

## Catch Word #232 – That’s when it all went south

### Episode description

Life isn’t perfect. No matter how hard we try, sometimes things just go terribly. In this Catch Word episode, hosts Andrew and Kassy discuss two expressions you can use when that happens: to go south and to go haywire. Give it a listen!

### Fun fact

Wellington is the capital of New Zealand. It is the southernmost national capital in the world. Here’s another interesting thing about this country in the Southern Hemisphere: New Zealand is thought to be the last major land mass settled by humans. It is thought that Polynesians began settling there only about 750 years ago.

### Expressions included in the study guide

- To go south
- To shed some light
- To go sour
- A one-off
- To spot [someone]
- To go haywire



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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 listening to the Culips English Podcast.

**Andrew:** Hello, everyone. Welcome back to Culips. Today's episode is a Catch Word episode, and this is the series where we teach you idioms, phrasal verbs, or expressions that will help improve your English listening and speaking. And today I am joined by my cohost Kassy. Kassy, hello.

**Kassy:** Hey, Andrew.

**Andrew:** How's it going?

**Kassy:** It's going really well. It's been really rainy here, but I'm trying to keep positive.

**Andrew:** Keep it posi! Yeah, maybe our listeners around the world don't know, but the summer season in Korea is usually rainy for at least 2 to 3 weeks and this year, it is particularly rainy, actually particularly rainy all throughout Asia, China, Japan, and some other places as well. So, yeah, we're trying our best to keep dry and stay safe.

**Andrew:** Kassy, I wanted to start this episode off by giving a shout-out to one of our listeners, Jeong Min, who left us a very nice comment on YouTube. And, Kassy, I think you're going to like this comment, because Jeong Min said, "Kassy, I love the way she talks. She sounds so lovely. I've listened to her episodes over and over again and learned so much from her. Her cheerful voice cheers me up. Love you, Kassy, and Andrew, too."

**Kassy:** Ah that's so lovely, thank you. I like the "Andrew, too" at the end.

**Andrew:** I know, I was almost offended until the very last sentence. No, I joke, I joke, but everyone who does leave us comments and feedback, we really appreciate it. It encourages us a lot to keep going and to try and do the best job that we can do for you all. So please keep them coming. And we look forward to reading some more of your comments.

**Kassy:** And, everyone, don't forget that there is a study guide for this episode available to all Culips members that you can get by visiting our website at Culips.com. We recommend following along with the study guide when you listen with us here today.

**Andrew:** So let's get into it, everyone. Today, we are going to teach you two idiomatic expressions that you can use to talk about situations that don't go well. They don't go as planned and, in fact, they end up very, very bad. So situations that are getting worse and worse. And the first expression is **to go south**. **To go south**, right? South, like the direction. You know, there's north, south, east, west, right? And so, Kassy, maybe you could **shed some light** on this expression for us. What does it mean when something **goes south**?

**Kassy:** When something **goes south**, it means, kind of, like, it goes horribly wrong, or it goes in the completely opposite way of what you expected or wanted to happen.

**Andrew:** So if we look at a map, or we look at a compass, at least on all the maps that I'm familiar with, south is usually on the bottom, right? We put northern countries on top, like my country, Canada, is usually at the top of a map. And then southern countries, like New Zealand, are on the very bottom, right, near the south. So here when we're saying that something **goes south**, it's not that it's actually moving in that direction. We're just using it as a replacement for going down, right? So if something **goes south**, then it declines or becomes worse.

**Kassy:** Some example situations where you might use the expression **to go south** could be when talking about a relationship that goes sour, which means it goes bad. You can say it **goes sour** or it **goes south**. It's getting worse and worse.

**Andrew:** Right. So, like, you know, maybe you're dating someone and, at first, the relationship is really awesome and exciting. And then, over time, it starts to get worse and you start to fight a little bit. And you bicker back and forth and then, you know, suddenly you don't want to see each other anymore. It's really **going south**, right? It's getting worse and worse and worse.

**Kassy:** And then there's screaming matches.

**Andrew:** Screaming matches, right. So that is an example. English speakers also use this expression often when talking about investments, right? If your investments are **going south**, it means you are losing money because the value of those investments is going down.

**Kassy:** Which is the worst time to take out your money, just wait it out.

**Andrew:** You're a little Warren Buffett over here, Kassy. One thing that we should mention, though, because I think maybe some of our listeners will be curious. Can we use this expression the opposite way? Could we say something's going north? Could I say my investments are going north? Does that work, Kassy?

