

Catch Word #275 – Debbie Downer (Ad free)

Episode description

Have you ever found yourself in a situation where you were feeling excited and enthusiastic, only for someone to say something that dampened your mood? In this Catch Word episode, Andrew and Kassy introduce several useful expressions that you can use to describe these situations. They provide detailed explanations, different usage scenarios, and offer advice on when to avoid using these phrases. You'll also hear four example conversations featuring these new expressions, which will help you learn how to use them naturally and sound more like a native speaker.

Fun fact

Rachel Dratch, the actress who played Debbie Downer on SNL, once shared a story of how the idea for the Debbie Downer character came to her in an interview. She explained, "I was on vacation in Costa Rica, and when I told someone that I was from New York, they asked, 'Were you there for 9/11?' The conversation froze. When I got back, the name [Debbie Downer] popped into my head."

Expressions included in the study guide

- A Debbie Downer
- Wet blanket
- Rain on [someone's] parade
- Have your eye on [something]
- Pick up on [something]
- Bring [someone] down



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 275, Debbie Downer, featuring, Andrew and Kassy. Hello friends, welcome back to another Catch Word episode. We're back with Catch Word. Helping me today with this episode is my co-host, Kassy. Hello, Kassy.

Kassy: Hey Andrew, and hey listeners. So, everyone, today's episode is like Andrew said a Catch Word and these phrases are one, phrases I use all the time and two, they're pretty fun. So, let me give you a little scenario before we tell you the phrases. Imagine you're planning this fun weekend getaway with your friends, and you've been looking forward to this for weeks. You're so excited. But then one of the people in your group is being so lame. They're finding all these reasons why the trip isn't a good idea. Like the weather is going to be bad or the hotel is too expensive or they're just so busy, there's too much driving. Like how would you feel about this person who is, you know, like making you feel less excited about this trip?

Andrew: I think we've all experienced that kind of person before Kassy, and I can picture this scenario in my mind very vividly and it's stressing me out to be honest. You know, one expression that we can use, this is kind of a bonus expression for everybody, is **to rain on your parade**. So, you have something that you're really excited about, right, you're excited about the trip, excited to hang out with your friends and then there's that one member of the group that's complaining, that person is raining on your parade. You know, a parade is one of those kind of almost like a street festival, right? This kind of celebration that happens outside but you can't have a very good time outside in the sun and with a festival if it's raining during that time. So, that's where the origin of that expression comes from, to rain on your parade. So yeah, I think if you have somebody like this complaining, raining on your parade, then it's going to be not so fun.

Kassy: Exactly, and even though Andrew gave you that bonus expression, to rain on your parade, the phrases we are going to teach you today are phrases to describe that person specifically, kind of like a nickname for them. They're not good names, but it describes a negative person, and those idioms are, **Debbie Downer** and **wet blanket**.

Andrew: Yeah, I think everyone, you guys will have fun with this episode because although these are expressions, like you said, Kassy, that describe people who are complaining a lot and being negative, they are rather colourful and fun. And when Kassy and I were chatting about what we're going to teach you all in this episode before we started recording, we're kind of laughing and having fun with these expressions. So, they do describe people who are negative, who complain a lot, but at the same time they are funny and yeah, they're good ones to add to your vocabulary to help you become a better English listener. Absolutely. And in certain contexts, and maybe Kassy we'll get into this a bit more when we get into the main content of today's lesson, but in certain contexts, they can help make your English sound really, really natural too, although they are very informal expressions. So, you do have to be aware of the context. And with that being said, Kassy, why don't we get started with this lesson? So, as we mentioned at the top of the show, we are going to teach our listeners about two expressions today, the first one being Debbie Downer, Debbie Downer. And first of all, I guess let's break this down. Debbie is a woman's name, right? Short for Deborah, I believe, right? If your name was Deborah, you could shorten it to Debbie.

Kassy: Yeah, it's not a super common name anymore, but like a couple decades ago, it was.

Andrew: Yeah, I think it's like my mom's generation. I think my mom's got some friends named Debbie. Kassy, if you were to have a child, would you name it Debbie?

Kassy: Never.

