

## Catch Word #243 – Read between the lines

### Episode description

The way we communicate includes more than what we actually say. Sometimes there are hidden meanings! In this episode, Andrew and Suzanne explain two phrases that mean to look past the obvious for the truth.

Catch Word episodes define idioms, phrases, and slang so you can sound like a native speaker. Listen as two English speakers have a natural conversation so you can improve your vocabulary and listening skills. You will also learn new ways to talk about finding the hidden meaning!

### Fun fact

The expression read between the lines comes from cryptography—using codes to protect information. In one code, reading every second line of a message gives a different meaning from that of the entire text.

### Expressions included in the study guide

- Read between the lines
- To take a hint
- To break down [something]
- Face value
- Body language
- Keep an eye out



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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.

**Suzanne:** Hey, guys. I'm Suzanne.

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

Hello there, friends. Welcome back to Culips. Today we have a Catch Word episode planned for you. Now Catch Word is the series where we teach you idioms, phrasal verbs, or expressions that will help improve your English listening and speaking. And in this episode, Suzanne and I are going to teach you two idiomatic expressions about noticing or perceiving something even when it's not directly stated or talked about.

**Suzanne:** Yes. And we're gonna kick this episode off with a shout-out. One of our listeners from South America, Anna Maria, left us a very kind comment and a five-star review on Apple Podcasts. Anna Maria wrote, "Start listening to it now." Yes, we love that title. "Hi, guys, I want to say thank you. Every morning while I'm getting ready for my work day, I listened to one of your episodes. I love it all." That is so cool. I'm so happy that we get to help you get ready for work. Anna Maria continues, "My listening skills have improved during the last year, so thank you. I highly recommend creating this good habit. Greetings from Chile by a Colombian woman."

**Andrew:** Perfect.

**Suzanne:** So Anna Maria is Colombian and lives in Chile. Super cool.

**Andrew:** Yeah, an interesting geographical configuration there, Suzanne. But thank you, Anna Maria, for that comments. And, everyone, we recommend that you follow her advice and get into the good habit of listening to us every morning, because we also think that if you do that your English listening skills will improve.

Now, if you would like to get shouted-out in an upcoming Culips episode, guys, then please leave us a five-star rating and a positive review on Apple Podcasts or whatever platform you use to listen to Culips. Doing this would be a huge help to us and would allow more English learners from around the world to learn English with Culips.

Now I also want to let you know that there's a transcript and study guide for this episode that's available for all Culips member. Following along with the guide while you listen is the best way to study with us and we highly recommend it. And, plus, when you become a Culips member, you'll get access to lots of special bonuses, like invitations to our monthly livestreams and access to our members-only series, the Fluency Files. So to sign up, become a member, and get the study guide and transcripts, just visit [Culips.com](http://Culips.com).

OK, Suzanne, so with that being said, I think we're ready to kick off this episode. And let's do it by taking a look at our first expression, which is to **read between the lines**. **Read between the lines**. Could you **break this one down** for us and explain what it means?

**Suzanne:** Yeah, so it's quite interesting, right? Because on the face of it, or if we look at it literally, it sounds like we're looking at the space between the words, right? If you have a line above, you have a line below and then you have a space in between and it's blank. But what this expression is actually expressing is that there's something going on that can't be seen or understood with just the words. It's something that's felt, that's not directly stated with the words, but more the meaning behind the words.

**Andrew:** Yeah, absolutely. So, Suzanne, you just **broke down the visual** for this expression. And I think understanding the visual is really useful in understanding the meaning. So maybe some of our listeners don't know exactly what it means, the lines. And so this refers to the lines of text in a book, right? So when you read a novel or something, you open the book and all of the writing is on a line. And, of course, there's some empty space after each line of text, because if there is no empty space, then it's impossible to read. And so then, when you look at a book, there are two things that you can see. You can see the text and you can see the empty space. And so the text is what is said directly, what the writer wants to communicate directly. And the empty space is kind of just empty space, right? So that is the visual metaphor for this expression.

So what it actually means to **read between the lines** is to pick up or to notice something and to understand something that someone doesn't say directly to you, right? So, Suzanne, for example, if you ask me, "Oh, Andrew, do you want to go to a café with me?" And I said, "Oh, I have to go to school today." OK, I didn't directly say no, right? But you might be able to **read between the lines** and understand that I don't want to go to the café with you, right? That could just be a way that I indirectly say that I don't want to go have coffee with you, right?