**Kassy:** Nope. That sounds really silly. I've never heard of that before.

**Andrew:** Yeah. So, guys, this is **a one-off**, OK? You can only use the direction south to talk about things that are declining or deteriorating. We cannot use the direction north to talk about the opposite, about things that are getting better and better. That just doesn't work at all, unfortunately.

**Kassy:** OK, everyone. How about we get started by listening to some examples?

**Andrew:** Yeah. We have some conversation examples prepared. So, everyone, let's take a listen to example #1 right now.

**Friend 1:** There you are! What took you so long to get here? I've been waiting for over an hour.

**Friend 2:** It's a long story.

**Friend 1:** Well, let's hear it.

**Friend 2:** Well, I woke up late and jumped in my car to come meet you.

**Friend 1:** OK, and?

**Friend 2:** And this is where things started **to go south** for me, because I forgot my wallet while I was rushing out the door.

**Friend 1:** You just forgot your wallet, you could have let me know. I would have **spotted you** some cash for today.

**Friend 2:** Yeah, I know. But while I was driving home to grab it, I got pulled over for speeding.

**Friend 1:** What? Oh, no.

**Friend 2:** Yeah. And, of course, I didn't have my licence on me, because it was in my wallet. So they gave me two tickets, one for driving without a licence and one for speeding.

**Friend 1:** Oh my god, what a nightmare!

**Friend 2:** Worst day ever.

**Andrew:** In this example, we heard two friends arguing a little bit because one of the friends was late to a meeting, over 1 hour late. But she had a good excuse because her day really **went south**, right? She started off poorly by waking up late. And then as she was rushing out the door to go meet her friends, she forgot her wallet. And because she forgot her wallet, she was speeding to go back and get it. And then she got pulled over and got a ticket. A ticket here means a fine, right? The police officers pulled her over, stopped her, and gave her a fine for speeding and for driving without her licence, which is also illegal. So a bad day got worse, the day really **went south**, right? Got worse and worse over the course of the day.

**Kassy:** She just had one piece of bad luck after another.

**Andrew:** And, Kassy, we heard in that example, the expression I would have **spotted you** some cash. What does it mean if you **spot someone** some cash?

**Kassy:** That's a really great slang phrase. It means that you would lend your friend some money. So since the girl in this example forgot her wallet, then her friend would, you know, pay for lunch and then she could pay him back later.

**Andrew:** Exactly. Perfect. Why don't we listen to example #2 **with to go south**?

**Kassy:** OK.

**Friend 1:** Wow, what a wild day at the stock market.

**Friend 2:** Right? The day started well, but started **going south** around 10 a.m.

**Friend 1:** Looks like my whole portfolio is down around 5%.

**Friend 2:** Mine, too. Actually, I think a lot of people are in the same boat. We'll have to cross our fingers that things bounced back tomorrow.

**Kassy:** OK, so in this example, it's again talking about the stock market that we mentioned earlier. The stock market was doing really well at the beginning of the day. But at 10 a.m., it started **to go south**. The stock market began to decline and they were losing money. They said their portfolio was down around 5%. Their portfolio is the stocks, the money that they're in charge of, down means decreased by 5%.

**Andrew:** Yeah, that's a really good word to know that might be new to some of our listeners, portfolio. That just means all of your investments combined. We heard two other interesting expressions that I'll just briefly describe here.

**Andrew:** The first one was we're all in the same boat. That means everyone's in the same situation. So if the stock market **goes south** and goes down, really, most people are going to lose in that situation, right? Unless you are a fancy investor that's making some more complicated kinds of investments. But for this situation, we can just assume that everybody loses money. And that means everybody's in the same boat.

**Andrew:** And the two friends say that they will cross their fingers that things will bounce back or improve tomorrow. Crossing our fingers, this is a kind of superstition that people in Western countries do for good luck, right? I don't know why we believe this, but it's something we do when we want our luck to change for the better.

**Kassy:** Andrew, do you use this expression often?

**Andrew:** I use it often. And I do it often, too.

**Kassy:** Me, too.

**Andrew:** I don't think, really, that by crossing my fingers, something good will happen. But I do it all the time. It's a really common expression that I use and gesture that I do.

