

## Catch Word #240 – Let's get crackin'!

### Episode description

Here's another brand-new Catch Word episode for our listeners! Tune in with Andrew and Jeremy to learn some useful English phrases you can use when you want to hurry up and do something quickly.

There's no better way to improve your English than learning English phrases encountered in natural conversations. This episode is perfect for advanced beginners or intermediate learners looking to improve their listening and speaking fluency. Without further ado, let's get crackin' on this episode!

### Fun fact

One of the key phrases we will talk about in this episode is get the show on the road. The exact origin of this phrase is unknown, but people say it refers to travelling circuses and fairs as far back as the early 1900s. Back then, circuses and fairs travelled from city to city, entertaining people along the way. Each time the entertainers packed up their gear and prepared to travel to the next destination, they would literally be getting the show on the road—transporting the show to its next location.

### Expressions included in the study guide

- Get the show on the road
- Or what?
- To bicker
- Get crackin'
- Fired up
- Suck it up



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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 there, friends. Welcome back to Culips. Today's episode is part of our Catch Word series. So Catch Word is where we teach you idioms, phrasal verbs, and expressions that will help improve your English listening and speaking. And I'm joined today by my cohost, Jeremy. Hey there, Jeremy.

**Jeremy:** Hey, Andrew. In this episode, we'll teach you two expressions about hurrying up and doing something quickly.

**Andrew:** That's right. And, Jeremy, we should hurry up and get this episode started. But before we do, I do have to remind all of our listeners that, guys, there's a study guide for this episode on our website, Culips.com. It's available to all Culips members. And there's great stuff in the study guide, like the transcript, as well as detailed vocabulary explanations and examples of all the key and important words and expressions you'll hear Jeremy and I use here today. There's also a comprehension quiz and more. So if you want to study with the study guide for this episode, just visit Culips.com, sign up and become a Culips member, and you can.

OK, so, Jeremy, let's jump into it. Again, our theme for today is hurrying up and doing something quickly. And our first expression for today is **get the show on the road**. **Get the show on the road**. Wow, this is an interesting one. What does this mean, Jeremy? Can you break it down for us?

**Jeremy:** Yeah. I've also heard this one said as **get this show on the road**, also. You can say **get the show** or **get this show on the road**. To me, it makes me think of, like, a band going on tour. And when the band is getting ready to leave, to take their show out on the road, then they could say, all right, everybody, let's pack our things in the van and let's **get this show on the road**. Let's hit the road. That's kind of another idiomatic expression we have that means to get started. Let's hit the road, or let's get in the car and drive off to our destination.

**Andrew:** Yeah, hit the road means something slightly different, it means to depart, to depart from your current destination quickly, right? Let's hit the road. Let's go. Let's leave.

**Get the show on the road**, Jeremy, you're absolutely right that its origin is with entertainment because it originated back in the vaudeville days when there were lots of travelling performers moving from place to place to place throughout America and also Europe. I think these performances were very common. You know, in the days before people had movie theatres and movies to entertain themselves, they watched these travelling shows.

So then, to summarize, **get the show on the road** means to begin or start doing something immediately. Or, actually, maybe most commonly, we use it to tell other people to hurry up. Maybe, Jeremy, you're dragging your feet. You're doing something very slowly. And I want you to hurry up, to speed up, then I could say to you, hey, let's **get this show on the road**. Come on, hurry up. Right? It has that kind of meaning.

**Jeremy:** Yeah, I think what you highlighted there is very important. The meaning is to start something, but we use it, the actual usage, is when we want someone to do something faster, to get started faster.

**Andrew:** And, interestingly, did you hear what I said there, everyone? I said let's **get this show on the road**. I didn't say, Jeremy, **get the show on the road**. I said let's **get the show on the road**. And so that implies that Jeremy's actions have some kind of impact on me too, right? Like, it's important for Jeremy to hurry up and to start doing something because I am also involved in this activity and if he is slow, then it impacts my life. So we often say let's **get this show on the road** when using this expression.

