

Catch Word #267 – Burst your bubble

AD-FREE

Episode description

Nobody likes to be disappointed, but it happens to all of us at some point of our life, so it's good to know how to talk about it. In this episode, Andrew and Kassy teach you two useful expressions used when talking about disappointing someone.

Catch Word is the Culips vocabulary series designed for intermediate and advanced English learners. With this series you'll learn common everyday idioms and expressions and improve your listening and speaking skills.

Fun fact

According to the Guinness World Records, Gary Pearlman from the USA set a world record for the largest outdoor free floating soap bubble on July 20, 2015. That bubble had a volume of 96.27 m³!

Expressions included in the study guide

- To burst [someone's] bubble
- To dash [someone's] hopes
- Tongue-in-cheek
- To be left on read
- To get over [something/someone]
- Worst-case scenario



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: Catch Word episode 267. Burst your bubble. Featuring Andrew and Kassy.

In this lesson, Kassy and I are going to teach you about two idiomatic expressions that English speakers use to talk about disappointing people. The expressions are, **to burst your bubble** and **to dash your hopes**. Let's get started with the lesson.

Kassy, the first key expression that we are going to teach everyone about is, **to burst [someone's] bubble**, to burst someone's bubble. So, I could **burst your bubble**, Kassy, or you could **burst my bubble**, or I could burst his bubble or her bubble or their bubbles even, we could say, right? The *someone* in that expression, we can change with a name of someone or a pronoun even. So, maybe we'll start with the word *burst*, it is a verb, to burst. And Kassy, could you explain that to everyone, what does it mean to burst something?

Kassy: To burst something is to break it or pop it or—yeah, it's no longer intact.

Andrew: Exactly. So, it's easy to visualize this expression I think, right? At least me, I think of kids playing with bubbles, right? So, you can get, like, a soapy solution. And well—at least when I was a kid, you would dunk this little plastic wand, we called it, which is really just a piece of plastic with a little circle cut out of it at the end. And then if you take that wand, you dip it in a kind of soapy water or soapy solution, and then either blow on it or wave it around in the air, then bubbles form, right? And the bubbles float in the air for a moment before they disappear. But, you know, I remember, like, my little brother and sister doing this and since I was the mean older sibling, I would pop their bubbles. I would poke

their bubbles with my finger and the bubbles would explode, right? And really, that explosion is the same thing as bursting, right? So, the bubbles burst, or they explode, and they disappear, they're destroyed, essentially.

Kassy: Yeah, and just like a real bubble bursting, if you burst someone's bubble, it means you are disappointing them by bringing their happiness or their hope to an end. You can think of someone's happiness or hope in something as this, you know, beautiful bubble that lifts them and makes them feel really happy, and all of a sudden you just take your finger and poke into their happiness, or their hope and it explodes.

Andrew: Exactly. So, we use this expression often when we're talking about people who disappoint someone else by maybe spoiling their day or ruining something that they were looking forward to, or especially, about telling them some bad news that is going to inform them about something that they were looking forward to, right? So, if you're expecting something, and then it doesn't happen, and you have to tell somebody about that then you might **burst their bubble** if you disappoint that person with that news.

Kassy: Exactly. I can think of one recently, I forgot what day it was, so I thought that I had some special plans this weekend. And then my friend reminded me "Oh, no, Kassy, that's next weekend." And I go, "Ah, way **to burst my bubble**. I have to wait two weeks now."

Andrew: That's a great example. That's exactly how we use it. I also think that you'll hear people using this expression with an apology. So, they'll say, "I'm sorry **to burst your bubble**," like, "I'm sorry to disappoint you." Or "I don't want **to burst your bubble**, but." And then you tell somebody some bad news. So, often we can use this expression as a kind of softener when we want to tell somebody something disappointing or say some bad news to someone that we know will make them feel disappointed. Of course, you have to be careful, right, Kassy? It's case by case, situation by situation. If you're the boss at a big company and you have to fire one of your employees, telling them that they're fired—that's going to be very disappointing and upsetting. But you wouldn't want to say like, "Hey,

Kassy, I've got something to tell you and I don't want **to burst your bubble**, but you're fired." Right? That wouldn't match the situation.

Kassy: That would be horrible.

Andrew: That would be really rude in fact, right? Because you're using this kind of light, playful expression with some very serious news. But if it's something small, right? Like, "I don't want **to burst your bubble**, Kassy, but, you know, today is not when we're going to the park for the picnic, that's next week." Right? Like, ah, OK. It's not the end of the world, your whole life is not changing because of that disappointment. So, it is case by case, situation by situation and I do think we tend to use this expression with lighter news, lighter disappointment, as opposed to something very serious, like getting fired from your job.

