

Catch Word #250 – Aren't you a sight for sore eyes!

Episode description

It's always fun to compliment a friend (and to receive a compliment, too). Luckily, the English language has many expressions you can use to tell people how good they look! Today, Andrew and Kassy define two such expressions: to look like a million bucks and a sight for sore eyes.

The Culips Catch Word series explains idioms, phrasal verbs, and expressions used in everyday life. Listening to our Catch Word audio lessons helps improve your English listening and speaking skills. In the process, you'll even learn a few new ways to compliment your friends!

Fun fact

Research shows that giving and receiving compliments is good for your health, confidence, and overall happiness! Compliments motivate people, inspire them, and, of course, make them happy.

Expressions included in the study guide

- To look like a million bucks
- A sight for sore eyes
- Got this [thing] beat
- To clean up pretty nice/well
- Rhetorical question
- To put a smile on [one's] face



Transcript

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.

Andrew: Hello there, everyone. My name's Andrew.

Kassy: And I'm Kassy.

Andrew: And this is the Culips English Podcast.

Hello, everyone. Welcome back to Culips. Today we have a Catch Word episode prepared for you. Now let me explain what Catch Word is. It is the series where we teach you idioms, phrasal verbs, and expressions that will help improve your English listening and speaking. And in this episode, we'll teach you two idiomatic expressions that are used to compliment someone's appearance or the way someone looks. These two expressions are **a sight for sore eyes** and **to look like a million bucks**. And to help me teach this lesson, I'm joined by my cohost, Kassy. Hey there, Kassy.

Kassy: Hey, Andrew. And hey, everyone. Before we kick off this episode, we have a shout-out to share. One of our listeners from Italy with the username Benko left us a five-star rating and a positive review on Apple Podcasts. Benko wrote, "I love this podcast, it helps me a lot to learn English and the topics covered are also very interesting. As soon as I finish my English course, I will become a member. Thanks."

Andrew: Awesome. Thank you so much, Benko, for that great review and for supporting us by leaving us a five-star rating on Apple Podcasts. And, listeners, if you'd like to get a shout-out in an upcoming Culips episode, then please leave us a five-star rating and a positive review on Apple Podcasts or whatever platform you use to listen to podcasts.

Now, Kassy, we should also let all of our listeners know that there's a transcript and study guide for this episode that's available for all Culips members on our website, Culips.com. And following along with the guide while you listen to Kassy and I here today is one of the best ways to study with us and we highly recommend it. And plus, when you become a Culips member, you'll get access to so many bonuses and special things, like invitations to our monthly live streams and access to our members-only series, the Fluency Files. So to sign up, become a member and get the study guide and transcript, just visit Culips.com.

OK, so now that all of the announcements are out of the way, we can get started with today's lesson and, Kassy, the first expression that we are going to take a look at is **look like a million bucks**. **Look like a million bucks**. Kassy, could you say this one so that our listeners could hear another speaker say it?

Kassy: Sure. **Look like a million bucks. Look like a million bucks.**

Andrew: And here bucks is what? What does bucks mean, a million bucks? What is a buck?

Kassy: A buck is \$1. So look like a million bucks, look like a million dollars.

Andrew: Yeah. Now, I've never seen a million dollars in real life, but I can imagine it's a very beautiful sight.

Kassy: Me, too. If **you look like a million bucks**, you're looking real nice.

Andrew: Right. And so that is what the meaning of this idiom is, right? **To look like a million bucks** means to look great or look very beautiful or look very healthy. It's regarding your outward appearance, right? If your outward appearance looks very good, then **you look like a million bucks**.

Kassy: Yeah, this is a great compliment, listeners. If you ever want to make someone feel really good, tell them they **look like a million bucks**.

Andrew: Now a similar expression is feel like a million bucks. And if you feel like a million bucks, it means that you feel really good, right? Maybe you got a raise at work and you feel like a million bucks. It means that you're really happy, really excited about your raise, and you feel really good.

So, listeners, be careful not to get these two expressions confused. They are very similar. However, one is about your physical, outward appearance, **look like a million bucks**. And the other is about your emotion and feeling, which is feel like a million bucks.

Kassy: Andrew, should we take a listen to some examples?