**Jeremy:** That's a good point. For example, Andrew would not tell me to **get the show on the road** if I'm doing something by myself. It sounds like maybe he is my boss, or a manager, or a leader of the group and he needs me to do something.

**Andrew:** Exactly. So we frequently say let's **get this show on the road** when we are working with other people in a project or teamwork setting. You really hear it often in this kind of environment.

**Jeremy:** You know, one more thing I want to add, before we get into our example sentences here is if Andrew and I were going to work on something together and we want to get started, we can also use this expression just to say, OK, let's get started.

**Andrew:** Exactly. Let's **get this show on the road**. Let's begin. Let's start. So there are those two slightly different ways that we can use it, right? We can use it to mean let's start, let's begin, let's get this project going. We can also use it to encourage people and push people to start working faster or start doing something faster.

**Jeremy:** Exactly.

**Andrew:** So I think it's time for some examples. Why don't we take a listen to example #1 now?

**Jeremy:** All right.

**Friend 1:** Are you almost ready to go **or what?**

**Friend 2:** Yeah, yeah, I'm almost ready. I just gotta grab my coat. Just give me a sec.

**Friend 1:** Come on, let's **get this show on the road**. We're already 20 minutes late.

**Friend 2:** I know, I know, I'm coming.

**Andrew:** OK. So in this example, we heard two friends kind of **bickering** at each other because they were late. And when you're late, the stress level is high and you can be prone to arguing with other people. And so this is what these two friends do. OK, they're 20 minutes late. And one of the friends really wants his other buddy to hurry up. So he says, come on, let's **get this show on the road**. And in this context, this expression means hurry up. Come on, let's go. Let's **get this show on the road**. Let's hurry up because we're already late.

**Jeremy:** Let's listen to one more example here.

**Andrew:** Perfect.

**Ron:** Bill, do you have a second?

**Bill:** Sure thing. What's up?

**Ron:** It's about the project proposal. Are you almost finished with it?

**Bill:** I'm almost done. When do you need it by again?

**Ron:** The sooner, the better. I want to **get this show on the road** and run the plans by management ASAP.

**Bill:** OK, gotcha. Well, I can get it to you by the end of the day.

**Ron:** OK, that'd be great.

**Jeremy:** In this example conversation, two coworkers are talking about a project proposal. One of them needs the proposal done soon because he wants to **get this show on the road** and run the plans by management A-S-A-P or ASAP. A-S-A-P means as soon as possible. It is an acronym, but people often say it like it's a word, ASAP. Or they can also say A-S-A-P. So he wants to get the proposal finished so he can hurry up and show the people in management the proposal.

**Andrew:** Exactly, he wants to run the plans by management and that means to show them the plans. So he wants to **get the show on the road** means he wants to hurry up and start this process of introducing the plans to management.

Well, why don't we move on to our second expression for today, which has a similar meaning and it is **get crackin', get crackin'**.

**Jeremy:** I think we should mention here that the word is cracking, i-n-g. But very commonly in English, we leave off the -ing part at the end, we say -in' instead. We say crackin' instead of cracking. There are some instances where it just sounds very weird to say -ing instead of -in'.

**Andrew:** Yeah, I totally agree. Especially in spoken English. You know, when we're writing, we should write the i-n-g. But when we're speaking in North American English, at least, it's really common just to shorten that i-n-g, -ing sound into crackin', -in'. Getting an -in' sound there. So to spell this word out for everyone, cracking, or crackin', is C-R-A-C-K-I-N-G. And we use it with the verb get, unfortunately. So let's put it all together: **get cracking**. What does it mean, Jeremy, to **get cracking**?

**Jeremy:** Let's **get cracking**. This one, the image that comes to mind for me is someone with an axe. And they are going to start chopping wood. And so if someone says let's **get cracking**, to me, it sounds like let's start hitting the wood with the axe and start cracking the wood open. That's the visual image I get when I hear this expression. But it means to get started quickly. Let's go. Let's **get cracking**. Hurry up, let's go.

