

## Catch Word #239 – It's all downhill from here

### Episode description

How's your English learning these days? Are you getting into the groove of things? In this Catch Word episode, Andrew and Jeremy give you some useful expressions to use when talking about a project or job that you are about to finish.

### Fun fact

Did you know that the act of procrastination has increased significantly in the last few decades? This is due to the fact that there are so many more interesting temptations that are available to distract us from doing our work, like cell phones, TV, internet, and video games.

### Expressions included in the study guide

- Downhill from here
- Half the battle
- To get into the groove
- To get [something] out of the way
- Over the hill
- Hump day
- To call it a day



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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. I'm Andrew.

**Jeremy:** And I'm Jeremy.

**Andrew:** And this is the Culips English Podcast.

Hey, guys. Welcome back to Culips. Today, we have a Catch Word episode for you. And Catch Word is our series where we teach you idioms, phrasal verbs or expressions that will help you improve your English listening and speaking. Today I am joined by Jeremy. What's up Jeremy? Hello.

**Jeremy:** Hey there, Andrew. In this episode, we are going to share with you all two expressions related to work or projects that are nearing completion. So you can use these expressions when you are almost done with a project or some task.

**Andrew:** Perfect. So we'll get to that in just a moment. But before we do, I want to shout out Dovet22. Dovet22 is one of our listeners, who just left us a very kind review on Apple podcasts along with a five-star rating. So Dovet is in Canada actually, and wrote, "Great podcast for English learners. I've listened to all of the episodes since January 1st 2019. Thanks a lot." Wow, Dovet! You must have been listening to a lot of Culips. It sounds like you've made it an everyday habit of yours. And guys, keep in mind this is one of the best ways to improve your English is to make it a daily habit, just like Dovet has.

And we also really encourage everyone to leave us a nice review on Apple podcasts or wherever you get your podcasts because that really helps us to gain more exposure and to help other English listeners learn about Culips and study with us. And everyone, don't forget that there is a study guide for this episode. If you don't know, we make study guides available for every single Culips episode. To access them and study with them, all you have to do is sign up and become a Culips member, which you can do on our website [Culips.com](http://Culips.com). And we highly recommend following along with the study guide while you listen to us here today.

So Jeremy, with that being said, let's jump right into it. Our first expression is it's downhill from here. Or sometimes people say it's all downhill from here. So could you break this down for us? What does it mean exactly?

**Jeremy:** Well, if you have ever had the experience of walking up a hill, it is usually quite difficult. But there is a point when you get to the top and you start to walk down the hill.

And then, usually, it gets much easier. So, this expression means that we have finished the hard part of the task, and we are entering into the easier part. Perhaps the last half of the task.

**Andrew:** Exactly. So you know, there's another expression in English starting is **half the battle**. And once you start a task, you know usually doing the preparation and beginning everything is very difficult. But once you **get into the groove**, once you get used to the work and you pass the halfway mark, then things get easier, as you can see that the end is in sight and you are getting closer to completion of that project.

**Jeremy:** So let's have a listen to our first conversation example.

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

**Friend 1:** How's the kitchen renovation going?

**Friend 2:** It's going well, I'm almost finished.

**Friend 1:** Oh, that's awesome. I can't wait to see it.

**Friend 2:** Yeah, I can't wait to show you. It's been a ton of work, installing new cabinets, redoing the floors, retiling the backsplash, buying new appliances. But now all I have left to do is paint the walls. So it's all **downhill from here**.

**Friend 1:** Good stuff! Well invite me over for dinner when you're done, so I can take a look.

**Friend 2:** Definitely.

**Andrew:** So in this example, we heard two friends talking about a kitchen renovation. And a kitchen renovation means an update to the kitchen. So when you redo everything and modernize and make a kitchen, or really any part of your home, you could do a bathroom renovation, a basement renovation, renovate just means update. So update the design, update the look. So this friend's been working hard doing a kitchen renovation. So he had to install new cabinets and install new flooring and retile the backsplash. The backsplash is the area behind the kitchen sink. And often in North American homes, it is made of tile. So the friend did that as well. And he's almost finished. It's all **downhill from here**. All he has left to do is paint the walls and he's done. His friend is maybe a little greedy. You know, after his friend has completed all of this difficult kitchen renovation, he asks for a dinner invitation as well.

**Jeremy:** Yeah, make me dinner after you're done.

**Andrew:** Yeah, don't relax, keep working hard. Make me dinner, too, so I can check out your kitchen. Jeremy, why don't we listen to another conversation example?