Andrew: Yeah, let's take a listen to an example conversation with this idiomatic expression, **to look like a million bucks**.

Coworker 1: Are you feeling better today?

Coworker 2: Way better. I think I **got this cold beat**. After getting home from work, I ate a good dinner and then slept for 10 hours.

Coworker 1: Yeah, you **look like a million bucks** compared to yesterday.

Coworker 2: I feel like a million bucks compared to yesterday, too.

Andrew: So in this example, we heard a guy say that he feels like a million bucks. And his coworker says that he **looks like a million bucks** compared to yesterday. And that is because yesterday, he had a cold and he just didn't feel very good. And, Kassy, you know when you have a cold and you're run-down, you don't look very attractive usually. At least I don't.

Kassy: Yeah, you look clammy and pale and sickly.

Andrew: And tired. Yeah, you just don't look your best. But after getting a 10-hour sleep and eating a good dinner, this guy feels so much better. And so his coworker compliments him by saying you **look like a million bucks** compared to yesterday. You look so much better than you did yesterday.

Kassy: I like this example because it uses both **look like a million bucks** and feel like a million bucks in the same conversation. So this is something you could use in your own conversations. If someone says you **look like a million bucks**, maybe you could reply back by saying I feel like a million bucks. Kind of a, you know, give and take of the conversation.

Andrew: Yeah, absolutely. I totally agree that that is a very good way to respond to this compliment.

Kassy, let's go back to that example conversation for just a moment because we heard another really common way to talk about feeling better after having a cold. And the speaker in that example conversation said I think I **got this cold beat**. I think I **got this cold beat**. The spelling is B-E-A-T, OK? It's not talking about a cold beet vegetable. What does it mean here? Like if you say I **got this cold beat**, what does that mean?

Kassy: My interpretation would be when you're in the midst of a cold, it's kind of like you are fighting your own body as you try to heal. But if, you know, you fight that cold and you win, you beat it and you feel better.

Andrew: Yeah, exactly. So to beat a cold just means to recover from the cold. Your immune system takes over and destroys the cold and it's gone and you feel better, exactly.

Kassy, how about we listen to another example conversation?

Kassy: Sounds great.

Friend 1: That was such a beautiful wedding.

Friend 2: It really was. And the dinner was delicious, too. And the dance party at the reception was a blast. What a great day.

Friend 2: Yeah, and Rachel looked so beautiful in her dress.

Friend 1: And didn't Steve **look like a million bucks**, too? I'd never seen him dressed up in a suit before, but he **cleans up pretty nice**.

Friend 2: It's true. I barely recognized him.

Kassy: In this example, two friends are talking about a wedding that they had attended recently. And they mention how great the bride and groom looked. The groom **looked like a million bucks**, and the bride likewise. She **looked like a million bucks** in her beautiful wedding dress.

Andrew: Perfect. And we also heard the speaker in that example conversation say that Steve, the groom who got married, Steve **cleans up pretty nice. Cleans up pretty nice.** Kassy, what does that mean? It's a common expression, actually. Wow, you **clean up pretty nice**, or **he cleans up pretty nice**. Does that mean that he had a shower and really scrubbed his body really, really well? Like what, what does that mean?

Kassy: No. I love this expression, actually. It means that, you know, on a day-to-day basis, he might not dress fancy. He dresses casually, like jeans, a shirt. But if you **clean up really nice**, that means when you dress up you wear a fancy suit, a bow tie, slick back your hair. It makes you look really good.

Andrew: Yeah, we usually use this expression to talk about men more than women, and it's something that we say when we're a little bit shocked to see someone wearing formal clothes or more professional clothes, because we're just so used to seeing them wearing casual clothes. And then when they put some effort into their appearance and wear a suit and a tie and do their hair and shave perhaps, then we're kind of shocked at how good they look in those professional or formal clothes. And so we can say, wow, you **clean up really nice**.

Kassy: Andrew, did anybody mentioned that to you when you got married?

Andrew: Nobody. Nobody said it. So I'm guessing that means that I just look good all the time.

Kassy: I think that's a great way to interpret that.

Andrew: Moving right ahead with our lesson, Kassy. We're gonna go to the second key expression for today, which is **a sight for sore eyes, a sight for sore eyes**.