Kassy: Exactly. I think the next step for us should be to listen to our first example conversation, right, Andrew?

Andrew: Yeah, let's take a listen to it now.

Friend 1: So, I've got some bad news.

Friend 2: Uh oh, what's up?

Friend 1: I just took a look at the weather forecast and it's not looking good. There's supposed to be a thunderstorm on Saturday and it's going to rain all day on Sunday.

Friend 2: Bummer. I guess that means we should cancel the camping trip, huh?

Fried 1: Yeah. I mean, I don't want to sleep in a tent when it's pouring rain. Doesn't sound too fun to me.

Friend 2: Have you told Peter yet?

Friend 1: No, not yet. I didn't want **to burst his bubble**. He's really excited to go camping. Do you think you could tell him?

Friend 2: Yeah, OK. He'll be sad. But we can reschedule for another time. I'll give him a call right now.

Andrew: So, in this example conversation, we hear a couple of friends talking about a camping trip. And unfortunately, because of the weather forecast which is calling for rain and thunderstorms on the weekend, they have to cancel the trip. Now, they haven't told their friend, Peter, yet. And they're a little worried about doing this because they don't want **to burst his bubble**. Peter is really excited about the camping trip, and they know when they tell Peter that the trip is cancelled, he's going to be disappointed, let down, sad. So yeah, they don't want **to burst his bubble**, but sometimes telling people these kinds of updates is unavoidable. So, the friend says she'll call him and tell him.

Kassy: Exactly! Now, let's listen to example conversation number two.

Brother: Hey, sis. So, I've got an idea to run by you.

Sister: I'm not lending you money again.

Brother: No, no, no, don't worry. I don't need to borrow any money.

Sister: What do you want then?

Brother: Well, I've got a date on Saturday, and I was thinking I could borrow your car for the night,

Sister: I hate **to burst your bubble**, but that's never gonna happen.

Brother: Oh, come on.

Sister: Nope. Sorry! Go buy your own car.

Kassy: All right. In this example conversation, we have a brother and sister. And it seems like this brother is asking his sister for stuff all the time and she's done with it. And in this case, the brother wants to go on a date, and he asks if he can borrow her car and she says, "I hate **to burst your bubble** but no." And Andrew, I don't know if the listeners can tell but, in this example, I hate **to burst your bubble** is kind of sarcastic. She doesn't really care if she disappoints her brother. She's like, "Go away. Stop bothering me." But this is also a way that we could use burst someone's bubble.

Andrew: Yeah, exactly. So, definitely in that example, when the sister says "I hate **to burst your bubble**" she doesn't actually hate **to burst his bubble**, right? She's just being sarcastic like you said, you can imagine a brother and sister their relationship is very close and yeah, it sounds like the brother is kind of annoying, right? Like we have the sense that he asked to borrow money in the past and maybe asks to borrow money often and then asks to borrow her car. So, she's like, "No, just stop bothering me. Leave me alone." This kind of nuance to that expression in this context.

Kassy: That's right. Well, I think that wraps it up for expression number one. Andrew, let's move on to expression number two, which is **to dash [someone's] hopes, to dash someone's hopes**. Andrew, what does it mean **to dash [someone's] hopes**?

Andrew: **To dash [someone's] hopes**. Well, I think this one is a little bit easier to understand because bubble, you know **to burst [someone's] bubble**, it's a little bit confusing, like what is a bubble exactly? It is not exactly clear that that expression means that the bubble is about someone's dream or hope or wish. But in this expression, it's a little bit clearer, right? **To dash [someone's] hopes**. So, we can understand that a hope is exactly something that someone is looking forward to or wants to happen. The interesting word in this expression is the verb, dash, dash. And Kassy, when I was researching this episode, I learned that the verb to dash used to mean to destroy, but we've lost that sense of the word in English for the most part, except it's been preserved in this expression. So, interestingly enough, **to dash [someone's] hopes** means to destroy someone's hopes. So, you know, somebody is looking forward to something, anticipating something, really

wants something to happen, but then it doesn't happen, and you are the person that is telling that person that their hope or their wish, or their dream is not happening, then you have dashed someone's hopes.

Kassy: So, Andrew, now that we've heard expression one, **to burst someone's bubble** and expression two, **to dash [someone's] hopes**, do you think there is a big or significant difference between these two expressions?

Andrew: I think for the most part, they're interchangeable, Kassy.

