

## Catch Word #254 – In for a rude awakening

### Episode description

Would you like to have a bombshell dropped on you? That sounds pretty bad, but don't worry, our hosts Andrew and Suzanne are here to explain expressions you can use when you're shocked at hearing big news. In this Catch Word episode, the two main expressions are to drop a bombshell and a rude awakening. Do you think you know what they mean? Give the episode a listen and find out!

With the Catch Word series, Culips works hard to provide intermediate and advanced English language learners with fun and interesting content so they can improve their English fluency.

### Fun fact

One of the main expressions from this episode is a rude awakening. Although unrelated to this expression, you might want to check out the Academy Award–nominated 1990 movie called *Awakenings*, starring Robert De Niro and Robert Williams. It's a touching movie about a doctor's relationships while helping his catatonic patients. If you see it, tell us what you think!

### Expressions included in the study guide

- To drop a bombshell
- To be set for life
- Across town
- A rude awakening
- A hard pill to swallow
- Out of [one's] league



---

## 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, everyone, my name is Andrew.

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

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

Welcome back to Culips, everyone. This is Catch Word, the series for intermediate and advanced English learners where we teach you idioms or phrasal verbs or expressions that will help improve your English listening and speaking.

Now, today's episode is all about shocking news. And we're going to teach you a couple of expressions you can use when talking about surprising or shocking situations. And to help me teach this lesson, I'm joined by my cohost, Suzanne. Hey there, Suzanne.

**Suzanne:** Hey, Andrew. Hey, everyone. We're going to kick this episode off with a shout-out to one of our listeners from Russia, Marina Antonova, who left us a great review and five-star rating on Apple Podcasts. Marina wrote, "Thank you for the lucid explanations and great examples. All the vocabulary I learn with you sticks in my mind and stays. Culips is undoubtedly worth listening to."

**Andrew:** Wow, an amazing review, Suzanne.

**Suzanne:** Yeah. Thank you, Marina.

**Andrew:** Yes, thank you so much for that awesome review, Marina, and we're happy to hear that you're able to improve your English with us. Listeners, if you haven't already, please support us by following and subscribing to Culips on your favourite podcast service. And if you have the time, it would be awesome if you could follow Marina's lead and leave us a short review and five-star rating, because that would help other English learners from around the world find and connect with Culips.

**Suzanne:** And finally, guys, don't forget that there is a full transcript and study guide for this episode offered to all Culips members on our website at [Culips.com](http://Culips.com). So becoming a Culips member is a really great way to support Culips and improve your English fluency at the same time. And it's our recommended way to learn with us. To find out all the details and sign up, just visit [Culips.com](http://Culips.com).

**Andrew:** OK, Suzanne, so we hinted at the start of the episode that the two expressions that we're going to teach everyone today are about shocking news and shocking situations and delivering shocking news to other people. And I think that's the best way to characterize our first expression is that we use it when we're delivering shocking news to someone or when someone has delivered and told us some piece of shocking news. So this first expression is **to drop a bombshell. To drop a bombshell**. And it's almost like you can visualize it. Like if you think of an airplane dropping a bomb from the airplane and then the bomb hits the ground and it explodes, right? It does a lot of damage and it makes just a huge explosion and there's a huge impact, right? It's something that makes a huge impact. So that is kind of the visual that I have in my head when I think of someone **dropping a bombshell**. Suzanne, do you have a similar image in mind?

**Suzanne:** Yeah, yeah. It's like pulling the rug out from underneath you. Like you're standing on a rug or a carpet and someone just yanks it right out from under you. It's that feeling of, like, what? Wait, nothing is stable. Nothing is for sure.

**Andrew:** Right. So then our dictionary definition of this expression is that when someone **drops a bombshell**, it means that they make a very surprising or unexpected announcement. And usually one that's negative, right? You wouldn't really say, like, "Suzanne, brace yourself. I'm going to **drop a bombshell** on you." And then you go, "Oh, Andrew, OK. Oh my god, what? Is everything OK?" "Yeah, I just got a new promotion at my job." Like, "I'm a manager now," right? You wouldn't, you wouldn't say, like, "Oh, Andrew **dropped a bombshell**" in that situation, because that's a good announcement. That's good news. It might be shocking, but it's good news. So we couldn't use it in that kind of situation. But, Suzanne, instead if I were to say, "I got fired today." You go, "Wow, that, you really **dropped a bombshell** on me. I wasn't expecting you to say that kind of thing," right? That would be a more appropriate situation to use this expression.

