks Fred Penner is a cool guy.

The singular form, **in my book**, is the more common version of this phrase. You could also say **in my mind**, **in my opinion**, or **as I see it**.

Here are a couple more examples with **in my books**:

**Daisuke:** Why do you dislike Jen so much? What did she ever do to you?

**Fannie:** Ugh, I don’t know. I just don’t like her. I think it’s the way she acts, always bossing us around like we’re her little servants.

**Daisuke:** Fannie, she’s the boss. That’s literally her job.

**Fannie:** But she doesn’t have to be so bossy about it! How can you like her so much?

**Daisuke:** She’s never lied to me and, **in my books**, that counts for a lot.

**Michelle:** I’m so sad that you’re retiring, Katashi. You’ve been such a great mentor. In fact, **in my book**, you’re the best manager there has ever been.

**Katashi:** Thank you for saying so. It has been a pleasure working with you and the team. I look forward to seeing you all do great things in the future.

## Quiz

**1. What does big time mean when it's used to as an adverb to describe an action?**

- a) to take a long time
- b) the greatest, best, or most successful
- c) a state of fame or success
- d) to a large degree or in an extreme way

**2. Which of the following could be used to replace "as I see it"?**

- a) in this book
- b) on my bookshelf
- c) in my book
- d) in my bookstore

**3. When someone is a goner, you could say they are \_\_\_\_\_.**

- a) gone for bad
- b) gone for good
- c) glad to be gone
- d) right beside you

**4. If your keys vanish into thin air, they:**

- a) disappeared
- b) evaporated
- c) dissolved
- d) reappeared

**5. Which of the following means you've stopped doing something or stopped using something?**

- a) it has gone in the window
- b) it has been thrown in the garbage
- c) it has gone out the window
- d) it is up in the air

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## Writing and Discussion Questions

1. Describe a time when you had to toss your plans out the window.
2. What happened the last time something important vanished into thin air?
3. Is there anything that you have succeeded at big time? What about something that you've failed at big time?
4. What is something that is gone for good that you're now better off without?
5. In your book, what is the best way to spend your vacation?



## Quiz Answers

1.d    2.c    3.b    4.a    5.c

### Episode credits

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