**Suzanne:** Exactly.

**Andrew:** Yeah. It's kind of the sensing or noticing what somebody's actual meaning is, even when they don't directly say it. That's **reading between the lines**.

**Suzanne:** Yeah. And I think that takes a certain kinds of awareness, because many people can just take what someone says at **face value** or for their direct meaning, right? The words have a direct meaning. And they don't necessarily comprehend the meaning between the lines. So you can say something to someone, and they're, like, but you said this, you know, you said you had to go to school. Yeah, but I really meant I just didn't want to go to the coffee—you know, so it's important, too, you're hearing the words, and you're also hearing the intonation or the speed at which they're saying it or how they're redirecting the conversation. And so it gives you added meaning. There's more there than just what's on the page.

**Andrew:** And that's what makes learning a foreign language difficult, right? It's not always about the words people say or the words people write and understanding those words. It's understanding the culture, the context, the **body language**, and all of those things that makes understanding a foreign language even more difficult, unfortunately, but it's true. And it's good to know how to do that, of course. And when you do it that is **reading between the lines**.

So, Suzanne, I think we're ready for some examples. And by listening to the examples, our listeners will be able to perfectly understand what this expression means. So let's take a listen to example #1 now.

**Friend 1:** What did you think of Beth's new boyfriend?

**Friend 2:** He seems nice enough. Why?

**Friend 1:** I don't know. Beth says she's happy with him, but they don't seem to get along very well.

**Friend 2:** Yeah, sometimes you have to **read between the lines** with her. But if she says she's happy, I'll believe her.

**Andrew:** In this conversation example that we just heard, two friends were talking about their other friend, Beth. And Beth has a new boyfriend and they were discussing, like, oh, is Beth happy, what's her new boyfriend like? All of these topics. And both of the friends weren't really sure how Beth actually feels. They said sometimes you have to **read between the lines** with her. So, of course, they are best friends. They know her very well. They know her personality and what she's like. And I guess that they know that she doesn't always express exactly how she's feeling. So she might say she's happy, but maybe her **body language** or her behaviour indicates that she's not exactly happy. And so her friends are trying to **read between the lines** and understand exactly how she feels.

**Suzanne:** Yeah, those are good friends. It's like they're trying to figure out if she's lying, if she's really being authentic about her approval of her boyfriend or love for her boyfriend, like for this new guy?

**Andrew:** Is she being manipulated by him?

**Suzanne:** Right. What's really going on here?

**Andrew:** Yeah, what's really going on? They have to **read between the lines** to find out.

**Suzanne:** Yeah, more will be revealed as Beth and the new boyfriend continue on.

**Andrew:** To be continued.

**Suzanne:** They'll **keep an eye out** for the stuff between the lines here.

**Andrew:** Let's take a listen to a second conversation example now.

**Friend 1:** I want to get my dad a nice gift for his birthday. But I'm not sure what to get. Do you have any ideas?

**Friend 2:** Hmm. Did you try asking him?

**Friend 1:** Yeah, of course I did. But he said just not to get him anything.

**Friend 2:** That's not very helpful, is it?

**Friend 1:** I know, right?

**Friend 2:** Sometimes you just have to **read between the lines**, pay attention to what he says next time you guys talk. And maybe you can get some ideas about what to buy him.

**Friend 1:** OK, that's a good idea. I'll give it a try.

**Suzanne:** So in this example, we have someone who wants to get their dad a gift, but their dad seems to be kind of difficult to shop for, because he's not really explicitly saying that he wants anything for his birthday, right? He's like, oh, don't get me anything, probably saying, I don't need any gifts, you know? But maybe inside, he does want to gift. But he's not being totally forthright and overt about his suggestions. So the friend suggests maybe **reading between the lines** or kind of paying attention to maybe what he talks about next time or interests the dad might have, or pay attention to maybe habits or hobbies or things that the dad might talk about. And that could be a clue as to what he might like for his birthday. This is kind of a way of noticing without being told explicitly what the person wants.