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

**Student 1:** This project is a nightmare. It feels like we'll never finish.

**Student 2:** I know it looks like that. But once we **get all of the preparation out of the way**, which I think we can do in the next few hours, to be honest, it'll be all **downhill from there**.

**Student 1:** You think so, really?

**Student 2:** Yeah, for sure. Let's just put our heads down and get it done.

**Jeremy:** In this example, two students are talking about a project that they're working on together. One student expresses how the project feels like a nightmare, meaning it feels very difficult and stressful. The other friend says that once all the preparation is out of the way, meaning finished, then the rest of the project is all **downhill from there**. This means that all the rest of the work will be relatively easy compared to the preparation.

**Andrew:** Jeremy, this might be a good time to talk about here and there. So in example one, the speaker said, it's all **downhill from here**, when he was talking about his kitchen renovation. But in example two, the speakers say it'll be all **downhill from there**. And they say there because they are talking about a future point in time. Once they get to that moment when all of the preparation is finished, then it will be easier, right? So when we are talking about a future point in time, we should use there with this expression. But when we're talking about the present moment, then we can use here. It's all **downhill from here** right now. Or it will be all **downhill from there** in the future.

**Jeremy:** Exactly.

**Andrew:** OK. So let's take a look at our second expression for today, which is a fun one, because it's related to camels. And Jeremy, I know you're a big fan of camels, right?

**Jeremy:** Oh, yes.

**Andrew:** Who isn't?

**Jeremy:** I actually have ridden a camel before.

**Andrew:** Wow.

**Jeremy:** And they are not comfortable to ride on.

**Andrew:** Yeah, so maybe some of our listeners in the Mideast have also had this experience. Jeremy, where did you ride a camel?

**Jeremy:** In northern India.

**Andrew:** Northern India, OK. Very cool. Was it a one-humped camel or a two-humped camel?

**Jeremy:** A one-humped camel, and perhaps that's why it was so uncomfortable.

**Andrew:** So this word, hump leads us into our second expression, which is, to be **over the hump**, to be **over the hump**. And Jeremy, a hump is what we call the bump on a camel's back, which is why I was joking about camels. But it's also what we can call a hill that is shaped like that camel's hump. You know, very stereotypical basic image of a hill where it starts at the bottom and it curves up and then goes down, in a kind of rounded shape. This is a hump. So let's break it down for everyone. What does it mean if we are **over the hump**?

**Jeremy:** Well, it means something very similar to the previous example, it means we are **over the hill** or over the top of the hill, we have crossed the halfway point of the hill. And actually **over the hill** is another expression, perhaps a little bonus expression we could mention here. It means that someone is old. If we say he is **over the hill**, it means that he has passed the halfway point of his life and therefore is getting old. He's not young anymore, he is old. Andrew, are you **over the hill** or not?

**Andrew:** Well, traditionally, in western culture, we tease people that they are **over the hill** when they turn 40 years old. I remember when my dad turned 40 years old, he got lots of birthday cards that said, oh, you're **over the hill** on the front. So I'm only 36. I'm not quite **over the hill** yet. But I get to look forward to doing that in just a few more years.

**Jeremy:** Well, I promise I won't send you a card that says that.

**Andrew:** So guys, be careful **over the hill** and **over the hump**. Even though they're using the same imagery, they have different meanings. **Over the hill** means to be old. And **over the hump** means to have finished the most difficult part of a task or project or any kind of work that you are doing.

**Jeremy:** So let's look at our first conversational example for this expression.

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

**Team leader:** OK, everyone, let's get started with the meeting. Barry, why don't you kick things off? Could you give us an update about the new sales strategy that you and the team have been working on?

**Barry:** Absolutely Sure thing. So Jesse, Sarah, Trevor and I have been developing new ideas for increasing sales over the last few weeks. It's been a lot of hard work. But we're **over the hump** now, and are planning to make our official presentation next week.

**Team leader:** Excellent work, I'm looking forward to that presentation. OK, next up on the agenda is that we need to discuss working with a new shipping company to process our orders.

**Andrew:** So in this example, we got to listen into a business meeting. And in the business meeting, one of the employees from this company, Barry, gave an update about the new sales strategy that company is developing. And he says that his team has been working hard, but they are now **over the hump**, that they are almost ready to present it to management. So here **over the hump** just means that the most difficult part of the work has been finished. And really, it's all **downhill from here**. I think often we use these two expressions in tandem, together with each other. We're **over the hump**, and it's all **downhill from here**, right? We can put both of them together and use them like that as well.