Kassy: All right. Let's take a listen to our first example conversation.

Andrew: Let's do it.

Friend 1: So, did you make the reservation?

Friend 2: I tried my best but unfortunately, the restaurant is completely booked tonight. They said they have no tables available.

Friend 1: No, don't **dash my hopes** like that! I really wanted to eat there before this holiday is over and we have to go back home.

Friend 2: The good news is I got us on the waiting list though. So, if someone cancels the reservation, they're going to call us first and we're first in line.

Friend 1: Let's pray someone cancels then.

Andrew: So, in this example conversation, we hear two friends talking about a restaurant that they want to visit. But unfortunately, the restaurant is all booked up. There are no tables available, so they can't eat at that restaurant, and when one of the friends hears about this, she responds by saying, "No, don't dash my hopes like that!" So, in this conversation then, of course, we just explained like, your hope is like your serious dream for the future and something that you're really looking forward to. I have the sense that

maybe this friend really wanted to visit this restaurant, but also that she's being a little bit sarcastic. A little bit **tongue-in-cheek**, joking a little bit because there are some people who probably dream about visiting restaurants, but for 99% of people, I think, if you find out that a restaurant is booked and you can't visit it, then it's like not the end of the world. You can find a plan B to do, right?

Kassy: Exactly.

Andrew: Perfect. So, why don't we listen to one final example conversation with this expression **to dash [someone's] hopes**.

Kassy: OK.

Friend 1: Did you hear Brandon's big news?

Friend 2: Yeah, he told me that he auditioned for that singing contest show on TV. And he seemed really excited about it. He even thinks he'll get selected to be on the show.

Friend 1: He told me that too. But he's a terrible singer, we all know that.

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

Friend 1: I hated **to dash his hopes**, but I wanted to tell him the truth, so I sent him a message to tell him that he shouldn't get too excited, and he probably won't get on the show.

Friend 2: How did he respond to that?

Friend 1: I'm not sure, I think he's mad at me or something because he just left me on read.

Friend 2: Well, **he'll get over it** soon enough. Don't worry about it.

Kassy: All right. In this example conversation, two people are talking about their acquaintance, Brandon. And Brandon auditioned for a TV show, but one friend is not convinced that he will be selected for the show. He's kind of a terrible singer, and he didn't want Brandon to get overly excited, so he said, I hated **to dash his hopes**, but I told him that, you know, there's not a big chance he's gonna get selected for the show. And as a result, Brandon's feelings got a little hurt. Andrew, how do we know Brandon's feelings got hurt? What was the expression that was used in this conversation?

Andrew: Yeah, it's a really good expression to know, I think these days, especially. It is, *on read*, or *to leave somebody on read*. So, he knows that Brandon was mad at him because he was **left on read**. And here read is not the colour, but it is the past tense form of the verb read. So, R-E-A-D, read. And if somebody leaves you on read, it means that they read a message that you send them, you know, through text message or WhatsApp or any of the big messaging platforms, here in South Korea, we use Kakao Talk, mostly, Kassy. So, you know, when you send somebody a message often, you can see if that person read your message or didn't read your message. And if they read your message, and they don't reply to you, that means they've left you on read. And, you know, there are sometimes like a million reasons why someone might read your message and not reply to you right away. But often when this situation happens, we automatically go to the **worst-case scenario**, and we're automatically thinking like, oh, this person hates me or is angry at me, or something bad like that. So, I think in the example conversation when he got **left on read**, he just assumed that Brandon was really angry at him because he didn't get a response from Brandon.

Kassy: Yeah, exactly. It's the worst feeling **to be left on read**.

Andrew: I wish that the software companies that make these messengers just didn't have that feature. Whoever was the genius who created that feature for these apps should be fired. It's a terrible feature.

Kassy: It's good for those that want to know if they're being ignored or not, though.

Andrew: That's true. That's true.

That brings us to the end of this lesson. Talk to you next time. Bye.

Detailed Explanations

To burst [someone's] bubble

Idiom

To burst [someone's] bubble means to disappoint someone by telling them bad news. When you **burst [someone's] bubble**, you put an end to the joy and happiness they are experiencing. If you tell someone that something they were hoping for isn't going to happen, or that something they believe isn't true, you are **bursting their bubble**.

As Andrew mentions in this episode, this expression is often used with an apology. You can say: I'm sorry **to burst your bubble**, I hate **to burst your bubble**, or I don't want **to burst your bubble**.

It's important to note that the expression **to burst your bubble** isn't suitable for very formal situations or telling people serious news, like in the example used in the episode about firing an employee.