**Andrew:** Exactly. So I think we all have a person like this in our lives, don't we, Suzanne? Somebody, usually a dad or a mom or parent. Don't buy me anything. My brother is this way. You know, if it's his birthday, I'll ask him, "Do you want something for your birthday?" He said, "No, don't spend your money on me, save your money." But sometimes I want to give him something. So I really have to **read between the lines**. I have to pay attention to what he's into. I have to try and notice without him directly telling me what kind of gift he wants. And sometimes I'm successful at **reading between the lines**. Many times I fail.

**Suzanne:** I had an example of this, actually, with my Mom for her birthday. It was in February. And she kept saying, "I don't want anything. Don't worry, don't worry, don't bother." And my sister and I were, like, what do we get her? And she kept saying, "Oh, it's been such a long day, I'm so tired." She's in the medical field, she's still working. She's an essential worker during the pandemic. So she's exhausted. And, you know, she's not super young, she's a mom, older, you know, she's a nurse, sixties or something. And we decided something that could be affordable for us and helpful for her that she would never think to get. We had this idea of getting her a foot bath, like an electric foot bath that she could just put some water in, turn it on, maybe some salts and sit after dinner, watch TV and relax her feet after a long day. She loved it. It was us sort of **reading between the lines**, listening to the cues in her everyday conversation, how tired she was. So sometimes it can help to, like, anticipate someone's needs or to, yeah, give them a little surprise.

**Andrew:** You were successful, then, at **reading between the lines**.

**Suzanne:** That time, yes, that time. Take it when I can get it.

**Andrew:** Very good. Very good.

I think we're ready to move on to our second expression for today, which is **to take a hint**. **To take a hint**. And we often also say to not **take a hint**. It's actually common to use this expression in a positive way, like **take a hint**, or also in the negative way, to not **take a hint**. Or you could say somebody can't **take a hint**, right? Or this guy can't **take a hint**, she can't **take a hint**, meaning, like, they can't notice anything.

**Suzanne:** That's common.

**Andrew:** They are so clueless that even when you are giving them lots of information and hints and clues, and you were almost telling them something without directly telling them something, but they still can't notice and pick up and understand what you're trying to say.

**Suzanne:** Yes. Have you ever used that at somebody? Like, not just that guy can't **take a hint**, but, you know, you can't **take a hint**, can you?

**Andrew:** Right. Or can't you **take a hint**? Right? I think the image that comes into my mind with this expression is when I lived with my family, you know, maybe I was in high school or middle school or something and trying to study. And, you know, I lived in a busy house with five people and I would go into my room, try to study, and, I don't know, somebody would be watching TV loudly or doing something loudly. And I'd be, like, come on, can't you **take a hint**, you see that I'm studying, can't you be quiet? I didn't tell them directly, hey, be quiet, I'm studying. I just hoped that they would be observant enough to notice that I was studying and then be quiet because of that. But they couldn't put two and two together and they weren't quiet. So that's a memory that I have from long ago that sort of illustrates the meaning of this expression.

So just to summarize, then, what it means **to take a hint**. And, again, it's related to understanding what somebody wants you to do even when they don't directly tell you, right? So, Suzanne, if you can **take a hint**, it means that you can understand what somebody is telling you without directly telling you. You can read their **body language** or understand their messages even though they might not, you know, directly express their feelings. And if you can't **take a hint**, then it's the opposite, right? Then you can't notice, you can't understand somebody's indirect messages.

**Suzanne:** I also think we use it personally. We say it in first person a lot. Like if somebody is like, "Hey, Andrew, you want to go have coffee?" "I gotta go to school and ..." OK, well, I can **take a hint**. You know, I could say, well, I can **take a hint**. Meaning I **read between the lines** and I can **take that hint**.

**Andrew:** Exactly.

**Suzanne:** It is often used, especially on TV, I find, it's maybe not used in everyday conversation out loud to someone, well, I can **take a hint** all the time. But I feel like this is an expression that is used in television scripts all the time, with like cop shows and things like this.

**Andrew:** I totally agree. I think it's actually pretty common and especially because I think we use this expression a lot in romantic situations, like when somebody is asking somebody else out on a date, right? Or if you're talking about somebody, you know. Maybe, Suzanne, maybe in your past you've had some guy that was, had a big crush on you and that was asking you out on a date or something. But you weren't really interested in him. But he kept trying. And you're like, oh, man, can he **get the hint** that I'm just not that interested in him? Like, I don't want to break his heart. I don't want to say, no, I don't like you directly. So I've just been turning him down.