**Kassy:** Yeah. Same for me, too.

**Andrew:** Interesting. So, guys, it's a good one to know, then. All right.

**Andrew:** Kassy, what's our second key expression for today?

**Kassy:** Our second key expression is **to go haywire**, **to go haywire**.

**Andrew:** **To go haywire**. So **to go haywire** means that something stops working correctly or becomes out of control. OK? So it's not exactly the same as **to go south**. But it's related, because when something **goes haywire**, it's not going as planned. It's not going correctly. It's malfunctioning, or becoming out of your control.

**Andrew:** And this is also a negative situation, right? So we use this expression often to talk about electronics that break or start working in a way that is unexpected. Like, if a hacker hacks your computer and suddenly your mouse is moving everywhere and you can't control your computer anymore, you might say, oh my gosh, my computer is **gone haywire**.

**Kassy:** Yeah, I also think of, like, a blender that you make smoothies in. If it just starts just spraying your smoothie all over the kitchen, your blender is **going haywire**.

**Andrew:** Right. And we also use it for things that we can't control, just like the blender or the computer, but maybe not related to machines. Like if you were babysitting a group of kids and the kids were **going haywire**, that means that it's really difficult to control the kids. And, Kassy, as an elementary school teacher, maybe your students have **gone haywire** before.

**Kassy:** Maybe just one or two times.

**Andrew:** All right, so I think it's time for us to listen to some examples. Let's do that right now.

**Kassy:** OK.

**Friend 1:** So how was the rest of the party last night?

**Friend 2:** You definitely left at the right time. Just after you went home, things started **to go a little haywire**.

**Friend 1:** Really? What happened?

**Friend 2:** Well, let's just say that Jeff and Robbie may have had one too many drinks.

**Friend 1:** Ah, gotcha. Well, I'm glad I left when I did, then.

**Andrew:** So in this example, we heard two friends talking about a party that they both attended last night. And the party **went a little haywire**. It started to get a little out of control, a little boisterous, a little rowdy. OK, all of these expressions we can use to talk about a party that's out of control. And why did it go out of control? Well, a couple of the people attending the party had too much to drink. And we don't know the details, but we can assume that maybe they started some trouble or got into some trouble.

**Kassy:** Maybe they became party animals.

**Andrew:** They morphed into party animals. Yeah. And so this is the perfect kind of situation for using this idiomatic expression **to go haywire**. The party **went haywire**.

**Andrew:** All right. I think we can listen to our final conversation example for today. Let's do that right now.

**Kassy:** OK.



**Friend 1:** Can you take a look at my phone? It's acting so weird. Do you have any idea what's happening to it?

**Friend 2:** Whoa, you're right.

**Friend 1:** It's **gone completely haywire**, apps just keep opening and closing randomly.

**Friend 2:** Have you tried restarting it? Turn it off and on again and see if that fixes it. It usually works for me.

**Friend 1:** OK, I'll give it a try.

**Kassy:** So in this example, instead of talking about a situation that **went haywire**, it's an electronic device **going haywire**. So in this example, the girl's phone is acting really strange. Apps are opening randomly. It's not working the way it's supposed to. It's **going haywire**.

**Andrew:** Exactly. And the friend offers some tried and true advice, just reset it, reset it and see if that fixes it.

**Kassy:** That's always the best solution.

**Andrew:** Always the best, yes.

**Andrew:** All right, Kassy, well, I think we can wrap it up here for today. I wanna thank everyone for tuning in and studying English with us today and for listening to this episode.

**Andrew:** If you enjoy Culips and if you like learning English with us and find us to be very educational, then please support us. There are several ways that you can do that. First, you could visit [Culips.com](http://Culips.com) and sign up to become a Culips member. When you become a Culips member, you'll get access to our study guide library, you'll have ad-free episodes, you'll be able to listen and study with our exclusive members-only series, the Culips Fluency Files, and it's a great way to take your English to the next level. So just visit [Culips.com](http://Culips.com) to sign up and become a member.

**Andrew:** But there are also other ways you can support us as well, such as telling your friends about Culips or following us on social media, or even leaving us a nice review and rating on Apple Podcasts or wherever you get your podcasts.

**Kassy:** If you ever want to ask us a question or leave us a comment, you can do that by getting in touch with us at [contact@Culips.com](mailto:contact@Culips.com).

**Andrew:** That is it for us today. But we'll be back soon with another brand-new episode and we'll talk to you then. Goodbye.