**Andrew:** Yeah, that's very interesting. It's really funny to hear the different images that are in people's heads when they think of these expressions, because I always imagined, like, a horseback rider whipping his horse to get the horse to go faster. And you hear that crack of the whip. But regardless of the origin of this expression, Jeremy, the core meaning is to start doing something immediately or quickly. So, you know—I'm picking on you a little bit in this episode, Jeremy, I'm sorry about that—but if you were being slow and lazy, I could say, come on, **get crackin'**, hurry up.

**Jeremy:** Yeah. And just like you mentioned with the other example, if you and I are doing it together, you could say, let's **get cracking**. Or let's **get crackin'**.

**Andrew:** Yeah, let's **get crackin'**. Let's hurry up. Let's start. Let's do something right now, let's not wait into the future and delay. But let's begin right now.

**Jeremy:** In fact, just to give everyone an example situation before we do our example conversations, this one, and the other one, as well, the two expressions for this episode, it sounds like something someone would say right after explaining the task to the team. So if Andrew and I and six other people are meeting up, and we're all going to help Andrew move his furniture out of his apartment. And so Andrew says, OK, everyone, I need the couch to go first and then these two tables over there, and then we need to move the TV. And, OK, I think that's it. That's the plan. All right, let's **get crackin'**.

**Andrew:** Yeah, absolutely. That's a totally natural context to use that expression in. I think managers or team leaders will probably use this expression really, really often. Because it's a kind of motivational expression that you can use to inspire people to get them **fired up** and to want to work hard and to do something quickly. So, yeah, after a team meeting, when you've made a plan, and then you want to do what you plan to do, then you could say, let's **get crackin'**. Let's do it.

**Jeremy:** All right, so should we get into our example conversations here?

**Andrew:** Yeah, let's take a listen to the first one.

**Friend 1:** Want to stop for a little break? My legs are getting tired.

**Friend 2:** What time is it?

**Friend 1:** Ah, 3:45.

**Friend 2:** No, we should keep moving. We're gonna have to **get crackin'** if we want to get to the peak and get back down to the car before dark.

**Friend 1:** Yeah, that's a good point, actually. OK, I'll **suck it up**. Let's just keep going.

**Andrew:** In this example conversation, we heard two friends who are on a hike. And they have to **get crackin'** if they wanna make it to the peak, the top of the mountain, and then back down to the bottom of the mountain where their car is before dark. So before the sun sets and it gets dark, because nobody wants to be stuck on a mountain in the forest in the dark. So they have to **get crackin'**. They have to hurry up. And because of this, they can't stop for a break. They just have to keep on hiking.

**Jeremy:** OK. Should we listen to our second conversation now?

**Andrew:** Yeah, let's do it.

**Friend 1:** Do you think we'll be able to get everything done by the end of the day?

**Friend 2:** I don't know. We still have a lot left to do.

**Friend 1:** I really don't want to work overtime tonight. I'm supposed to meet up with some friends for dinner later on.

**Friend 2:** Well, let's **get crackin'** then! This work isn't gonna do itself.

**Jeremy:** In this example, two coworkers are working on a project together and they have a lot of work left to do that they won't be able to finish if they don't **get crackin'**. One of the coworkers says this work isn't going to do itself. This is a common idiomatic expression, meaning that we have to finish it or I have to finish it, it's not going to finish itself. So you may hear this expression in speech.

**Andrew:** Yeah, we use these kinds of expressions all the time. This laundry isn't going to fold itself. This floor isn't going to sweep itself. Right? Whenever we have a task to do and it requires effort or labour to finish it, you know, it's a kind of way to encourage people to start doing that task, to do it, because it shouldn't be ignored anymore. So in that example, conversation, the coworkers say, well, let's **get cracking**. Let's start this work. Let's work hard and get it done, because nobody else is going to do it. We are the ones responsible for doing it. And if we procrastinate and delay, then it won't get done at all.

**Jeremy:** All right, everyone, thank you for listening to this Catch Word episode today. We hope that you found all of this content interesting and useful. And we hope that you'll be able to apply it in your English studies and in your English speaking.

**Andrew:** That's right.

Guys, if you learned something new in this episode and you find Culips educational and entertaining, then please support us. There are several ways that you can do that, such as signing up and becoming a Culips member on our website, Culips.com. And when you become a Culips member, you have unlimited access to our study guide library, as well as many other bonuses. So please visit Culips.com to check out all the benefits of Culips membership.