Kassy: Yes, **a sight for sore eyes, a sight for sore eyes**.

Andrew: OK, Kassy, let's break this expression down, **a sight for sore eyes**. Sight is spelled S-I-G-H-T and sore is S-O-R-E. Now this word sore, usually we use it to describe a pain or something that is hurting you. So I could say, you know, after I exercise really intensely, my legs are sore or my arms are sore. Or if I watch TV or look at my computer monitor all day long, then maybe I would say my eyes are sore. So it usually is used to talk about physical pain or discomfort.

But in this context, it's not about actually having eyes that are hurting you, it just means that something that you are looking at is very amazing, or looks really great. And we usually say **a sight for sore eyes** when we're very happy to see something after not seeing it for a long time or when something looks very attractive and very good to us.

Kassy: Let's go back to the sore example. So imagine if your legs are sore, ice would look really appealing to you, right? Because it'll lessen that feeling of pain that you have from your exercise. So something that is **a sight for sore eyes**, you know, brings you comfort or happiness or relief. It's something that you're really excited to see.

Andrew: Exactly. So, Kassy, what kind of situation would you use this expression in?

Kassy: I can't recall exactly, but I might have heard this expression this summer from my father when I got home from Korea.

Andrew: So when you went back home and visited your dad, I'm sure you haven't seen him in a long time. So when he saw you, he said, "Wow, Kassy, you're **a sight for sore eyes**." Something like that?

Kassy: Exactly. Yup. It's just like that.

Andrew: Meaning it's great to see you. I haven't seen you for such a long time and I'm so happy to see you and you look great. And so you're **a sight for sore eyes**.

Yeah, I think you know, for me, I'm a food lover. I love to eat. So if I go back to my hometown, maybe, and I visit my parents' house or my aunt's house, and there's a huge home-cooked meal on the table, wow, that would be **a sight for sore eyes** because living abroad, I don't get to eat that kind of hometown cooking every day. So that would be **a sight for sore eyes** for me.

Kassy: Yeah, I totally agree. And I felt that way when I was home this summer.

Andrew: All right. Well, why don't we take a listen to a couple of conversation examples with this expression, **a sight for sore eyes**.

Liz: Hey there, Dustin.

Dustin: Oh, Liz. Wow. Aren't you a **sight for sore eyes**? Your new haircut looks great.

Liz: You think so?

Dustin: Yeah, your new do looks so light and fresh. I love it.

Liz: Thanks. It feels light and fresh, too. This is the first time I've had a short haircut in over a decade.

Dustin: Wow. It's like a brand-new you.

Liz: Thanks.

Andrew: So in this example, we heard two friends talking to each other about Liz's new haircut. She got a brand-new haircut, a new do, a new do. Kassy, what's a do?

Kassy: A do is a funny way of saying haircut.

Andrew: Yeah, haircut or sometimes we say hairdo, right? Hairdo or a do. So this character, Liz, she got a new haircut, a new hairdo. And when her friend Dustin saw her, he said, "Wow, aren't you a **sight for sore eyes**?" And he uses this expression as a compliment, meaning you look great, right? Liz has this new haircut. She looks fresh and new and attractive. And so he compliments her by saying aren't you a **sight for sore eyes**? And, Kassy, I think this is a really common way to use this expression is almost by asking this **rhetorical question**, aren't you a **sight for sore eyes**?

Kassy: That's right.

Andrew: All right. Let's listen to one more conversation example with a **sight for sore eyes**.



Friend 1: Hey, come quick and look out the window.

Friend 2: OK. Oh, wow. Look at that sunset.

Friend 1: Isn't it beautiful?

Friend 2: Yeah, what **a sight for sore eyes** after all the rain this week.

Friend 1: Oh, wow. Look over there, there's even a rainbow, too.

Friend 2: Where?

Friend 1: Look, to the left by that mountain.

Friend 2: Oh, now I see it. Amazing. I'm gonna go grab my camera and take a picture.

Kassy: OK, in this example conversation, two people are looking outside a window at a beautiful view. And they say that it is **a sight for sore eyes**. And why is it **a sight for sore eyes**? Because it's been raining most of the week. So when they see this gorgeous sunset and rainbow, they realize, you know, how much they've missed the beautiful weather.