**Suzanne:** Yes. Reality has, has shifted, right? Because you've **dropped this bomb** on the other person.

**Andrew:** Suzanne, I have a trivia question for you. And don't feel bad if you don't know the answer, because I think this is a tough question. But I googled this phrase, **dropping a bombshell**, and there was one story that came up again and again and again. It's kind of a current event story from a little while ago, like within the last year or so, this event happened. And I guess it was such a bombshell, such a perfect example of using this expression, that all of the writers had to use it when they were writing their news articles. So could you guess, the current event, situation, or story that would cause writers from around the world to use this expression when writing up their news articles? I'll give you a hint: it took place in the UK.

**Suzanne:** Oh, was it Meghan and Harry?

**Andrew:** Exactly. So when Harry and Meghan made their announcement to the Queen that they wanted to leave the royal family, this was seen as a huge bombshell, like, such a shocking announcement. Why would you want to leave the royal family, right? Like, you've got it made, you're **set for life**. But that's what they decided to do. So that was a bombshell.

**Suzanne:** I probably would want to, too, but that's a whole different podcast episode, Andrew.

**Andrew:** Yeah, I can't say that I blame them. But we'll save that for a different episode.

All right, Suzanne, so why don't we get into a couple of examples with this expression, **to drop a bombshell**, and we'll see how we can use it in a conversational context.

**Suzanne:** Cool.

**Friend 1:** Hey, how was work today?

**Friend 2:** It was crazy. My boss **dropped a bombshell** on us.

**Friend 1:** Is he retiring or something?

**Friend 2:** No. I mean, I wish he was, but no. Instead, he said that the office is relocating **across town**.

**Friend 1:** Really? To the west side?

**Friend 2:** Yeah, to the west side.

**Friend 1:** That's pretty far away. What are you gonna do? I mean, that'll take you, like, 2 hours every day to commute.

**Friend 2:** I know, I was worried about that, too. But here's where the awesome part comes in. Anyone who wants to can choose to work from home. So my commutes going to be cut down to like, zero in a few weeks.

**Friend 1:** Wow, that's really great news.

**Andrew:** So in this example, we heard two friends talking and one of them had a **bombshell dropped** on him at work. And the bombshell was this big announcement from his company that the company's headquarters, their office, will be relocating **across town**. So they're going to move from one area of the town to the other side. And, Suzanne, I think some people might get a little bit confused when we say town here, like, you could say **across town** and you'd be talking about a huge city like Los Angeles or New York.

**Suzanne:** Or Houston. Houston is really spread out. And, like, in order to get from just even halfway through the city, sometimes it's, like, 45 minutes. It's big.

**Andrew:** Right. So we can use, like, **across town** or the other side of town, it doesn't mean that we're talking about a small town. It's just the word that we use to mean the other side of the city or the town. So what I'm trying to say here is that because the office is relocating **across town**, it doesn't mean that it might just be, like, a 10-minute difference in commute. In fact, it's really far and it will take him 2 hours every day to commute to this new office. So that's a shocking announcement. And he would have been pretty disappointed if he had to commute every day for that amount of time. However, there is a bigger bombshell on top of that original bombshell, and that is that he has the option to work from home going forward. So because the office is relocating, I guess his company has joined in with what so many other companies around the world are doing these days, and that is to offer their employees a work from home option. So yeah, that was a perfect kind of way that we could use bombshell to talk about a surprising or shocking announcement.

So we have one more example here. Why don't we take a listen to it now?

**Friend 1:** So James sure **dropped a bombshell** the other day, didn't he?

**Friend 2:** Yeah, I had no idea he was thinking about dropping out.

**Friend 1:** I guess it was an easy decision to make after that job offer.

**Friend 2:** True, if someone offered me a cushy job with a big salary, I'd probably dropped out of college too.

**Suzanne:** Wow. Don't you want to know what job he was offered, Andrew?

**Andrew:** I do. I would have loved a cushy job with a big salary.

**Suzanne:** Yeah, right out of school.

**Andrew:** Right out of school. Yeah, a cushy job means a very comfortable job.

**Suzanne:** Yeah, good money, benefits.

**Andrew:** Just like a cushion is very soft and comfortable to sit on. A cushy job is one, like you said, Suzanne, one with good benefits and good salary. So I guess, in this example, the two students were having a conversation about their friend James. And what was that **bombshell that James dropped**?