Andrew: Me too. If I were to have a child, I don't think I would name it Debbie. No offense to any Debbie's listening out there, but it does have that kind of older lady nuance to it. And Downer, OK, in this sense, this is kind of a joke. It's a play on words, a pun, because Downer could technically be a family name. Kassy, like if my name was Andrew Downer, that wouldn't be too weird, would it?

Kassy: No, yeah, that sounds normal.

Andrew: Yeah, OK. But also, what is the other meaning of Downer, if you are a Downer?

Kassy: Well, we've probably talked about this phrase on Culips before, but to be a letdown is to be like a disappointment, or, you know, you're always thinking in the negative direction. Down is negative, so to be a Debbie Downer means, yeah, she's a negative Nelly.

Andrew: Negative Nelly. I guess from time to time, it's true, we make these kind of nicknames for people using a first name and some kind of adjective that comes at the end, right? Like you said there, Kassy, a negative Nelly, a Debbie Downer, right? I don't know. It's a kind of fun way that English speakers can make, yeah, some nicknames to describe people who have, you know, a downer personality or a negative personality.

Kassy: I just want to add you don't want to make somebody feel bad necessarily by calling them a Debbie Downer to their face. Like, if one of your friends is complaining a lot, you might a little bit jokingly say, "Wow, being such a Debbie Downer over here." And that makes your friend realize, like, "Ah, I'm complaining a little bit too much, aren't I?" So, like, you're not really saying, "Ah, you're so pessimistic. I don't like you." But you're just kind of showing them, "Hey, maybe you could have a more positive attitude."

Andrew: Sure, sure. That's a good point. So, guys, the meaning of a Debbie Downer then is a person who is acting in a way that's negative or pessimistic. Usually complaining

about something. You know, maybe you think the situation is really good and you're very positive and optimistic about it, but, you know, somebody else is complaining or a little bit negative or just not too excited to do something even, then you can call them a Debbie Downer. Now, Kassy, even though the name Debbie is a woman's name, do you think it would be OK to call a guy a Debbie Downer?

Kassy: Yeah, totally.

Andrew: Yeah, it's not really specific like that, right? So, Kassy, it was interesting to me to learn the origins of this expression, and I think you too, you didn't know this, right?

Kassy: Yeah, it's crazy. Listeners, just wait.

Andrew: Yeah, yeah, it's kind of surprising that both of us didn't know this because we've used this expression really often, and it seems really natural to me to use it, and if you were to have asked me before the origin of this expression, I would have said, "Oh, it's probably been around since, like, the 50s or something." But it only was created in the year 2004 because of the TV show *Saturday Night Live*, and I think probably many of our listeners will be familiar with that show, *Saturday Night Live*. It's a live comedy show that's broadcast every Saturday night, and I guess around the year 2004, they debuted a skit where one of the characters was named Debbie Downer, and the comedic aspect of that skit was that, you know, there'd always be a group of friends, and whenever the group would be excited about something, that Debbie Downer character would always rain on their parade and complain about something. So, like, I was watching some on YouTube before we started, and I didn't know about this for whatever reason, I guess I just tuned out of SNL. That's what we call *Saturday Night Live*, SNL. I tuned out of SNL around that time, so I didn't even know about this skit or this character, but yeah, when I was watching some on YouTube today, it was kind of funny, like, some friends were hanging out, and Debbie Downer was with them, and they were talking about steak and wanting to eat hamburgers and steak at some restaurant, and then Debbie Downer was talking about mad cow

disease, and just made them all feel like, "Ah, OK, now we don't want to eat this meat." So, yeah, I don't know, that's just kind of an example of the character and the type of jokes that you could see in her skits, and guys, if you just go on to YouTube and type Debbie Downer, you could see many, many of them. I'm going to watch some more after we finish recording here, Kassy, because they are pretty funny.

Kassy: That's a good point, Andrew, that's good homework for our listeners, after they listen to us and do our own examples here, they can go find some more on YouTube.

Andrew: Yeah, hopefully we are funnier than SNL in our examples, that would be a real accomplishment. Anyways, everyone, so now I think you know the meaning of Debbie Downer, you know the origin story of Debbie Downer, and I guess we should briefly talk about usage, and then we'll get to some examples from a usage perspective, Kassy, to me, this feels very, very informal. Would you agree with that?

Kassy: Yeah, you're going to be using it with friends and family.