**Kassy:** See ya around.



## Detailed Explanations

### To go south

Phrasal verb

The first key expression of this episode is **to go south**. **To go south** is used to describe a situation that goes terribly. This does not directly refer to the geographical south. Think of a line graph showing your company's profits. If the line goes up, you are making money. If it goes down, or southwards, you are losing money. However, you cannot say to go north to mean things are going well.

Here are a couple more examples with **to go south**:

**Kyle:** How was your camping trip?

**Sara:** So-so.

**Kyle:** How come?

**Sara:** It started off great. We had really good weather for the first 2 days, but then it **went south** after that. Nothing but rain.

**Kyle:** That's no fun when you're camping. I feel for you.

**Michelle:** Did you sell your store? I walked by the other day and saw it was closed.

**Oscar:** I did.

**Michelle:** Was there any reason in particular for selling?

**Oscar:** Yeah. We were losing too much money.

**Michelle:** Oh, no. I thought your business was doing well.

**Oscar:** It was, for the first year or so. But things **went south** quickly once the pandemic hit. It was like that for a lot of people.

## To shed some light

Phrasal verb

At the beginning of this episode, Andrew asks Kassy **to shed some light** on the expression to go south. **To shed some light** means to explain the topic to someone who might not know what it means. If you are looking for something in a darkened room, it's a pretty good idea to turn on the light. The light will enable you to see better. There are many expressions in English that use the word light to mean knowledge, such as **to enlighten** and **to see the light**.

Here are a couple more examples with **to shed some light**:

**Alexei:** Hello, Helena. Thank you for the fiscal report you put on my desk.

**Helena:** No problem. Do you have any questions?

**Alexei:** Actually, I do. Would you mind **shedding some light** on how you arrived at the figures in Column B?

**Helena:** Sure. It's a little complicated. Would you like to sit down? It might take a while.

**Jiwon:** Did you finish the algebra homework?

**Maddie:** I just got it done. I had so much difficulty with it.

**Jiwon:** Yeah. It was pretty tough, especially the fourth question.

**Maddie:** Totally. I couldn't crack it. But then my brother helped **to shed some light** on the needed equation.

**Jiwon:** That's right, he took this class last semester, didn't he? Maybe he could help us with all our homework.

## To go sour

Phrasal verb

One of the examples used in this episode is the bickering and screaming matches that happen in a bad relationship. That's a relationship that **went sour**. When things **go sour**, they go bad. Think of the milk in your fridge. When the milk **goes sour**, it is not good to drink. The same applies to relationships and other situations involving people. Another variation on this expression is **to turn sour**.

You can also say **to sour**. For example, **to sour** on someone is to no longer like that person.

Here are a couple more examples with **to go sour**:

**Kelly:** Are you still going out with Mark?

**Winnie:** No. We broke up.

**Kelly:** That's too bad.

**Winnie:** Actually, it's a good thing. The relationship really **soured** after our trip to Mexico. We got bitter towards each other. Ultimately, I realized we just weren't compatible and so I broke it off.

**Casper:** Did your sister eventually buy that condo she was shopping for?

**Monty:** No, she didn't.

**Casper:** Really? When I last talked to her, she was super enthusiastic about the deal.

**Monty:** She was, but then the negotiations turned **sour**. She felt like she couldn't trust the realtor, so she walked away.

**Casper:** That's a shame. Well, there are plenty of other opportunities out there.

## A one-off Idiom

As our hosts explain, the expression to go south means to go wrong. However, the opposite is not true. You cannot say to go north to mean that things are going well. So Andrew says that the expression to go south is **a one-off**. It is a fixed expression. People often say **a one-off** when the expectation was to do something repeatedly, but you are only doing it once. For example, one year you throw a Christmas party. Your friends might ask you if you will be throwing one every year. You can say no, it was **a one-off**. That means you will only do it once. A similar expression is **a one-time thing**.