Andrew: Kassy, this example was inspired by my real life, because after a week of rain, I finally went outside to go running and I was shocked because there was a huge rainbow in the sky. And after living in Korea for years and years and years, I think this was the first rainbow that I've ever seen here in Seoul. So I was really shocked to see one. And it was a beautiful sight to see this massive, big rainbow across the city. It was very beautiful. And it inspired this example conversation.

Kassy: That's one thing I wanted to mention about these two expressions, **a sight for sore eyes** and **to look like a million bucks** are a little bit of an exaggeration, I think. Like, you're exaggerating your speech, but when people hear these two phrases, it often **puts a smile on their faces**, especially in my case. I don't know about you, Andrew. But these two expressions, you know, they're not super common, but when you hear them, they always make you happy to hear. And listeners should keep these expressions in their back pocket.

Andrew: Absolutely. And although we might not use them every day, they do come up from time to time and definitely for understanding English, right? To be a fluent listener, you need to know all of these expressions. And these are two that are great, as you mentioned, Kassy, to keep in your back pocket.

One last thing here before we wrap up that I wanted to mention is that we can use the first expression that we learned, **to look like a million bucks**, when we're describing people, right? And we can also use the second expression that we learned, **a sight for sore eyes**, to describe people. But we can also use **a sight for sore eyes** to describe things, like a delicious dinner or a beautiful rainbow in the sky. But, Kassy, could you use the first expression, **to look like a million bucks**, to describe things? Could you look up in the sky at a beautiful rainbow and say, wow, it **looks like a million bucks**. Would that work? Would that be appropriate?

Kassy: I guess you could, but it sounds a little awkward.

Andrew: Yeah, it doesn't sound natural to me. So, listeners, please just keep that in mind as well that the first expression, **to look like a million bucks**, is really only used to describe peoples' appearance, but **a sight for sore eyes** can describe people and things.

Well, that brings us to the end of today's episode. Thank you all for listening. To summarize, we learned about two expressions that we can use to talk about people and things that look good. Those two expressions were **to look like a million bucks** and **a sight for sore eyes**.

If you enjoyed studying with this episode and found it helpful for building your English language skills, then we would love it if you could help us and support us. And there are many different ways that you can do that. The best way is by visiting our website, Culips.com, and signing up to be a Culips member. But that's not the only way. You can also follow us on social media or leave us a five-star rating and a nice review on Apple Podcasts or wherever you listen to your podcasts, or, hey, you could even tell your friends who are learning English to check Culips out.

If you have a question, or a comment or suggestion for an upcoming episode, we'd love to hear from you. Our email address is contact@Culips.com. So that's it for us for now, but we'll be back soon with another brand-new episode and we'll talk to you then. Goodbye, everyone.

Kassy: See ya.



Detailed Explanations

To look like a million bucks

Idiom

To look like a million bucks means to look very attractive, happy, or healthy. As Andrew mentions in this episode, “It’s regarding your outward appearance, right? If your outward appearance looks very good, then you **look like a million bucks**.” You can also say someone **looks like a million dollars**.

The idiom was originally used when someone was wearing clothing that costs a lot of money. They look rich, like they have a million dollars. Now it’s used to say that someone looks very good.

Andrew and Kassy also talk about the similar expression to feel like a million bucks. Where **to look like a million bucks** is about the outward appearance, to feel like a million bucks is about the inner state. Someone who feels like a million bucks is very happy, confident, and positive.

Here are a couple more examples with **to look like a million bucks**:

Yumiko: OK, be honest. What do you think of this outfit? I saw it on the mannequin and I just had to have it, but I’m not sure if it actually looks good on me.

Julie: Whoa, girl! You look amazing! Like, oh my goodness. **You look like a million bucks** in that dress!

Yumiko: Really? You really think so?

Julie: Heck ya, girl! You better wear that to the big event this weekend.

Yumiko: That was my plan, yeah. OK! Excellent. I’m so glad I bought this!

Emelia: Hey! Long time no see!

Russell: Hi! What’s it been, a year since we were in the office?

Emelia: Sounds about right. Looks like working from home treated you well. You **look like a million bucks**.