Andrew: Mm-hmm, you don't want to really use it in a professional situation, you know, if you have a great idea at your staff meeting, and then one of your co-workers doesn't support your idea, and then you say, "Why are you such a Debbie Downer?" That would be, you know, not a great match, I think, for that kind of professional situation.

Kassy: There would be an awkward silence after that happened.

Andrew: Right, yeah, there are better, more professional expressions you could use in that situation, but we'll save those for maybe a different episode, for today, we'll focus on the fun, informal ones. And with that being said, then let's transition into the examples. So, here's the first one, now. Here we go.

Friend 1: I think I've finally saved up enough money to buy the truck that **I've had my eye on for a few years**. I can't wait, it's going to be so fun to drive.

Friend 2: Sure, I mean, I guess, if you don't mind the horrible gas mileage and expensive maintenance costs.

Friend 1: Why do you have to be such a Debbie Downer? Can't you just let me enjoy my idea for once?

Andrew: Alright, in this example, we hear two friends talking, and one of the friends is talking about buying a new truck. He's been saving up his money to buy a truck, and finally he has enough, so he's going to go and buy the truck, and he's so excited. He is anticipating driving it around and enjoying that, and when he tells this to his friend, his friend responds in a pretty negative pessimistic way, right? Instead of saying, "Oh, that's great!" or "I'm so happy for you!" or supporting her friend, she does the opposite. Instead, she brings up the negative things about owning a truck, like how they don't have great fuel efficiency, and how they're expensive to maintain. And so, the guy who's going to buy a truck, he says, "Why do you have to be such a Debbie Downer?" Like, can't you just let me enjoy this moment, this moment of happiness?"

Kassy: "Can't you just be happy for me?"

Andrew: Yeah. "Can't you just support me and be happy for me, instead of being so negative?" So, yeah, this kind of situation is perfect to use Debbie Downer.

Kassy: Alright, Andrew, shall we listen to example number two?

Andrew: Yeah, let's do it!

Friend 1: So, I just signed up for this new ceramics class, and I'm really excited to start learning pottery! Making my own dishes sounds so fun and therapeutic!

Friend 2: You know those kilns use a ton of energy though, right? Not very eco-friendly, if you ask me.

Friend 1: Jeez, do you have to be such a Debbie Downer about every new interest I get? Why can't you just be supportive?

Kassy: Alright, this example is very similar to the one before. We have two friends, and one friend is very excited about something. In this case, she is very excited about starting a new ceramics class, making pottery, bowls, and plates, and vases, things like that. However, her other friend, the Debbie Downer, he goes, "Well, you know, that hobby uses a lot of energy. Do you want to kill the environment?" And she's like, "Really? Can't you just support my new hobby? Come on!"

Andrew: Exactly, and maybe some of our listeners didn't **pick up on that word** that we heard in the example, which is "kiln" kiln, K-I-L-N-S. In this example, it was kilns in the plural, so K-I-L-N-S and a kiln is what you use to bake pottery, as far as I know. Is that correct, Kassy? It's like the oven that you use for firing pottery, right?

Kassy: Yep, because at first, it's like just the clay, and then you want to harden the clay, so it stays hard, and doesn't crack.

Andrew: Right, so you have to put it in the kiln, but kilns of course take a lot of energy to heat up so hot, and so that's the point that the Debbie Downer wanted to talk about. Instead of just being like, "aww, awesome!" Like "Ah, that's great for you!" No, he had to be negative, and that's why he is a Debbie Downer.

Andrew: OK, so I think we are ready now to move on to our second key expression for this episode, which is another fun one, and a very visual expression, I think. I love this

one, to be honest, I think it's great. It is, wet blanket, wet blanket. And a wet blanket is an idiomatic expression that we use to describe someone, or to call someone, who again just kills a fun situation, or kills enthusiasm, because they're pessimistic, or unenthusiastic, or negative, or they rain on your parade. OK, a wet blanket. Kassy, what's the image that comes into your mind when you think of this expression?

Kassy: Honestly, I think this is what pops into most people's minds, but I imagine like having a friendly bonfire, and then at the end of the night, you want to like get rid of the fire, so you throw a wet blanket over it, and the fire dies.