Here are a couple more examples with **a one-off**:

**Sophie:** I heard you were on a date last night. How did it go?

**Calvin:** It was all right.

**Sophie:** You don't seem too enthusiastic.

**Calvin:** It was fun, but nothing special.

**Sophie:** Are you going to see her again?

**Calvin:** No. It was **a one-off**. I just wanted to see what it felt like to date again.

**Betty:** My friends tell me you played soccer with them last week.

**Dean:** Yes, it was fun.

**Betty:** Do you think you'll play again this week?

**Dean:** I don't think so. That was probably just **a one-off**.

**Betty:** How come?

**Dean:** Their level of play is a bit too high for me. I need to find a more appropriate league for my skill set.

## To spot [someone]

Phrasal verb

In one of the example dialogues, one friend says he would have **spotted his other friend** some money since she forgot her wallet. **To spot [someone]** is to help them out. In this case, the help is to lend the friend some money. You can also help others at the gym. You will often see someone standing near another person who is lifting weights. That person is there to help the lifter with encouragement and to act as a helper if there is a problem. The standing person is **spotting the other**.

Here are a couple more examples with **to spot [someone]**:

**Jeffrey:** Are you coming out with us tonight?

**Norma:** I don't think so.

**Jeffrey:** Why not? It'll be fun.

**Norma:** I know. Actually, I'm a little embarrassed to say this, but I barely have any money in the bank. I'm still waiting to receive payment for my sales.

**Jeffrey:** I see. If I **spot you** some cash for the night, would you come? You can pay me back any time.

**Norma:** All right then. Thanks!

**Reed:** I'm nervous about playing you one-on-one in basketball.

**Ali:** Why's that?

**Reed:** I haven't played in years, and you're on the college team. Of course I'm nervous.

**Ali:** I'll **spot you** a lead.

**Reed:** What does that mean?

**Ali:** The winner is the first person to reach 10 points. But I'll let you start with 4 points. Does that sound fair?

## To go haywire

Phrasal verb

The second key expression in this episode is **to go haywire**. **To go haywire** means that a situation has gone badly and is out of control. For example, if a peaceful protest in the street starts getting violent, you can say it **went haywire**. **To go haywire** is mostly associated with two things: electronics and human behaviour. When your computer starts failing on you, it has **gone haywire**. If your children start acting uncontrollably, they have **gone haywire**.

Here are a couple more examples with **to go haywire**:

**Padraig:** Hey, how are you doing?

**Cecily:** Not good. I had a terrible day.

**Padraig:** What happened?

**Cecily:** Everything **went haywire**. First, the digital keypad to open my front door wouldn't work. I had to call a locksmith. Then once I got in, my wireless router was acting up. I could get Wi-Fi for a few minutes, but then it would die in the middle of a business call.

**Padraig:** That sounds awful.

**Jessica:** How was your son's hockey game last night?

**Beau:** It was good, up until the end.

**Jessica:** What happened at the end?

**Beau:** Our team was winning by a large margin, so the other team was really frustrated. Then the other team suddenly **went haywire**. They attacked our players. They took cheap shots. It got ugly.

## Quiz

### 1. What does it mean to shed some light?

- a) to light a match
- b) to explain something to someone
- c) to shed your hair
- d) to throw something not very heavy

### 2. What is a good example of something going haywire?

- a) a train running on time
- b) an airplane arriving a little early
- c) getting money out of a bank machine
- d) a traffic light flickering sporadically

### 3. Which of the following is NOT similar to the others?

- a) to go south
- b) to go sour
- c) to spot someone
- d) to go haywire

### 4. What is a good example of a one-off?

- a) an airplane taking off for the first time that week
- b) scoring your first goal out of many
- c) taking your regular shift at your job
- d) running your first and only marathon

### 5. What does to spot [someone] mean?

- a) to help them
- b) to hurt them
- c) to dirty them
- d) to speak with them



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## Writing and Discussion Questions

1. When was a time in your life when things went south?
2. Electronics going haywire is inevitable. When was the last time your electronics failed you?
3. Who is your go-to person when you need someone to shed some light on a topic for you?
4. What is a one-off event you have had in your life but wish you could do again?
5. In this episode, our hosts talked about crossing their fingers for luck. Do you do something similar in your culture? What is it, and what does it mean?

## Quiz Answers

1. b   2. d   3. c   4. d   5. a

### Episode credits

Hosts: Andrew Bates and Kassy White

Music: *Something Elated* by Broke For Free,  
*Sleepless Aloha* by Reed Mathis

Episode preparation/research: Andrew Bates

Audio editor: Andrew Bates

Transcriptionist: Heather Bates

Study guide writer: Matty Warnock

English editor: Stephanie MacLean

Business manager: Tsuyoshi Kaneshima

Project manager: Jessica Cox

Image: AbsolutVision (Unsplash.com)