Russell: Thanks. Yeah, I feel good. Being able to take walks during the day and not having the commute did wonders!

A sight for sore eyes

Idiom

A sight for sore eyes is a way of saying that you're happy to see someone or of telling someone that they look good. It can also be used to say you're happy to see something. When it's used in the sense of being happy to see someone or something, it also has a sense of relief attached to it, as in you were worried you wouldn't see that person or thing at that moment.

In this episode, Kassy mentions that her father said this to her when she visited. This could mean that he was both very happy and relieved to see her again. Andrew talks about how he feels home-cooked meals are **a sight for sore eyes**. So he feels very happy when he gets to eat a home-cooked meal.

Here are a couple more examples with **a sight for sore eyes**:

Darren: Whoa, this weekend was crazy, right? How were there so many customers?

Ava: I don't know. Maybe there was a big show or something that everyone but us knew about?

Darren: There must have been! I tell you, when the night shift showed up to take over, I nearly fainted with relief.

Ava: Same here! They were **a sight for sore eyes**, for sure.

Melissa: Good morning! I found this last night after I closed. Is it yours?

Ellie-May: My phone! Oh, sweet little treasure, you are **a sight for sore eyes**. I was looking everywhere for it last night. Where was it?

Melissa: Oh, good, I'm glad I recognized the jewelled case. I found it on the floor in the cloakroom.

Ellie-May: I thought for sure I lost it on the way home. Thank you so much for picking it up.

Got this [thing] beat

Slang

If you've **got this [thing] beat**, it means you've overcome that thing. You defeated it or did better than it in a competition. It is used most often when speaking of illnesses. In one of the example conversations in this episode, coworker 2 says, "I **got this cold beat**." This means he is feeling better and is overcoming the cold.

You can also use this slang term for anything that might require a lot of effort or work. This includes work, games, and illnesses. For example, say that you're almost finished working on a project that was really difficult. When someone asks how it's going, you could tell them, "I've almost **got this beat**" or "I've almost **got this project beat**."

This American English slang expression can be confusing, since there are many slang phrases that use the word beat.

Here are a couple more examples with **got this [thing] beat**:

Lei: OK, dude, I'm here. What do you need?

Jackson: Buddy ... I've been up for almost 24 hours straight working on this project. I need you to look at it and tell me what I'm missing, because I just know I'm missing something! But, man, I just can't figure it out.

Lei: OK, OK. Give me a second to read this through.

Jackson: And?

Lei: Dude! You've **got this project beat**, man. You're just missing a slide there and the reference graphic on this page here. You see?

Jackson: Yes! That's it. Thanks, man.

Mira: I'm surprised you came in today. You weren't looking so good yesterday.

Yoshiko: Oh, I'm feeling a lot better. I think it was a stomach bug or something, but I've **got it beat now**.

Mira: Good, I'm glad to hear that, especially since I couldn't find anyone to take your shift.



To clean up pretty nice/well

Phrase

To clean up pretty nice/well is used to compliment someone who has made an effort on their appearance when they don't usually. As a result, that person looks really good. For example, if someone who often wears sweatpants or casual wear decides to get dressed up in a suit or dress, the end result is that they look really good. You could say that **they clean up pretty well**.

You can also use this to compliment someone's work on a restoration or cleaning project. For example, if your friend bought an old, broken car and spent a lot of effort cleaning and fixing it, you might tell your friend that the car **cleaned up pretty well**.

You can also say **clean up good**, **clean up well**, or **clean up nicely**.

Here are a couple more examples with **to clean up pretty nice/well**:

Haleema: Basma's wedding was so beautiful! I'm so glad we decided to go.

Rafiq: It was a really nice wedding. And it was great to see everyone from school again.

Haleema: Right? I haven't seen any of them in any sort of formal setting before.

Rafiq: I haven't either. Everyone **cleaned up really well**.

Haleema: I was just going to say! Everyone looked so lovely! I took so many pictures, just so I could remember when we were all dressed up for once.

Jeremy: Leah! Are you ready? We must leave, like, now if we're going to be there in time for cocktails!

Leah: Yeah, yeah! I'm coming now. Not sure if I did this mascara thing right ... I haven't used it before.