Andrew: Nice. That's awesome, that's totally different than my imagination. My imagination is that you're just like walking down the street, and it's a beautiful sunny day, and you're enjoying life, and then somebody throws a blanket that's been sitting in like ice-cold water on you, and you get hit with that cold, wet blanket, and then suddenly you're like, "Oh, it's so cold!" And like now I'm soaking wet, and just like that, your mood has been spoiled, right? It was such a nice day, and you were just loving life, and then suddenly you're cold and wet, and yeah. So, kind of a similar thing, right? Just a different way to imagine it.

Kassy: I think that wet blanket is more negative than Debbie Downer. Like we said, Debbie Downer originally started as an SNL skit, so it has this connection of comedy of being like a funny, fun phrase like "Don't be such a Debbie Downer!" But when I hear the phrase wet blanket, it just sounds terrible. I would never, ever want to be called a wet blanket, but I wouldn't mind being called a Debbie Downer.

Andrew: Yeah, I think maybe tone and intention are very important in English with all expressions, right? You can say almost anything with the correct tone and with loving intention, positive intention behind it, and almost always you can manage not to offend somebody, especially if you're close to that person. However, if you do intend to you know, maybe criticize somebody for being very negative and you call them a wet blanket, I do

agree, this could come off as stronger. So, definitely, as with every expression in English, tone, the way that you say it, and intention, which is your underlying thought that you want to communicate, definitely you have to be careful with this expression. Again, very casual, very informal expression. You don't want to use it in an essay for school. You don't want to use it in the meeting room at your office. And Kassy, I think this is just my feeling. I haven't really confirmed this with any data or anything, but I think I would be more likely to call someone a Debbie Downer to their face, whereas maybe I would use wet blanket to talk about someone.

Kassy: Yeah, I agree. I would never be able to call someone a wet blanket to their face. I don't think I'm mean enough. But a Debbie Downer, yeah, it's easier to use a friendlier tone.

Andrew: Right, but if you're like, you know, I don't know, maybe you take golf lessons at a driving range, right, and you are hitting some golf balls and the guy beside you hitting golf balls is complaining about your swing and just being annoying and making sure that you have a terrible golf lesson. Well, then maybe after once you're finished your golf lesson and you're back at home with your husband or with your family and you're talking, you'll be like, "Ah, that guy is such a wet blanket at the golf course." It's just always complaining about my golf swing, like, ah, come on." You know, that kind of situation, I think we'd use it in.

Kassy: I totally agree. Yeah, you don't use it to someone's face, but you would definitely use it in a story setting, like telling someone about a person that you met that you did not like.

Andrew: Perfect. OK. And with that being said, why don't we hop into our conversation examples with this expression, wet blanket?

Friend 1: Hey, so I just asked John if we could play some games, you know, to liven this party up a little bit, like horseshoes or cornhole, something. I thought it could be really fun. But you know what he said?

Friend 2: No, what did he say?

Friend 1: He said, "Those games sound childish and boring."

Friend 2: What? Childish and boring. This party is childish and boring. Why is he being such a **wet blanket**?

Friend 1: Yeah, seriously. I mean, games are great.

Andrew: Alright, let's break this example down. So, in this example, we hear a couple of friends chatting. Sounds like they're at maybe a birthday party, some kind of, you know, party, maybe a barbecue, I don't know. And they're talking about playing some games to spice the party up a little bit, to make it more fun and exciting. And they suggest playing a couple of popular outdoor backyard games to their friend, John, who is maybe the host of the party, we could imagine. The two games that they suggest are horseshoes, which Kassy, horseshoes is where you take a physical horseshoe, the kind of thing that you attach to the foot of a horse to protect their hoof, right? And you have to try and throw it around a stick. And if you can connect the horseshoe to the stick, you score some points. And cornhole is similar. It's where you have to throw a bean bag into some holes that usually are cut into a kind of box. And depending on the size of the hole, you can get more points or fewer points, right? So, they suggest playing a game like this just to spice up the party and make it more fun. And then, yeah, John says, "Nah, it's childish, it's boring. I just want to sit around and chat or do whatever they were doing". And so, yeah, the friends call him a wet blanket, just because instead of having fun and enjoying the party and doing what the guests want to do, then he just wants to, you know, do it his own way. And as a result, it's kind of negative.