**Suzanne:** Yeah. So he must have, when he was speaking with these two friends, said that he was going to drop out of college, drop out of university, and go right into this position, the job he was offered. And I'm sure that's really shocking to his classmates.

**Andrew:** Yeah, it's not usually what most people do, right? Most people graduate and then get a job. But instead, he was going to drop out and start working right away because he had gotten this good job offer. So that's why we could say it was a bombshell. And the nuance here is that I kind of feel like the classmates are disappointed or surprised in some way, right? It's not like, oh, it's such good news. It's more like, ah, it's good news for him, but at the same time, like, it's kind of shocking and sad to see him go.

**Suzanne:** Totally. I think when you're in a, you know, a kind of a cohort that is moving in the same direction, with the same hopes and dreams and trajectory and one of you veers off of that path, it's shocking and destabilizing. And it can make you feel like, hmm, should I be questioning my path? You know?

**Andrew:** Totally.

**Suzanne:** So I think that's probably how they felt.

**Andrew:** Exactly, exactly. I couldn't agree more.

Well, Suzanne, we have another expression to teach in this episode. So why don't we take a look at the second key expression for today, which is **a rude awakening, a rude awakening**. And I'll just break this down, because I know when people are listening and not following with the transcript, sometimes it can be hard to know exactly how these words are spelled. So we have A, and then new word, second word, rude, R-U-D-E, and then third word is awakening, A-W-A-K-E-N-I-N-G. And awakening means like kind of waking up, like what we do in the morning after we finished sleeping, right? We wake up, it's just the noun form of that verb. To wake up is an awakening.

**Suzanne:** Yeah, the act of waking up.

**Andrew:** The act of waking up. Now, to be honest, we don't really use this word outside of this expression too much. I don't find myself saying the word awakening very often at all. But in the context of this idiom, it is pretty common. So Sue, could you break it down? What, what does it mean? What is **a rude awakening**?

**Suzanne:** The dictionary definition is suddenly learning about some surprising, shocking, or unpleasant fact or truth. And, you know, if you really think about it, if you think of awakening is like waking up in the morning. It's, like, you wake up to something suddenly being really unpleasant, right? Like, I can compare it to, you know, when, in the middle of the night, I'm woken up by sounds of my dog maybe throwing up or whatever or, like, you know, when I wake up and I'm like, oh no, and I have this mess to clean up. And it's terrible. I mean, not to be gross. I don't want to, like, gross people out about, you know, my dog and his food coming up the other direction. But definitely, it's not a pleasant way to be woken up.

I'm being kind of literal here and saying, I'm literally waking up to this unpleasantness. But when you have **a rude awakening**, when you use that expression, it's more something that can happen during the day while you are quote, unquote awake. But it's, this unpleasant thing sort of shakes you and shocks you and wakes you up to a new reality that is not pleasant.

**Andrew:** I think we use this expression a lot when we have a bias or an understanding about how the world works and then that bias is shattered in a very shocking way. And another expression, another idiomatic expression that we use is that it's **a hard pill to swallow**. It's kind of hard to accept that what you thought was true is not actually true.

And I have a kind of example here from my real life that I think can illustrate **a rude awakening** that I had one time. And that was when I first moved to Korea. Actually, it was my second year in Korea and I had to attend a teacher training workshop thing for different English teachers in Korea. And part of that workshop was some Korean language training. And so they asked the teachers to sign up for either a beginner, intermediate, or advanced level course. And I didn't know which level of course I should select. I had only been studying Korean for a year at that time. But the staff at the workshop said, "Well, can you understand this sentence? If you can understand this sentence, then you're advanced." So I looked at the sentence, and I could understand it, and they said, "OK, go to the advanced class."