Here are a couple more examples with **to burst [someone's] bubble**:

Jane: I'm so excited, I couldn't sleep all night!

Larry: Why, what's going on?

Jane: I got an email from our department manager about a meeting today. He said he had something important to announce. I think he's going to promote me!

Larry: Oh, Jane, sweetie. I hate **to burst your bubble**, but it's got nothing to do with that. He is resigning, I just heard this morning. He's sent that email to everybody in the office.

Maddie: Hi dad! I have some news. I'm getting married!

Adam: Honey, that's amazing! Your mother is going to be so happy! So, when is the wedding?

Maddie: Actually, we've decided to elope, so there will be no wedding. I don't know how to tell mom; I don't want **to burst her bubble**. She's always dreamt about a big wedding for me. Can you tell her, dad?

Adam: Oh. Okay. Well, it's your choice, I'm sure she'll understand.

To dash [someone's] hopes

Idiom

To dash [someone's] hopes means to ruin their hopes by informing them that something they were anticipating isn't happening. If you dash someone's hopes, you disappoint them by destroying their plans, dreams, or expectations.

The expression **to dash [someone's] hopes** is also used in situations when something makes it impossible for someone's plans or dreams to come true. For example, if you were planning to have a picnic, but then the weather forecast says that it's going to rain all day, you can say the rain **dashed your hopes** of having a picnic.

You can hear this expression used in the passive voice as well. For example, you can say your **hopes were dashed** by something or someone.

Here are a couple more examples with **to dash [someone's] hopes**:

Emily: I'm so happy we're going to my hometown together! I'll finally introduce you to my family! I'm sure they will love you. I can't wait!

Paul: Oh, Emily, I hate **to dash your hopes**, but I have to go on a business trip this weekend. I just found out. I'm afraid I can't join you after all.

Emily: Oh, no! I can't believe it. I've been planning this trip for so long. What am I going to say to my parents?

Paul: I'm sorry. Don't worry, I'll meet them another time.

Stephan: I liked your play! Being an actress must be so cool.

Sadie: Well, it wasn't something I dreamt about all my life to be honest. I've always wanted to become a ballet dancer. I spent my childhood at the ballet studio.

Stephan: What happened?

Sadie: I got a serious foot injury when I was practicing. I couldn't dance anymore. **My hopes of becoming a famous ballerina were dashed.**

Stephan: I'm sorry about that, but you really are a good actress, if that's any consolation!

Tongue-in-cheek

Adverb

When talking about one of the episode's conversation examples, Andrew says that the speaker is being sarcastic when she gets upset about not being able to go to a restaurant. Andrew says she's being a little bit **tongue-in-cheek**. If someone is being **tongue-in-cheek**, what they're saying is not intended to be taken seriously, even though they might seem or sound serious. If you say something **tongue-in-cheek**, you are saying it as a joke.

This expression comes from the way some people try to keep a straight face while joking by putting their tongue in their cheek. Doing that helps to suppress laughter. That's why **tongue-in-cheek** humor is sometimes not easy to understand. So, if you make a joke but people take it seriously, in order to make it clear you are joking, you can say, "I am being **tongue-in-cheek**."

Here are a couple more examples with **tongue-in-cheek**:

Eve: Any plans for tomorrow? Are you taking your new girlfriend out somewhere?

Allen: Why?

Eve: It's Valentine's Day! Did you forget again?

Allen: No, I remembered. I was thinking, we could all go to the pub, have something to eat, hang out with my pals.

Eve: Right. Great idea. That's exactly what every girl wants for Valentine's.

Allen: You think?

Eve: No, you silly! I'm being **tongue-in-cheek**. You should do something romantic, with just the two of you. Come on, let me help you find a restaurant.

Katy: Ah, you're watching that talk show again.

Nick: I love it! It's so funny. You don't like it much, do you?

Katy: It's just that the host is so rude! She says really offensive things to the guests.

Nick: Come on, she's obviously being **tongue-in-cheek**! She's just joking, you're not supposed to take it seriously.

To get over [something/someone]

Phrasal verb

To get over [something/someone] means to recover from an unpleasant experience, or to accept an unpleasant situation. If you **get over [something]**, you start feeling better physically or emotionally after something bad has happened to you. If you **get over [someone]**, usually someone you had a relationship with, you forget about them, and learn to live and be happy without them.

In one of the episode's example dialogs, two speakers talk about their friend Brandon, who is mad at one of them for telling him an unpleasant truth. One of the speakers says, "**He'll get over it soon**". He means that Brandon will stop feeling mad, accept the comment, and forgive his friend for saying what he said.