Kassy: Exactly. How about we listen to example number two?

Friend 1: I was thinking we could go hiking this Saturday, you know, get out into nature, explore some trails. It'll be an adventure. Are you in?

Friend 2: Hiking? That sounds exhausting. And knowing our luck, it's probably going to rain like the whole time.

Friend 1: There you go again, being **a total wet blanket**. You know, a little rain never hurt anybody, and it might actually make it more refreshing.

Friend 2: You're right. OK. I'll try. Let's go.

Kassy: Alright. So, in this example, we had two friends, and one friend says, "Hey, let's go hiking this Saturday. It'll be great. We'll have so much fun." And the other friend is being a bit of a wet blanket, and they're so negative about it. "Ugh, I don't like hiking. It's going to rain." But then they realize that, you know, they were being a little too negative. They were being too much of a wet blanket, and they decide to try the hike anyway.

Andrew: Yeah. So, we mentioned a little earlier, guys, that you're not as likely to call someone a wet blanket to their face. But again, as we mentioned, it's about your tone, and it's about your intention. So, if both of those are OK, and you know, you're not really trying to hurt the other person's feelings, you're more just trying to say, like, "Hey, why are you being so negative?" Then it can be OK. And I think that example that we just heard was a case of that. Well, everyone, that's going to bring us to the end of today's episode. Thank you, as always, for listening and for studying English with us today.

Kassy: To summarize what we learned today, we learned two expressions that describe negative personalities. A Debbie Downer refers to someone who frequently points out the negative aspects of situations in a way that **brings others down**, brings their mood down. A wet blanket is similar. It's a person who's negative, and they dampen the attitude or the atmosphere, and they take all the enjoyment out of the situation.

Andrew: Now it's your turn to practice using these expressions. Head on over to our Discord community and share some example sentences. The link to join is in the episode description. It's free and a great way to connect with fellow Culips listeners worldwide. Alright, that's it for now. We'll be back soon with another brand-new episode, and we'll talk to you then. Bye-bye.

Kassy: See ya!

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

Detailed Explanations

A Debbie Downer

Noun, informal

The first expression in this episode is Debbie Downer. Andrew explains that it is used to describe someone who is being negative or pessimistic. **A Debbie Downer** is a person who complains a lot, sees only the downsides of situations, and makes those around them feel discouraged or sad.

Andrew explains that this expression started from a character named Debbie Downer on the TV show Saturday Night Live. This character would always complain about something and ruin the good mood. Andrew adds that even though Debbie is a female name, you can use this expression to talk about men too.

Kassy also points out that you need to be careful with this expression because it could offend someone. She suggests using it in a light-hearted way, as a joke. And you probably shouldn't call someone a Debbie Downer directly unless you are sure they won't mind.

Both hosts note that this is a very informal expression. It is not suitable for professional situations. They recommend using it in casual settings with friends and family.

A similar expression that Andrew mentions is "negative Nelly". You might also hear "negative Nancy". You can use these variations in similar situations, to describe someone who is overly negative and pessimistic.

Here are a couple more examples with **a Debbie downer**:

Chris: I can't wait to check out the Thai restaurant tonight!

Olivia: I don't mean to be a **Debbie Downer**, but I just heard that somebody got food poisoning there.

Chris: Oh no, really? That's awful! I guess we'll skip it for now.

Matt: Great. We missed our bus. Now we're going to be late. The night is ruined!

Pam: Stop being such a **Debbie Downer**, Matt. There's going to be another bus in 10 minutes. Let's just try and have some fun tonight, OK?

Wet blanket Noun, informal

The second expression featured is "wet blanket." **A wet blanket** is a person who ruins a fun or exciting situation by being overly negative or unenthusiastic.

This expression comes from the practice of putting out fires by throwing a heavy, wet blanket over the flames. In the metaphor, the "fire" represents excitement or fun, while the "wet blanket" is the person whose negative attitude smothers that enthusiasm.

Andrew and Kassy agree that "wet blanket" is a stronger expression than "Debbie Downer." They suggest using it when telling a story, rather than directly calling someone a wet blanket to their face. They emphasize being careful with the tone and intention when using expressions like this. Kassy says she would not want to be called a "wet blanket," though she doesn't mind "Debbie Downer." Like "Debbie Downer," "wet blanket" is a very informal expression. You should avoid using it in professional, academic, or formal situations. It is better suited for relaxed, casual conversations with friends and family.