So, at that time, I thought, wow, OK, I'm an advanced student. I felt pretty good about myself. And then when I got to the course and I had to do the class, all of the other students were Korean Americans or Korean Canadians. And they were, like, fluent in Korean and totally conversational. And I was the only one that was like, a really low-level beginner student, and I felt so out of place and awkward, like, why did they recommend that I go to the advanced level class, I'm obviously still a beginner. So that was kind of **a rude awakening** for me. For a little bit there, at least, my ego kind of blew up. I was, like, oh, I'm an advanced student, I can understand the sentence. OK, I meet the requirements of an advanced level class. And then I got there and was faced with the truth that this was not actually true. And that was a bit of **a rude awakening** for me. And I think I've been more humble with my Korean abilities ever since that day, many years ago.

**Suzanne:** I really relate to that kind of thing where you're, like, where am I? I'm not in the right place.

**Andrew:** I don't belong here, yes.



**Suzanne:** Totally. I actually have a quick story, too. I love volleyball and beach volleyball. And I was, like, one summer, I was doing it all the time, all the time. I was getting pretty good. Like, I was really getting good at it. And I really, like, I was excited by it. And it was really becoming like my sport here for a while. And then I, my friend said that I should just try out for the volleyball team because they are in a good competitive league here. And they're a good team. So I called them, I emailed them. I made an appointment, I went to their practice and their tryouts, and it was **a rude awakening**, Andrew.

**Andrew:** Oh no.

**Suzanne:** I was like, oh, gosh, what did I do? Why? Oh, Sue, just stick to the recreational league. You are way **out of your league** here. This is way too hard. And all of the people were, like, 19 years old, 20. I was, like, 40, you know, 41. It was humbling.

**Andrew:** Humbling, yeah. And sometimes **a rude awakening** does lead to humbling like it did for both you and I, right? I was more humble about my language skills, and you were more humble about your volleyball skills after. In that way, sometimes **rude awakenings** are good, because they opened our eyes to a wider view of the world and they kind of opened our minds that way.

**Suzanne:** Totally. Yes.

**Andrew:** So why don't we listen to some examples with this expression, and we'll see how we can use it in a conversation setting. So let's take a listen to example #1 now.

**Coworker 1:** Ah, my head hurts. Can we take a break soon or something?

**Coworker 2:** Yeah, we can take ten, but then we have to get back to work.

**Coworker 1:** Seriously? I thought we were almost finished.

**Coworker 2:** You're joking, right? If you think we're almost finished, then you're in for **a rude awakening**. We've barely even started this project.

**Coworker 1:** Really? I thought we just need to finish up the presentation file and then we're done, no?

**Coworker 2:** Wrong. Then we need to write up the report and complete the sales projections. We're going to be here for quite a while longer.



**Andrew:** So in this example, we hear two coworkers talking and one of the coworkers wants to take a break. He said his head hurts. Maybe he's been looking at his computer monitor for a long time or something like that. And he just wants to take a break. And he is happy that they're almost finished with the project, or so he thought. But then his coworker informs him that, in fact, they are not anywhere near done. And they still have a lot of work to do. And the way that she communicates this to him is that she says, "If you think we're almost finished, then you're in for **a rude awakening**." Which means, like, if you think we're finished, then I have some shocking news for you. In fact, we're not close to finishing at all.

And, Suzanne, I think this is a really, really good sentence pattern for our listeners to know because it's a really common way that we use this expression is to be in for **a rude awakening**. Like, maybe we could describe, you know, some kind of arrogant high school student who is just acting rude. And, you know, he's really showing off and bragging about himself. And you can just see in the future, like, if he keeps acting like this, he's going to get into trouble or something bad will happen to him and that will be kind of shocking moment for him. So we could say, you know, if this kid keeps up like this, he's in for **a rude awakening**, like something bad is gonna happen to him in the future. And he'll be shocked when, you know, he can't act this way forever.

**Suzanne:** Exactly. Or, like, a student who's slacking off, right? Who is not doing any work, acting lazy. And you're, like, if you think that this behaviour is going to be OK in the outside world, then you're in for **a rude awakening**, right? It's like when you get out there, you're going to be shocked by how much harder you may have to work.

**Andrew:** It's funny that we both gave examples of students. It makes me think that maybe this is an expression that teachers use a lot when talking to their students. Like, you're in for **a rude awakening** in the future when you graduate from this school when the harsh realities of the world are right upon you, something like that.