Jeremy: Whoa.

Leah: Is that a good whoa?

Jeremy: It's a great whoa! My love, you **clean up good**.

Leah: Thank you, thank you. Now, didn't you say we have to go?

Rhetorical question

Noun

A **rhetorical question** is a question asked for dramatic effect or to make a point. The person asking doesn't actually want an answer. They're highlighting or emphasizing something with their question. The purpose of a **rhetorical question** can be to start a conversation, to insult someone, to show what the speaker thinks, or to challenge someone.

English has a some common **rhetorical questions**. Andrew mentions one in this episode: aren't you a sight for sore eyes? Here are a few other examples:

- "Can't you do anything right?": This is an insult and insinuates the listener's lack of ability.
- "What have they ever done for us?": This is a challenge and asserts that nothing was ever done.
- "Who knew?": This is an exclamation and sarcasm and implies that the statement should be obvious.
- "Why do these things always happen to me?": This is an exclamation when someone is frustrated that bad things are happening.

Here's one more example with **rhetorical question**:

Young-Hee: So, we've taken inventory, closed the machines down, and –

Elaine: Oh, you dropped your pen!

Young-Hee: What? Oh, damn. That's, like, the tenth time today! But who's counting?

Elaine: Sounds like you are.

Young-Hee: Shush, you, that was a **rhetorical question**.

To put a smile on [one's] face

Idiom

To put a smile on [one's] face means to make someone happy. The idiom means to literally make someone smile. You can also say **bring a smile to someone's face** or **bring a smile to someone's lips**.

Kassy says that when people hear today's Catch Word expressions, it "often **puts a smile on their faces**, especially in my case." This means that telling someone they look like a million bucks or that they are a sight for sore eyes makes them happy. It makes them smile.

Here are a couple more examples with **to put a smile on [one's] face**:

Chin: What are you planning over there?

Wesley: What? This? Nothing. Just a birthday party for my dad.

Chin: Oh? Is it one of the big ones?

Wesley: Yeah, he's turning 60. I'm trying to figure out how to make it special, but I'm coming up empty on good ideas.

Chin: Whatever you do, I'm sure it'll **put a huge smile on his face**. He'll love getting spoiled by his only son.

Wesley: Thanks, man. I know he'll love whatever I do, which is why I gotta make it extra special, you know? Ugh. Time to ask the internet for ideas.

Tanya: Have you seen Andy around lately?

Pascale: Yeah, he's in every day, like the rest of us. Why?

Tanya: Have you noticed his mood? He seems down to me, like something's bothering him.

Pascale: Yeah, I suppose so. I mean, he's usually cheerier and more social. Yeah, now that you mention it, he's been quiet lately.

Tanya: I'm going to go see if I can't find out what's wrong and figure out how to **put a smile back on his lips**.

Pascale: I'll help!

Quiz

- 1. Your friend tells you they've got this thing beat. What does that mean?**
 - a) they've tired out the thing
 - b) they've drummed the thing
 - c) they've harmed the thing
 - d) they've overcome the thing

- 2. What might you say to someone you haven't seen in a while to show you're excited and relieved to see them?**
 - a) you're a sight for easy eyes
 - b) you're a sight for tired eyes
 - c) you're a sight for sore eyes
 - d) you're a sight for closed eyes

- 3. What does it mean to put a smile on someone's face?**
 - a) to make someone sad
 - b) to make someone happy
 - c) to make someone angry
 - d) to make someone tired

- 4. Which of the following could you say to let your significant other know they look very attractive?**
 - a) you look like a million bucks
 - b) you smell like a million bucks
 - c) you look like a million ducks
 - d) you look like a million trucks

- 5. What is it called when someone asks a question but doesn't expect an answer?**
 - a) a difficult question
 - b) a rhetorical answer
 - c) a rhetorical question
 - d) a funny question

Writing and Discussion Questions

1. Describe a time when you looked or felt like a million bucks.
2. Which of your friends would you consider a sight for sore eyes and why?
3. What was the last thing you overcame where you could have said “I’ve got this beat”?
4. Who in your life cleans up well and why?
5. What do you do to put a smile on someone’s face?

Quiz Answers

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

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