There are other similar informal expressions that mean ruining others' enjoyment, such as:

- Party pooper
- Buzz kill
- Killjoy
- Spoilsport

To summarize, "wet blanket" describes someone whose negative, unenthusiastic attitude puts a damper on an enjoyable situation or mood. It is an informal, slightly stronger expression than "Debbie Downer."

Here are a couple more examples with **wet blanket**:

Ellen: I'm so excited for the costume party! What costume are you wearing?

Mark: To be honest, I'm not that into costumes. I think they're silly.

Ellen: Come on, Mark, **don't be such a wet blanket**. It's going to be fun! Let's see if we can find you something.

Fiona: Can you believe John? We were having such a great time, but then he came and started talking about all these depressing things. What a buzzkill!

Sam: Yeah, he can be **a bit of a wet blanket sometimes**.

Rain on [someone's] parade

Idiom, informal

At the start of this episode, Andrew introduces the expression **to rain on someone's parade**. This idiom means to spoil someone's plans or ruin their excited mood.

The expression originates from the idea of actual rain falling during a parade, which would definitely ruin the fun of the event. If someone "rains on your parade," it means they give you bad news or negative information that makes you feel less happy or excited about something. For example:

- You're excited about an upcoming vacation, but a coworker says "When you get back, you'll have a huge workload" - this rains on your parade about the trip.
- A friend shows you a new designer bag they bought, but you notice it's a fake. You could say, "I don't mean to rain on your parade, but I don't think that bag is genuine."

The phrase "I don't mean to rain on your parade" is often used to soften the delivery of disappointing or negative news to someone. Like the other expressions in this episode, "rain on [someone's] parade" is an informal, casual idiom. It should not be used in formal or professional settings.

So, "to rain on someone's parade" means to spoil someone's plans or ruin their excited mood by giving negative or disappointing information. It is an informal expression best used in casual conversation. Here are a couple more examples with **rain on [someone's] parade**:

Deb: You know Luke from accounting? He asked me if I wanted to grab a coffee some time. He's kind of cute, isn't he? I'd definitely be interested in him!

Kyle: Deb, **I hate to rain on your parade**, but Luke's married. He's just being friendly.

Deb: Are you for real? Well, it makes sense. Thanks for letting me know!

Mary: We're finally moving into a house! I can't wait!

Ed: Well, let me tell you, living in a house is a lot of work. There's always something that needs fixing.

Mary: **Don't rain on my parade!** This is a big moment for us, and I want to enjoy it without any negativity.

Have your eye on [something]

Idiom, informal

In the first example conversation featuring the expression Debbie Downer, one of the friends talks about saving up for the truck he wanted to buy for a while. He says, "I've had my eye on it for a few years."

Literally, **to have your eye on [something]** means to watch it closely. However, this phrase is often used idiomatically to mean being interested in obtaining or getting something. If you have your eye on an item like a gadget or piece of furniture, it means you want to own or purchase that thing. It typically refers to having an interest in buying something for a while before actually getting it. For example:

- I've had my eye on those new headphones for months. I'm going to buy them soon.
- There's a cool jacket I've had my eye on. I might get it for my birthday.

This expression can also apply to opportunities or achievements you want, not just physical objects:

- I have my eye on a few different job openings I'm interested in applying for.
- Mary has had her eye on becoming class president since last year.

A similar expression is "to set your heart on something" which means to strongly desire to get or achieve something.

"To have your eye on [something]" is an informal way to say you are interested in obtaining or pursuing that thing, often for a period of time before actually getting it. It can refer to items you want to buy or opportunities/achievements you want. Here are a couple more examples with **have your eye on [something]**:

Sarah: I'm thinking about taking a road trip this summer.

Jullian: Sounds like a great idea! Where are you thinking of going?

Sarah: Well, **I've had my eye on the Pacific Northwest.** I want to explore Oregon!

Erin: So, have you decided on what you're going to buy with the money you got for your birthday?

Tony: **I've had my eye on this vintage record player** I found at the flea market. You know, I have all these records, it would be nice to finally be able to listen to them.