**Jeremy:** Sometimes one person will say one, and the other person will say the other.

**Andrew:** Right. As a way to agree with each other.

**Jeremy:** Exactly. Oh, so we're **over the hump** on this one. Yep. It's all **downhill from here**.

**Andrew:** Exactly. So it's a good response. Listeners, if you hear someone say this to you, you can reply with the other one. And Jeremy, one related expression that I hear all the time, usually every week, on Wednesday, is **hump day**.

**Jeremy:** Yes.

**Andrew:** **Hump day**. What is **hump day**?

**Jeremy:** Well, if you look at a calendar, you'll see that Wednesday is in the middle of the week. And in that way, it is the hump or it is the top of the hill, so to speak. And once you get past Wednesday, then you have Thursday, which is right before Friday, and everybody likes Friday, because you can go out and have some fun, and you don't have to work the next day. So it means you're closer to the weekend. You're past the harder part of the week.

**Andrew:** Exactly. So around the office on Wednesday or on the school campus on Wednesday, everybody kind of says, "Hey, happy **hump day**!" The weekend is not too far away. We've made it through Monday and Tuesday. Those days suck. Now it's Wednesday. But after today, it's almost the weekend. So hang in there. This kind of meaning to it, right?

**Jeremy:** Yeah, hang in there.

**Andrew:** Let's take a listen to our final conversation for this expression right now.

**Co-worker 1:** Hey, man. How much longer do you think this is going to take? It's getting late, and I've got to head home soon or I'll miss the last train.

**Co-worker 2:** You know what? Why don't we just **call it a day**? We can pick things up from here tomorrow.

**Co-worker 1:** OK, great. Yeah, I think we're **over the hump** now. So I think we'll be able to finish tomorrow.

**Co-worker 2:** Yeah, me too. OK, get out of here before you miss the train.

**Co-worker 1:** All right. See you tomorrow.

**Co-worker 2:** See ya.

**Jeremy:** In this example, two co-workers are working on a project and it is getting late. So one of the co-workers says I think we are **over the hump** now. So we will be able to finish tomorrow. This means that the first half or the most difficult half of the project has been completed already.

**Andrew:** Yeah, so they don't need to pull any more overtime. They can go home because they'll be able to pick things up tomorrow, where they left off. Pick things up where you left off means to resume where you finished. They'll be able to resume tomorrow and finish up the project because they're **over the hump**, and the most difficult part is now behind them, is finished, is done.

**Jeremy:** And you know what, Andrew? I think we are **over the hump** with this episode as well.

**Andrew:** Yes, we are not **over the hump**, we are in fact finished. So, thank you for listening everyone. We hope that you enjoyed this episode and that you learned a lot with us. I think if you keep your ears open for these two expressions, you will hear them in the English around you when you watch TV, when you watch movies, when you listen to music, or when you have conversations with English speakers. So to review what we looked at today, we learned about two idiomatic expressions that you can use when talking about work or tasks or projects that are nearing completion, and that the most difficult part of has been finished. The first expression was it's all **downhill from here**. And the second was to be **over the hump**.



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**Jeremy:** Bye, everyone.



## Detailed Explanations

### Downhill from here Idiom

The phrase it's all **downhill from here** means that the hardest part of a task is behind you, and the task will be easier to complete from that point. Imagine a task is like climbing a hill. At first, you work hard to climb the hill. But once you reach the peak, all that remains is an easy descent down the other side.

The same can be said about completing a task or working towards a goal. At first you have to put a lot of energy and effort into planning, starting, and executing your task. But after awhile, you reach a point where you've completed most of the work and only the finishing touches are necessary. At this point, you can say that it's all **downhill from here**.

Here is one more example with **downhill from here**:

Roger:	Wow! You've nearly finished the puzzle. How many pieces was it again?
Fatima:	My biggest one yet, 5,000. I felt like giving up a few times, but I pushed through it. Now that the sky part of the puzzle is finished, it's all <b>downhill from here</b> .
Roger:	Yeah, I can see that. Every piece in the sky is the same pale-blue colour. It must have taken you hours to complete that part.
Fatima:	Yes, it took forever. But I got into the groove half way through and now it's finally done. I think I'll finish the whole puzzle in the next two hours or so.
Roger:	You want some help?
Fatima:	Sure. Sit down and join me.