**Suzanne:** Yes.



**Andrew:** But, you know, we don't actually get asked out on dates every day in our everyday lives, right? That's not a common occurrence for us anymore, I think. But when we watch romantic comedies or sitcoms on TV, this is a huge theme, dating. So, yeah, you would hear this expression used really often.

So I think let's move on to our examples. So we can take a listen to our first conversation example now.

**Adam:** Hey, Sarah.

**Sarah:** Oh, hey, Adam.

**Adam:** What are you doing on Friday night?

**Sarah:** I was just planning to chill out and relax at home. It's been a long week, you know?

**Adam:** Oh, that's cool.

**Sarah:** Yeah. What about you?

**Adam:** Well, I was thinking about going to see the new Batman movie, and I was wondering, you want to go with me?

**Sarah:** Oh, well, that sounds fun. But like I said, I'm really tired, but maybe we can see a movie some other time?

**Adam:** Ah, it's OK. I **get the hint**.

**Sarah:** Sorry.

**Andrew:** So in this example conversation, we heard a situation very similar to the one that we were just talking about a moment ago, Suzanne, where a guy is asking a girl out on a date and it doesn't seem like she's very interested, right? She doesn't really feel attracted romantically to this guy. So when he asks her to see a movie with him, she says no indirectly, instead of just saying no, I'm not interested in you, leave me alone, you know, that's too harsh, we have to be a little gentler. She says, "I'm kind of tired. I don't really want to. Maybe some other time." And the guy responds by saying, "Ah, OK, I **get the hint**." Like, I noticed that you're not really interested in me. I understand. A little bit of a sad example, but a very natural way that you can use this expression.

**Suzanne:** Yeah, aw, I always feel bad in those cases.

**Andrew:** There's plenty of fish in the sea, he'll be OK.



**Suzanne:** But you know, I also do commend Sarah because you got to be honest, too. And also, if you're tired, that's not gonna be fun. That's not a fun date.

**Andrew:** Neither is a Batman movie, to be honest with you.

Shall we listen to another conversation example with this expression?

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

**Friend 1:** So my annoying neighbour came over again this afternoon.

**Friend 2:** Again? What for?

**Friend 1:** For nothing, he just wants to hang out. So he knocks on my door right in the middle of the afternoon, out of the blue.

**Friend 2:** So what did you say to him?

**Friend 1:** Nothing. I didn't answer to the door. But he just stood there knocking for, like, 5 minutes.

**Friend 2:** I guess he just can't **take the hint**.

**Friend 1:** Yeah, I mean, it's fine. But I really don't have time to just randomly hang out like that.

**Friend 2:** That's a tough situation. Maybe next time you should just be honest and direct.

**Friend 1:** True, that's probably the best idea.

**Suzanne:** So in this conversation, the two friends are talking about how this neighbour just unannounced comes over to their house, and it's quite invasive and annoying. Maybe that person is busy and, you know, has a schedule to keep to and this neighbour just wants to come over and hang out whenever they want to, randomly. And it's really bothersome to this person. So he didn't answer the door. So when the neighbour came over knocking and knocking and knocking and he didn't answer the door, maybe to pretend like he's not home?

**Andrew:** Yeah, I think so.

**Suzanne:** But the neighbour just doesn't **take the hint** that he doesn't want to hang out with him, right? That he's not answering the door, that he's not available, is still just kind of going, OK, let's try another tactic. So he's not **taking the hint** that this person is not available. So the friend suggests that maybe this person isn't so good with nonverbal cues, that this person needs direct communication. I am not interested in you coming over, do not come over at random hours of my day. They need more direct communication.

**Andrew:** Right. Because the indirect way to deal with this situation is that he just didn't answer his door, right? And he thought that communicated, like, "Hey, I'm not available to talk with you right now. I'm sorry." But the neighbour didn't pick up on that and just kept standing there, knock, knock, knock. You know, I think most people would maybe knock on the door for 30 seconds.