Here are a couple more examples with **to get over [something/someone]**:

Eric: I'm sorry, Daisy, but I can't come to see your play tonight. I have to work late.

Daisy: Again? But you promised you'd be there.

Eric: I know, sweetie, but you know how important this project is.

Daisy: I know. It's OK. **I'll get over it.**

Eric: How about we get dinner at your favourite place afterwards and you'll tell me all about it?

Daisy: Okay, see you then!

Mindy: You'll never guess who I ran into today! Mike, my ex-boyfriend!

Sean: No way! How did it feel to see him again? I remember you guys had a really bad breakup.

Mindy: Yeah, it took me at least a year **to get over him**. But I didn't feel a thing today.

Sean: I'm glad to hear that. I hated that guy! He was never nice to you.

To be left on read

Slang

To be left on read is a slang expression we use when someone has read our message(s) but hasn't replied yet. If you send someone a text message through a messaging app, and they open it, but don't respond to it right away, you are being **left on read**. "Read" in this phrase means the status of a text message. You know you have been **left on read** if you see the small text under the message has changed to "seen".

We normally use the expression **to be left on read** in a negative way, when we want to express that we're unhappy about our message being ignored.

This expression is used in both the active and the passive voice. That is, you can **leave someone on read**, be **left on read**, or get **left on read**.

Here are a couple more examples with **to be left on read**:

Rosa: So, how is it going with that girl you met last week?

Charlie: We chatted for a couple of days, and it was going pretty well. But then I asked her on a date, and she **left me on read**. I don't even know what to think.

Rosa: Maybe she just doesn't want to see you again?

Charlie: I don't know, she seemed interested. Girls are mysterious!

Zach: Hi Iris! Have you been talking to Sam lately?

Iris: Not really. Is anything wrong?

Zach: I just needed some advice, so I texted him the other day. He read my message, but never replied. I **got left on read**!

Iris: Oh, don't take it personally. He does it all the time. He probably just got distracted and forgot about it. I'd call him if I were you.

Worst-case scenario

Noun

Worst-case scenario means the worst possible way a situation can develop. We use this expression to talk about things we imagine might happen. If we talk about something as a **worst-case scenario**, we describe the worst way things might go.

In this episode, Andrew says that we tend to go to the **worst-case scenario** when someone reads our message but doesn't reply. That means that we think that the person doesn't message us back, because they're angry at us.

The expression that has the opposite meaning is best-case scenario, which can be described as the best possible result. Sometimes people use both these expressions to analyze a situation and predict its outcomes. The expressions **worst-case scenario** and best-case scenario are commonly used in both everyday conversations and business situations.

Here are a couple more examples with **worst-case scenario**:

Michelle: Laura isn't picking up. I'm worried about her.

Theo: Honey, she only left an hour ago. She's probably still on her way to the dorm, and she's not answering her phone because she's driving.

Michelle: What if something happened? It's dark and it's raining. The roads are dangerous like this.

Theo: Why do you always think of the **worst-case scenario**? She's fine. She's a careful driver. I'm sure she'll call you back as soon as she gets there.

Tony: Are you OK? You seem nervous.

Rachel: I always get really nervous before going to a job interview.

Tony: Come on, it's just a job interview. What can happen? **Worst-case scenario**, you'll not get the job. It's not the end of the world. You'll just find another one.

Rachel: I guess you're right.

Quiz

1. Which of the following does not mean to burst someone's bubble?

- a) To tell someone that something they're hoping for isn't happening
- b) To tell someone bad news
- c) To disappoint someone
- d) To break up with someone

2. If your friend says, "I hate to dash your hopes, but...", what does it mean?

- a) They're going to tell you some bad news
- b) They're going to tell you some good news
- c) They're going to hit you
- d) They hate you

3. True or false? If you're being tongue-in-cheek, you're being serious.

- a) True
- b) False

4. Which of the following means to recover from an unpleasant experience?

- a) To give over
- b) To go over
- c) To get over
- d) To grow over

5. If someone left you on read, they _____.

- a) sent you a long message
- b) have read your message, but haven't replied
- c) gave you a book
- d) left you at the library

Writing and Discussion Questions

1. Talk about a time when someone burst your bubble. What happened?
2. Do you say things tongue-in-cheek a lot or are you more of a serious person?
3. Does it normally take you long to get over unpleasant situations?
4. When was the last time you got left on read? What happened?
5. Would you say you tend to think of the worst-case scenario in different life situations?

Quiz Answers

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

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