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So that's it for us today. But we'll be back soon with another brand-new episode and we'll talk to you then. Goodbye.

**Jeremy:** Bye, everyone.



## Detailed Explanations

### Get the show on the road

#### Idiom

To **get the show on the road** means to begin something, to get it started. **Get the show on the road** originates from entertainment when performers would travel between cities touring different locations. **Get the show on the road** implies that you want to get started on something right away and without delay.

Here's one more example with **get the show on the road**:

**Dad:** OK, everyone. Into the car you go! Let's **get this show on the road!**

**Sylvia:** How long is the drive?

**Dad:** About 8 hours. I can almost smell the ocean already.

**Sylvia:** I'm taking a nap. Wake me up when we get to a rest stop.

**Dad:** You got it!



## Or what?

### Idiom

The question **or what?** is used to ask about what is happening or to see if someone agrees with something. In this episode, one of the example conversations had the sentence “are you almost ready to go **or what?**” In this example, the speaker wanted to know if his friend was almost ready or, if not, how much longer he was going to take. This question implies that the speaker is impatient with his friend and he’s wondering what’s taking so long.

**Or what?** is also used when you want to see if someone agrees with you or not. For example, if you are at a concert with a friend, you might turn to them and ask, “Is this exciting **or what?**” If your friend is having a good time, she might agree and say, “Yes, very exciting,” but if she’s having a bad time, she might disagree and say something like, “Uh, I don’t really like this band.”

Here are a couple more examples with **or what?**

**Terrence:** Oh my goodness! Was that awesome **or what?**

**Mikah:** Totally! That was probably the best Marvel movie so far.

**Terrence:** Definitely. I can’t believe that ending!

**Mikah:** I mean, I read the comics so I totally saw it coming, but it was still amazing to watch.

**Terrence:** We should come back and watch it again next weekend.

**Mikah:** I’m in!

**Richard:** So what do you think? Was I good **or what?**

**Sutton:** Richard, that was fantastic! I had no idea you could play like that.

**Richard:** I’ve been taking private lessons after work to surprise you.

**Sutton:** Well, your lessons really paid off. I was blown away.

**Richard:** Thank you, sweetheart.

## To bicker

Verb

**To bicker** is to argue with someone, but not in an aggressive manner. Usually people **bicker** about small things like who has to clean the dishes or who gets to ride in the front seat of the car. When people **bicker**, it is not a full-blown argument with shouting and tears. **Bickering** is more a product of annoyance; it is a small conflict between two or more people.

Here are a couple more examples with **to bicker**:

**Mom:** Joshua, stop **bickering** with your brother.

**Josh:** Why are you only yelling at me?

**Mom:** Because you're the oldest. You should set a good example for your little brother.

**Josh:** Uh. So not fair.

**Mom:** Well, life's not fair. It's better to learn that while you're young.

**Flora:** I heard you and Justin in the hall. What are you guys **bickering** about this time?

**Stacy:** Nothing much. I told Justin he has to wear a suit and tie to this event we're going to on Friday and he's being a baby about it.

**Flora:** You guys just started dating, but I swear you **bicker** like an old married couple.

**Stacy:** I guess that means we're destined to be together forever!

## Get crackin' Phrase

If you tell someone to **get crackin'**, you want them to get started on something right away, the sooner the better. **Get crackin'** is used a lot in work settings or in situations where a deadline is involved. To **get crackin'** means you need to get started and get focused right away to tackle something that needs to be done.

Here's one more example with **get crackin'**:

**Jaesung:** I'm here!

**Carrie:** Great. Then let's **get crackin'**, shall we? We've got a lot of walls to paint and we've gotta be done by 3:00.

**Jaesung:** Yes, ma'am. Just point me in the direction of the supplies and I'll get started.

**Carrie:** Over there. If we finish this quickly, we might even have time to start on the other room today.

## Fired up

Phrasal verb

To **get fired up** is to get excited, annoyed, or angered about something. It means to quickly become passionate about something. For example, a campaign speech gets voters **fired up** before an election. Political candidates hold rallies and give speeches to get voters excited to come out and vote for them on election day.