**Suzanne:** Maybe less, yeah.

**Andrew:** And if the door wasn't opened, then you would just leave, right? But this guy, knock, knock, knock, knock, 5 minutes later, he's still there. Well, he's not **taking the hint**. He doesn't understand I don't want to spend time with him. So a better approach is probably just to say, "Hey, sorry. I don't want to see you." Something like that.

Now, Suzanne, you mentioned a great point earlier before we started recording and that is that with this expression, there are two options that you can use, right?

**Suzanne:** Yeah.

**Andrew:** You can say **to take a hint** or to **take the hint** and both are OK. Which one do you personally say?

**Suzanne:** I usually use a hint. There is a difference. It's interesting, right? It's a subtle difference between a and the hint. I feel like a hint is like, this person doesn't **take any hints**, right? This person doesn't get any of the extra-linguistic cues at all. They're just not aware.

**Andrew:** Yeah. Generally unaware.

**Suzanne:** Yeah. But the hint, it's more like this specific one, this hint, this cue that I'm giving, you know, or this subtle, covert communication, this specific one, they're not understanding. So, yeah, I guess maybe I'm more mean, if I say **take a hint**. It's like they're just clueless in general.

**Andrew:** Yeah, somebody that doesn't **take a hint** means that they can't observe or notice or understand any kind of indirect communication, but somebody that can't **take the hint** just means that they didn't pick up, didn't understand that one specific situation. Yeah. So that is the subtle difference between them. But I thought it would be useful for our listeners to know that because they may see a hint sometimes and they may see the hint sometimes, and both are OK. But they do have a different nuance, just like you mentioned, Suzanne.

**Suzanne:** Yeah, I encourage anyone, maybe if you're watching, you know, streaming services or TV shows and things in English, to put on the subtitles in English. And to see if you can catch these words. And to see if you can see **read between the lines** or **take a hint, take the hint** because **take a hint, take the hint**, like Andrew said, is really common in a lot of these romantic comedies and shows, maybe even like The Bachelor or something like that, I don't know, I don't watch that show. But I feel like that would be a good place to hear that phrase. So, yeah, turn on the subtitles, see if you see it or hear it and let us know.

**Andrew:** If you hear any of the expressions that we teach here in Culips, in the wild, in the wild meaning, like in real, everyday English that you hear or read in your regular life, then let us know. We'd love to hear that. And I think, you know, it's kind of bizarre, it's kind of strange, but once you learn about an expression, then you tend to notice it a lot easier in the future. So I'm very confident that our listeners will hear this one and encounter it in the wild coming up soon. And if you do, let us know we'd love to hear from you. Our email address is [contact@Culips.com](mailto:contact@Culips.com). That's the place you can reach us. If you ever have a question or a comment for us, feel free to contact us that way.

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So that brings us to the end of the show. Thank you for listening, everyone, and we'll be back soon with another brand-new episode. We'll talk to you then. Goodbye.

**Suzanne:** Bye.

## Detailed Explanations

### Read between the lines

#### Idiom

**Read between the lines** means to look for a hidden or implied meaning behind what is obvious. When you **read between the lines**, you interpret situations, people, and clues that aren't explicit, such as understanding someone's real feelings beyond what they say.

Andrew explained the visual metaphor in this expression. "When you look at a book, there are two things that you can see. You can see the text and you can see the empty space. And so the text is what is said directly, what the writer wants to communicate directly. And the empty space is kind of just empty space."

Here are a couple more examples with **read between the lines**:

**Lola:** I think my boss is mad at me. Look at this email she sent me.

**Thomas:** Looks like a perfectly nice email to me. Why would you think she's mad?

**Lola:** Because I'm **reading between the lines**. I've worked with her long enough to know that when she says, "as per my previous email," she really means "I've already told you this, dummy." And look at that sign off! She says, "Thanks." That's so abrupt! She's definitely mad.

**Thomas:** I don't see it. I think you're overreacting.

**Lola:** Whatever. Go away. I have to answer this.

**Jun:** Was it just me, or were your sister and her husband acting weird yesterday?

**Young-Sook:** It wasn't just you. I noticed it, too.

**Jun:** Did she mention anything to you?

**Young-Sook:** No. But, and I might just be **reading between the lines** here, I think they're having some relationship issues.