Erin: That's a great idea!

Pick up on [something]

Phrasal verb, informal

When discussing an example conversation, Andrew explains the word "kiln" in case some listeners didn't "pick up on that word."

The phrasal verb **pick up on [something]** means to understand, comprehend, or become aware of something, especially something that is:

- Unclear or indirect
- Implied rather than stated directly
- Subtle or not obvious

If you pick up on something, it means you were able to detect or grasp the meaning, even though it wasn't communicated plainly.

For example, imagine you're on a first date with someone, and they give you some hints and clues, trying to let you know that they're interested in seeing you again. However, you miss all of these hints, and when they finally tell you directly, you might say, "Sorry, I didn't pick up on your signals."

Here are some more examples:

- During the lecture, I didn't pick up on all the technical terms the professor used.
- Jane picked up on the hints that her friend wasn't enjoying the movie.
- She picked up on his joke right away and laughed.

This phrasal verb is commonly used in casual conversation when something is not directly stated. Here are a couple more examples with **pick up on [something]**:

Lana: Wait, did you actually wash my favorite sweater with hot water?

Seth: Well, I thought you asked me to.

Lana: **Didn't you pick up on my sarcasm?** I was only joking about wanting it to shrink!!

Alice: I couldn't help but **pick up on the tension between Sarah and Tom** at the party last night.

Ned: Yeah, I noticed it too. I wonder what's going on between them. I'll give Tom a call later, see if he wants to talk about it.

Bring [someone] down

Phrasal verb, informal

At the end of this episode, Kassy summarizes that a "Debbie Downer" is someone who "brings others down" by frequently pointing out the negative aspects of situations.

The phrasal verb **to bring [someone] down** means to make someone feel sad or spoil their good mood. It is used when describing a situation where another person's actions or situation have a negative impact on someone's emotions.

If something brings you down, it makes you feel emotionally low, disappointed, or depressed. For example:

- That bad news really brought me down today.
- My friend's negative comments about my new job brought me down.
- My boss's criticism of my work really brings me down.

A similar expression is "get [someone] down" which means to make someone feel sad or depressed. The opposite is "lift [someone] up" which means to improve someone's mood or make them feel happier.

So, "to bring [someone] down" is an informal way to say that a person or situation makes someone feel sad, low, disappointed, or depressed. It has a negative connotation.

Here are a couple more examples with **bring [someone] down**:

Alex: Are you OK? Still upset about failing the exam?

Megan: Yeah. **It's really bringing me down.** I was sure I'd pass this time.

Alex: I see. Well, third time is the charm! If you want, I can help you prepare.

Megan: That'd be awesome! Thank you so much.

Jake: I can't stop thinking about those terrible comments someone left on my video.

Emily: Look, Jake, you know who leaves these comments? People who have no life, internet trolls. **Don't let them bring you down!**

Jake: I'll try my best, but it isn't so easy.

Quiz

1. If someone is being a wet blanket, it means that _____.

- a) they work in a fire brigade
- b) they're spoiling everyone's fun
- c) they're being positive
- d) they're afraid of something

2. Which of the following is a good example of raining on someone's parade?

- a) Your friend is getting a promotion and you celebrate with him.
- b) You left your wallet in a restaurant and it was stolen.
- c) You want to go for a walk, but it's raining.
- d) You're excited about a movie, and your friend tells you that the reviews for it are bad.

3. If you like something and want to get it, you _____.

- a) have your eye on it
- b) have your hand on it
- c) have your mind on it
- d) have your heart on it

4. To pick up on something means to _____.

- a) be offended by it
- b) obtain it
- c) understand it
- d) miss it

5. Which of the following does NOT mean to spoil someone's mood?

- a) To lift them up.
- b) To bring them down.
- c) To rain on their parade.
- d) To get them down.

Writing and Discussion Questions

1. How would you deal with someone who is being a Debbie Downer or a wet blanket?
2. Can you think of a situation when someone rained on your parade? What happened?
3. Have you ever had your eye on something for a long time before finally getting it?
4. Are you good at picking up on subtle hints in conversations?
5. Can you recall a time when someone's negativity brought you down, and how did you overcome it?

Quiz Answers

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

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