**Suzanne:** I think I say that to a lot of my actors, because, you know, it's easy to play and have fun and think that all is well in acting school. But when you get out there in the real world, it's a lot harder. And so maybe that is something I have said to my acting students.

**Andrew:** And we have one final example for this episode. So let's check it out now.

**Suzanne:** Yeah, let's take a listen.

**Friend 1:** So how's your new computer? Are you loving it or what?

**Friend 2:** Yeah, it's awesome. I finally had the chance to play some new games on it.

**Friend 1:** Oh, that's so great. How was it?

**Friend 2:** Well I haven't played online for ages. So it was a bit of **a rude awakening** to play online again.

**Friend 1:** Did you get your butt kicked?

**Friend 2:** Yeah, I pretty much got killed as soon as I started playing. I guess I'm not as good as I used to be.

**Friend 1:** Keep trying.

**Andrew:** So, Sue, what happened in this example, do you want to break it down for us?

**Suzanne:** Yes. So one friend got a new computer. And maybe back in the day, this person was really good at online video game play. But after getting a new computer, maybe it's really fast and great for online gaming, they finally got back into it, and found out that they're maybe a little rusty or not in shape, we should say, right? Not in good shape with their online gaming. So it was a bit of **a rude awakening** for this person. You know, really, oh yeah, got my new computer, I used to be so awesome at this game. Got back in. Yeah, nope. I got work to do, you know? So it was **a rude awakening**.

**Andrew:** This example was taken from my real life when I played some video games recently with some friends, a game that I used to play often, back when I played computer games when I was, like, a high school student and my first few years of university I played computer games a lot. Haven't played for a long time, sat down to play some games with some friends recently, and just totally sucked and died right away and just wasn't competitive at all. And it was kind of like **a rude awakening** because for some reason, in my head, I thought that I would still be good even after not playing for, like, 15 or 20 years. So, yeah, I learned that I'm not good at video games anymore, although I used to be at one time in the past.

**Suzanne:** All right, well, just keep it up. You can do it, Andrew.

**Andrew:** So, everyone, that brings us to the end of today's lesson and this episode, and we hope that you enjoyed it and were able to learn some useful expressions that you can use in your future English speaking and that you'll also be able to understand when you hear them used in the movies and the music that you listen to in the future.

If you enjoy Culips, and you like listening to us, and you find us helpful for improving your English, then we'd love it if you could support us. There are many different ways that you can do that. The best way is to sign up and become a member on our website, Culips.com. But that's not the only way. You could also tell your friends who are learning English to check Culips out, you could follow us on social media, like Instagram or YouTube, or you could leave us a five-star rating and a nice review and subscribe to us on your favourite podcast app.

**Suzanne:** And we love hearing from you. So if you have any questions or ideas for future episodes, you can always contact us at [contact@Culips.com](mailto:contact@Culips.com).

**Andrew:** We'll be back soon with another brand-new episode and we'll talk to you then. Goodbye, everyone.

**Suzanne:** Bye.

## Detailed Explanations

### To drop a bombshell

#### Idiom

The first main expression studied in this episode is **to drop a bombshell**. **To drop a bombshell** means to make a surprising or shocking announcement. The announcement is so large and shocking that you might feel as if a bomb exploded near you.

There are many situations where you can use **to drop a bombshell**. Telling a friend that you got fired from your job, telling your parents that you are expecting a baby, or telling your wife that you won the lottery are all examples of telling shocking news.

Here are a couple more examples with **to drop a bombshell**:

**Kim:** How was lunch with your daughter?

**Harriet:** It was interesting. Actually, she **dropped a huge bombshell** on us.

**Kim:** Oh no. What happened?

**Harriet:** Nothing bad. It's just that ... She's expecting triplets.

**Kim:** She's pregnant with three babies? That's amazing!

**Harriet:** I know. But I can't help but think how difficult life is going to be for her. And for me, the grandma!

**Nelly:** Are you nervous about the meeting tomorrow?

**Sheldon:** Do you think I should be? Why do you look nervous?

**Nelly:** I heard the boss is going **to drop a bombshell** on us.

**Sheldon:** Really? Like what?

**Nelly:** I don't know, but I have a feeling it's going to change the way we do business.

**Sheldon:** I see. Well, thanks for telling me. I'll be better prepared for the impact.

## To be set for life

### Idiom

Talking about British royals Harry and Meghan leaving the royal family, Andrew wonders why they would choose to do that since they were already **set for life**. **To be set for life** means you are financially secure for the rest of your life. If Harry and Meghan continued being a part of the royal family and assumed their royal duties, they likely would have been financially secure for the rest of their lives.