The phrase **to get fired up** is like a fire is burning in your soul or your heart. The more you think about something, the more excited, annoyed, angered, or passionate you get.

Here are a couple more examples with **fired up**:

**Mary:** Wanna sit together at the pep rally today?

**Jane:** Ugh, I forgot about that. I hate pep rallies.

**Mary:** At least we get to skip class.

**Jane:** I'd rather go to class. What's the point of these dumb pep rallies, anyways?

**Mary:** I guess to get us **fired up** for the football game tonight or to show our school pride.

**Jane:** Nothing could get me **fired up** for a high school football game, especially not a lame pep rally.

**Kevin:** Man, are you ready?! This is gonna be awesome!

**Tony:** Yeah, I'm **fired up**! Our first frat party is gonna be epic!

**Kevin:** For sure! Let's take some shots now to loosen up.

**Tony:** Brilliant idea. I'll get the tequila.

## Suck it up

Phrasal verb

To **suck it up** is to endure or accept something even if you really don't like it. If someone is acting childish or unreasonable, he or she might be told to **suck it up**, to stop acting immature or unreasonable until the job is done or the event is over. For example, in one of this episode's example conversations, one friend says that he wants to take a break, but the other friend says that they have to keep moving if they want to make it to their car before dark. The first friend agrees and says that he will **suck it up**. In other words, he is tired and uncomfortable, but he will endure it and keep hiking so that they can reach the car before dark.

Here are a couple more examples with **suck it up**:

**David:** Mom, I don't want to go to Aunt Sarah's graduation ceremony. Can't I just stay home?

**Mom:** No. This is an important day in your aunt's life. Don't you want to be there to support her and celebrate?

**David:** Not really. It's gonna be boring and I have to wear those itchy clothes.

**Mom:** Well, you'll just have to **suck it up**. If you behave, I'll buy you an ice cream cone afterwards. How's that?

**David:** Oh, I guess that makes it better. Thanks, Mom!

**Coach:** OK, everyone. Today you'll do your strength training circuit. Then I want you to complete a 30-minute run.

**Raj:** But Coach, it's pouring rain outside.

**Coach:** So what? A little rain never killed anyone. This season, you guys will run rain or shine. That's what will make you not just good athletes, but great ones.

**Raj:** But these are new sneakers. They'll get soaked.

**Coach:** Oh, **suck it up** and get to work. Unless you'd like to run for an hour instead?

**Raj:** No, Coach!

## Quiz

### 1. Why might two people bicker?

- a) they are having a good time
- b) they have some exciting news to tell each other
- c) they both want the last piece of pizza
- d) one person is trying to cheer up the other person

### 2. What is the opposite of fire up?

- a) get angry
- b) calm down
- c) let down
- d) melt down

### 3. The phrase “get the ball rolling” means to get started. Which other TWO phrases have a similar meaning?

- a) get crackin’
- b) get it together
- c) get the hang of it
- d) get the show on the road

### 4. Which phrase means to endure something you don’t like?

- a) fired up
- b) suck it up
- c) pull it up
- d) bottoms up

### 5. Which of the choices below could be possible responses to the question “is this place cool or what?” Choose all that apply.

- a) it’s over there
- b) totally cool!
- c) I’d like that, too
- d) uh, not really

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## Writing and Discussion Questions

1. When was the last time you got crackin' on a new project? What kind of project was it?
2. Do you have any siblings? Did you bicker a lot when you were younger? If you don't have siblings, who do you bicker with most in your life?
3. When was the last time you got really fired up about something? What was it?
4. When was the last time you were told to do something you really didn't want to do? Did you suck it up and do it, or did you refuse?
5. Can you think of a situation where you might use the phrase "or what?" Write a dialogue in your writing journal or role-play a dialogue with your language partner using the phrase "or what?"



## Quiz Answers

1.c    2.b    3.a,d    4.b    5.b,d

### Episode credits

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