## Half the battle

Word class

**Half the battle** refers to a large part of the work necessary to achieve some outcome or goal. Imagine that the completion of a task or the reaching of a goal is like fighting a battle. An important step towards completing that task or reaching that goal is known as **half the battle**. In this episode, Andrew says that when you have a task you need to do, starting is **half the battle**. In other words, starting any project is not easy. But once you start, you are already well on your way to completing your task, to winning your battle.

Another well known use of this phrase is **knowing is half the battle**. This means that knowing how to complete the task is a vital step towards actually getting it done.

Here are a couple more examples with **half the battle**:

Bailey:	OK, son. Are you ready to learn how to make a delicious pizza?
Duncan:	You bet I am!
Bailey:	First, you must choose your ingredients wisely. Buying the proper ingredients is <b>half the battle</b> .
Duncan:	Don't you just need things like dough, cheese, and tomato sauce?
Bailey:	Yes, but what kind of cheese? What type of sauce? Will your dough be homemade? These are the important questions to consider when making a truly delicious pizza.
Duncan:	Wow. You'll show me the right way to do it, won't you, Daddy?
Bailey:	Of course I will, son. Now, let's get started.

Gina:	Why are you just staring at your blank canvas? You've been in front of it for 40 minutes now. Are you ever going to start painting?
Viola:	I'm feeling the canvas, getting used to it, gathering inspiration. You know, when starting any painting, a good start is <b>half the battle</b> .
Gina:	Whatever you say. Hopefully you'll start that thing before I'm 80 years old. I doubt it though.

## To get into the groove

Idiom

**To get into the groove** is to get into a good rhythm or mental state so the task you are doing goes smoothly and quickly. **In the zone** is a similar variation. Both **to get into the groove** and **to get in the zone** mean that you are focused on your task and you are able to work through it quickly and efficiently.

For example, **to get into the groove** while writing an essay means you are able to write it without stopping or losing your train of thought.

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

Jackson:	Shall we call it a day?
Mohammed:	No, but you can go ahead. I'm just going to finish up this piece of code. I really <b>got in the groove</b> today and I don't want to lose it before I'm finished.
Jackson:	OK. I'm heading out then. I'll see ya tomorrow.
Mohammed:	Yep. See ya.

Jimo:	Wow! Honey, the house looks amazing.
Clara:	I know, right? I really <b>got in the groove</b> while cleaning today, so I decided to deep-clean the whole house.
Jimo:	It looks brand new. Are you sure we live here?
Clara:	Ha! Ha! It's not that clean, silly. But thanks for the compliment anyway.
Jimo:	You deserve it. I'm cooking dinner tonight. You take a break.

## To get [something] out of the way

### Phrase

**To get [something] out of the way** is to complete something, especially something irritating or difficult so that you don't have to think about it anymore. There are people who like **to get unpleasant things out of the way** quickly, and then there are those that like to procrastinate from doing the unpleasant task for as long as possible.

For example, if students are assigned an essay at school, one type of student will complete the essay within a few days of getting the assignment so they don't have to stress over it. In other words, they will **get the essay out of the way** quickly. However, the another type of student would avoid the essay for as long as possible, then stress about it and try to finish it shortly before it is due.

Here are a couple more examples with **to get [something] out of the way**:

Nina:	Want to watch a movie?
James:	No, I have to head home and finish my science project.
Nina:	You didn't finish that yet? I did that on Friday. I <b>got it out of the way</b> so I could enjoy my weekend.
James:	Lucky you. I have barely started it.
Nina:	That's what you get for putting it off until the last minute. Good luck on your homework. I'll just enjoy that movie without you.

Rachel:	Let's go outside and play!
Alice:	OK, but let's <b>get our chores out of the way</b> first.
Rachel:	Why? We can just do them later.
Alice:	We won't want to do them later, and Mom might get angry at us. If we do it quickly now, we can play longer.
Rachel:	Your right, Alice. Let's go quickly! I'll do the dishes and you sweep the floor.
Alice:	OK. I'll put on my new playlist to listen to while we work.

## Over the hump

### Idiom

**Over the hump** is an expression that means you've completed the worst or most difficult part of something. The phrase **over the hump** can be used with any kind of activity that occurs over a period of time, such as work, travel, a project, and homework. Imagine any task as a hill to climb. When the hardest part of the task is complete, it is like going past the peak of the hill. So when you are **over the hump** of a project, you are on the downhill stretch; you are nearing the end of your project.