Think of a professional athlete who signs a multimillion-dollar contract. We like to think they are **set for life**, because they will be making more money in a year than most people earn in a lifetime. It's possible that they will spend or lose all their money, but that doesn't change how people use **to be set for life** or how people think of very rich people.

Here are a couple more examples with **to be set for life**:

**Brady:** Do you have plans after graduating from university?

**Stewart:** Yes. I'm working on a start-up company in tech.

**Brady:** That's cool. What's your goal with that?

**Stewart:** The same as everyone else, of course! Eventually I want to sell it to a giant technological firm for millions and millions of dollars. Then I'll be **set for life**.

**Trish:** Are you buying lottery tickets again?

**Kat:** Why not? You can't win if you don't buy a ticket.

**Trish:** I know. But even if you win, it might not be a good thing for you. My uncle won the lottery and thought he was **set for life**. So he started spending money like crazy and making all kinds of terrible investments.

**Kat:** And what's the end of that story?

**Trish:** The poor guy. He ran out of money and had to go back to his old job.

## Across town Phrase

In the first example dialogue from this episode, two friends talk about how their office will be relocated **across town**. This does not mean they live in a small town or that the office will be relocated exactly at the opposite end of where they live. In this sense, **across town** means relatively far away. You have to cross a lot of the city to get **across town**. You can also say **on the other side of town**.

Informally, you can use the word town when talking about a city. For instance, it is common for New Yorkers to refer to New York as a nice town, even though it is one of the largest metropolises in the world. It is also common for people to refer to a nice neighbourhood as a nice part of town.

Here are a couple more examples with **across town**:

**Tony:** How are your dancing lessons going?

**Maggie:** The lessons themselves are amazing. But ...

**Tony:** But what?

**Maggie:** But it's a pain to get to them. I have to drive **across town** through traffic twice a week. I don't know if I'm going to continue attending class, because it's just too far.

**Tony:** I'm sure there are good dance studios near here. Open your laptop. Let's do some research.

**Linda:** Oh, wow, this chicken is so good. Where did you buy it?

**Victor:** It's from a Lebanese market. It's **on the other side of town**, but it's well worth the trip.

**Linda:** Would you mind picking me up some the next time you go?

**Victor:** Sure. Or better yet, how about we go together?

## A rude awakening

### Phrase

The second key expression studied in this episode is **a rude awakening**. **A rude awakening** is when you suddenly become aware of some kind of new and unpleasant fact. This can be something very serious, such as finding out the bank lost all your money, or something simple, like Suzanne finding out she wasn't as good at volleyball as she thought.

Our hosts mention that **a rude awakening** can be a humbling experience. However, that depends on the kind of self-reflection you do afterward.

Also, it is common to say to be in for **a rude awakening**. This means that you should expect some future reality that you might not like. This phrase serves as a kind of warning.

Here are a couple more examples with **a rude awakening**:

**Randy:** How did your race go?

**Finn:** Oh boy. Not well. I finished 154th.

**Randy:** Did you tell me before the race that you were going to finish in the top three?

**Finn:** Yeah. I guess I didn't realize the **rude awakening** that was waiting for me on the track.

**Sako:** Are you nervous about going to your new school? The competition for grades over there is fierce.

**Will:** I'm not worried. I've always been head of my class.

**Sako:** I have a feeling that you're in for **a rude awakening**, my friend. Everyone in that school was head of their class, too. Everyone there is extremely bright.

**Will:** I know. I guess we'll have to wait and see how well I succeed.



## A hard pill to swallow

### Idiom

In this episode, Andrew mentions another expression that is similar to a rude awakening. He says a rude awakening can be **a hard pill to swallow**. **A hard pill to swallow** is used when you have a negative situation that is difficult to accept. It was **a hard pill to swallow** for Andrew to find out he wasn't as good in Korean as he thought.