**Jun:** I think I agree with you.

**Young-Sook:** I'll call her tomorrow to see if she needs to talk.

## To take a hint

### Idiom

**To take a hint** means to understand or do something that someone wants you to do, without them telling you directly. The other person must be giving their instructions in an indirect way, either with body language or other indirect clues.

As Andrew mentions in this episode, it's "common to use this expression in a positive way, like **take a hint**, or also in the negative way, to not **take a hint**. Or you could say somebody can't **take a hint**." Someone who can take a hint reads indirect or covert suggestions and acts on them. Someone who can't **take a hint** is oblivious to any subtle messages given by other people.

Here are a couple more examples with **to take a hint**:

**Khalid:** Hey, Tia! Where's that attachment for the blender?

**Tia:** I dunno.

**Khalid:** I looked everywhere, and I can't seem to find it. Do you know if it was put somewhere else?

**Tia:** No.

**Khalid:** I'm trying to make some good whipped cream to go with dinner tonight, and I just need this one attachment for—

**Tia:** Khalid! I'm trying to work here. Can you please **take a hint**?

**Khalid:** Oh, uh. Sorry. I'll keep looking. It might be hiding in the other attachments, maybe. Or it could—

**Tia:** Get out!

**Jennifer:** Look at this! Isn't it awesome?

**Ben:** Yeah, it's pretty cool.

**Jennifer:** You know, my birthday's coming up. If I got this, I'd be crazy happy.

**Ben:** Oh, is it now? I think I might be **getting the hint**.

**Jennifer:** Yay!

## To break down [something]

Phrasal verb

**To break down [something]** means to make it easier to understand by separating it into smaller bits. You can **break down an idea or statement**. When you do, you're explaining it by using metaphors or comparisons to better understand it. Or, if you're explaining how to do something, you're outlining its individual steps. For example, in this episode Suzanne **breaks down the phrase** read between the lines.

You'll also hear the phrase as **to break [something] down**.

This phrase can also be applied to machines or things. When you **break down a machine**, you're taking it apart to see how it works. Usually, you do this to fix it.

Here are a few more examples with **to break down [something]**:

**Eric:** Hey, Coach! Why didn't you put me in the starting line?

**Coach:** Why didn't you come to practice?

**Eric:** Why does that matter?

**Coach:** Let me **break it down** for you. If you don't come to practice, you don't get to start the next game. It's that simple.

**Teacher:** Welcome to Anthropology 101. This semester, you'll be learning what makes us human. The **course is broken down** into several units, each with its own essay assignment and short test. The final exam will be worth 25% of your grade.

**Zhou:** The first step of any good money plan is to **break your spending down** into bills, food, and other. Then assign a total amount to each category. Add it up, and you have your monthly budget.

**Masami:** That seems easy enough. What's the second step?

**Zhou:** Not spending more than your budget during the month.

**Masami:** That's going to be the hard part.

## Face value

Noun

**Face value** is what something looks like on the surface. When you take something at **face value**, you're assuming that what you can see or understand right way is the truth. You don't question it or look for deeper meaning beyond that. You accept the **face value** without thinking about it very much, even though it might be false.

In this episode, Suzanne says, "Many people can just take what someone says at **face value** or for their direct meaning." She means that people who can't take a hint or read between the lines are accepting what they see or understand on the surface to be the truth.

The term comes from currency. **Face value** is the amount or value of a coin, banknote, postage stamp—anything that represents a price or cost.

Here are a couple more examples with **face value**:

**Mi-Gyeong:** Are you still with that guy you brought to the freshman hall party?

**Holly:** Nope. He lied all the time. I couldn't take anything he said at **face value** and it was just too much. I mean, I've got midterms coming up! I can't be fact-checking everything he says!

**Mi-Gyeong:** Smart move, girl. He totally sounds like way too much work. You've got priorities!

**Wesley:** Guess what! I got the job!

**Kei:** Congratulations! I knew you could do it. Did they give you a good offer?

**Wesley:** Yeah, I think so. I mean, at **face value** the offer is pretty great. Benefits and retirement matching, the whole thing. And I don't think they'd try to trick me, so yeah.