**Over the hill** may sound like a similar expression, but it has a different meaning. Over the hill means that someone is getting old. That person is past their prime years. Be careful not to mix up **over the hump** and **over the hill**.

Here is one more example with **over the hump**:

Derrik:	Mom! We've been in the car for ever. How much longer?
Mom:	Don't worry, Sweetie. We're <b>over the hump</b> . We've only got a couple of hours left.
Derrik:	A couple more hours? That's so long. We're never going to get there.
Mom:	Why don't you take a nap? We'll be there by the time you wake up.
Derrik:	I'm not really tired. But fine, I'll try.

## Hump day

Noun

**Hump day** is another name for Wednesday, the middle of the work week. This name has been around for decades and originated in North America. In this context, hump means hill or bump. The work week in North America typically spans from Monday to Friday, so Wednesday is the peak of the week. Workers are over the hump on Wednesday, so they coined the phrase **hump day**.

Here are a couple more examples with **hump day**:

Ricky:	Ugh. This week is never-ending. What day is it again?
Kyle:	<b>Hump day!</b>
Ricky:	Huh?
Kyle:	You know? <b>Hump day!</b> Wednesday.
Ricky:	Ah, right. Ugh. That means there's still two and a half more days until the weekend. I don't think I'm going to make it.
Kyle:	Don't be so dramatic. It'll be Friday evening before you know it.

Samantha:	Girl! It's <b>hump day</b> . Let's go celebrate.
Vicky:	Ha! Ha! <b>Hump day</b> isn't anything special. We have one every week.
Samantha:	What do you mean it's not special? <b>Hump day</b> every week is special. It means the weekend is right around the corner. Now get your coat on and let's go!
Vicky:	Where're we going?
Samantha:	<b>Hump day</b> means half-priced wings at Tony's. Let's go eat some chicken.

## To call it a day

Verb phrase

**To call it a day** is to stop work or activities for the day. Someone usually uses the phrase **call it a day** to declare that plenty of work has already been completed, and that it is a perfect time to quit for the day and resume activities later.

A similar expression **to call it a day** is **to call it quits**. **To call it quits** means to agree to stop doing something and pick it back up again later. Both **to call it quits** and **to call it a day** are frequently used at work or when doing activities with a group of people.

Here are a couple more examples with **to call it a day**:

Trey:	Man, I'm tired. We've been working for hours.
Seo:	We really have. Let's <b>call it a day</b> , shall we?
Trey:	Yeah. I can't focus anymore. We can finish it up tomorrow morning.
Seo:	Sounds good to me. Let's go grab some pizza. We've earned it.
Trey:	Yeah!

Boss:	Okay, everyone. The long holiday weekend starts tomorrow, so I'm <b>calling it a day</b> . Head home and spend time with your family.
Chrissy:	Wow! Thanks, boss!
Boss:	You're welcome. Thanks for being such a great team.
Chrissy:	Thanks! Make sure you get some rest as well.
Boss:	Thanks, Chrissy. I don't make any promises, but I'll try.



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## Quiz

- 1. Which of the following expressions is similar to get into the groove?**
  - a) to get into the rut
  - b) to get into the road
  - c) to get into the zone
  - d) to get into your mind
  
- 2. Which TWO phrases mean that the hardest part is behind you and you're close to completing something?**
  - a) over the hump
  - b) won the battle
  - c) half the battle
  - d) downhill from here
  
- 3. Which day of the week is hump day?**
  - a) Monday
  - b) Wednesday
  - c) Friday
  - d) Saturday
  
- 4. True or false? Procrastinating means to quickly get something out of the way.**
  - a) true
  - b) false
  
- 5. What does the phrase to call it a day mean?**
  - a) it's a beautiful day
  - b) to call someone during the day
  - c) to have a bad day
  - d) to stop working for the day

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## Writing and Discussion Questions

1. Are you the type of person who likes to get things out of the way quickly or do you usually procrastinate? How so?
2. Are you completing any large tasks these days? How far along are you? Are you over the hump?
3. What do you think are some good techniques you can use to help you quickly get into the groove while working?
4. Do you have any interesting nicknames for days of the week in your country, like how Wednesday is sometimes called hump day?
5. What tasks or goals would you like to work towards this year? Why?

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## Quiz Answers

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

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### Episode credits

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