Think of an actual pill containing medicine. Some of those pills can be difficult to swallow, even if you wash it down with water. The expression **a hard pill to swallow** is similar, since it expresses that you have difficulty accepting a situation that is not good, such as losing your job or dealing with the death of a loved one.

A common variation on this expression is **a tough pill to swallow**.

Here are a couple more examples with **a hard pill to swallow**:

**Laila:** How did Sheila's job interview go? Did she get the job?

**Howard:** No, she didn't. She said the interview went well, but the problem was her qualifications. Even though she has a bachelor's degree and a master's degree, most of the other candidates had PhDs.

**Laila:** Even with her hard-earned master's, she still couldn't get hired? That must have been **a hard pill to swallow**.

**Howard:** It was. But she's still out there, going to interviews. Let's hope she's successful with one of them.

**Sinead:** Are you excited about the upcoming holidays?

**Malcolm:** Kind of.

**Sinead:** What's the matter?

**Malcolm:** Because I just moved away, it's going to be the first time I'm spending the holidays without my family. I think it's going to be **a hard pill to swallow**.

**Sinead:** Maybe. But you know, you're always invited to come over to my place for Christmas and New Year's.

**Malcolm:** That's kind of you. Thanks.

## Out of [one's] league

### Idiom

In this episode, Suzanne talks about trying out for a competitive volleyball league and realizing that the players were too strong for her. She admits that she was **out of her league**. **To be out of [one's] league** is to not have the skills to do well in a given situation. In Suzanne's case, she uses **out of [one's] league** both literally and figuratively.

**Out of [one's] league** is not only used when talking about sports. It's about the level of your talent. For example, you might know something about cars, but you would be **out of your league** if someone asked you to fix their car engine.

Here are a couple more examples with **out of [one's] league**:

**Lucy:** Did Ryan enjoy his first soccer match with his new team?

**Brianna:** He did. But it wasn't easy.

**Lucy:** What do you mean? Did something bad happen?

**Brianna:** No, not at all. It's just that it's clear that he's way **out of his league**. Everyone is bigger and faster than him.

**Lucy:** But if he's enjoying himself, it's not all bad, right?

**Brianna:** That's right. So long as he's still having fun, he'll continue playing.

**Craig:** Aren't you pretty good with computers?

**Ahmed:** I'm all right.

**Craig:** Can you help me with something?

**Ahmed:** OK.

**Craig:** Do you see this? How do I fix it?

**Ahmed:** Oh. Actually, this is way **out of my league**. I think you should bring your laptop to a computer shop. I think I would just make things worse.

## Quiz

**1. What does it mean to be set for life?**

- a) you don't have to worry about financial matters
- b) you don't have to set your alarm clock anymore
- c) you have an unbreakable plan for your future
- d) you have no idea what the future holds

**2. If you are out of your league, you are \_\_\_\_\_.**

- a) the best
- b) not skilled enough

**3. If your friend drops a bombshell on you, how do you feel?**

- a) happy
- b) shocked
- c) angry
- d) calm

**4. True or false? The expression across town can refer to a town or a city, regardless of size.**

- a) true
- b) false

**5. What does it mean if something is a hard pill to swallow?**

- a) it tastes bad
- b) you need water to swallow it
- c) it is difficult to accept
- d) the medicine doesn't taste good

---

## Writing and Discussion Questions

1. When was the last time someone dropped a bombshell on you?
2. What would it take for you to be set for life?
3. What is something you really don't mind going across town to buy?
4. When is the last time you felt out of your league?
5. Talk about a time when you had a rude awakening. What were your expectations, and what actually happened?

## Quiz Answers

1. a   2. b   3. b   4. a   5. c

### Episode credits

Hosts: Andrew Bates and Suzanne Cerreta

Music: *Something Elated* by Broke For Free

Episode preparation/research: Andrew Bates

Audio editor: Kevin Moorehouse

Transcriptionist: Heather Bates

Study guide writer: Matty Warnock

English editor: Stephanie MacLean

Business manager: Tsuyoshi Kaneshima

Image: Colton Sturgeon (Unsplash.com)