**Kei:** That's awesome. When do you start?

**Wesley:** Monday. One last weekend and then I'll be joining the ranks of the gainfully employed!



## Body language

Noun

**Body language** is unspoken communication through gestures and movements. This word describes any and all physical actions that express or convey information. This includes facial expressions, posture, gestures, eye movement, touch, and use of space. When you frown, cross your arms, take a step, point, or even tilt your head, you are using **body language**.

Someone who can take a hint, or read between the lines, analyzes your **body language**. Like spoken languages, there are differences from country to country. People interpret **body language** in different ways, so it's not the most reliable way to communicate.

Here are a couple more examples with **body language**:

**Daniela:** Be careful around Mrs. Sternfield today in third period.

**Lucy:** Why?

**Daniela:** She's in a really bad mood.

**Lucy:** Really? How can you tell?

**Daniela:** I saw her stomping down the hall earlier. I had her for English last semester and picked up on her **body language** pretty quickly, especially since she tends to lash out when she's mad. I never want to experience another lecture from her!

**Lucy:** Oh my. Thanks for the heads-up! I'll definitely be on my best behaviour.

**Wen:** I was reading up on interview tips to prepare for tomorrow's interview.

**Hachiro:** Smart. Did you see the one about making sure your **body language** is saying the right stuff?

**Wen:** No! Are the tips good?

**Hachiro:** Really good. Basically, it's all about how to sit, where to look, and that kind of stuff. Really helpful tips. I'll send you the link.

**Wen:** Awesome, thanks! I'm so nervous, I'm going to need to focus on how I'm sitting so I don't just hunch over like a crazy person.

## Keep an eye out

Idiom

**Keep an eye out** means to watch carefully for something or someone. Native English speakers often use this as a command or request. For example, if you're driving with a friend and you need to turn onto a specific road, you could ask your friend to **keep an eye out** for the road sign. They will then watch their side of the road to make sure you don't miss your turn.

There's a very similar phrase in English that means something a bit different: keep an eye on. You **keep an eye out** for something to watch for its arrival. You keep an eye on something to make sure it stays safe.

Here are a couple more examples with **keep an eye out**:

**Xiuying:** The mall is really packed today, isn't it?

**Emma:** Yeah. I wish it weren't. Susie's supposed to be meeting up with us here soon. **Keep an eye out** for her, OK?

**Xiuying:** For sure. In this crowd, she could walk right past us and we wouldn't know!

**Zac:** You missed out on dinner last night!

**Ayane:** I tried to come, but I missed my bus and there's only one an hour at that time of night!

**Zac:** It's a shame. The food was so good. Karen is a great cook.

**Ayane:** What did you have?

**Zac:** Here. I took some photos!

**Ayane:** Oh, these look delicious. Do you think Karen will share her recipes? I'm always **keeping my eye out** for good recipes.

**Zac:** I'll ask John to ask her. As long as you promise to share what you make with me.

**Ayane:** Deal!

## Quiz

- 1. Which of the following is a type of body language?**
  - a) Crossing your arms
  - b) Singing in the shower
  - c) Talking on the phone
  - d) Yelling at your neighbour
  
- 2. Sally asked Fred a question and accepts his answer without asking any follow-up questions. What could you say Sally did?**
  - a) Read between the lines
  - b) Took it at face value
  - c) Took the hint
  - d) Kept an eye out
  
- 3. Which of the following means to look for a hidden or implied meaning behind what is obvious?**
  - a) Read between the lines
  - b) Take it at face value
  - c) Take the hint
  - d) Keep an eye out
  
- 4. What could you ask a friend to do when you are watching for someone or something?**
  - a) Read between the lines
  - b) Take it at face value
  - c) Take the hint
  - d) Keep an eye out
  
- 5. Which of the following means to understand or do something that someone wants you to do, without them telling you directly?**
  - a) Read between the lines
  - b) Take it at face value
  - c) Take the hint
  - d) Keep an eye out

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## Writing and Discussion Questions

1. Describe a time when you read between the lines and took a hint.
2. How would you break down the last thing you learned to make it easy to understand?
3. Describe a time when you took someone or something at face value. Were you right or wrong?
4. What is common body language in your country?
5. Describe a time when you had to keep an eye out for something or someone. Did you spot them first?

## Quiz Answers

1.a    2.b    3.a    4.d    5.c

### Episode credits

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