

Catch Word #279 – Over my dead body (ad free)

Episode description

In this episode of Catch Word, Andrew and Suzanne introduce two powerful English expressions that you can use to strongly say "absolutely not!" or express that something is completely impossible. The expressions they discuss are "Over my dead body" and "When hell freezes over." These are perfect for expressing firm refusal or indicating that something will never happen. Listen and learn how to use these handy sayings in your everyday English!

Fun fact

The expression "When hell freezes over" has been used in popular culture for decades. One famous example is the 1994 Eagles album titled "Hell Freezes Over." The band used this title because they had previously broken up and said they would only reunite when "hell freezes over." However, they did eventually reunite, leading to the release of the album and a successful tour.

Expressions included in the study guide

- Over my dead body
- When hell freezes over
- To be cool
- Period
- It's worth a shot
- > To not hold one's breath





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: Catchword episode 279, "Over my dead body." Featuring Andrew and

Suzanne. Hello, everybody. Today, joining me is my cohost, Suzanne. Hey there,

Suzanne. How's it going?

Suzanne: Hey, Andrew. Hey, everybody. I'm great, thank you.

Andrew: All right, Suzanne, let's get started with today's episode in earnest. And actually, what we're going to do is teach everyone out there two very interesting expressions, and they are used when you are really, really, strongly refusing something. Or when you're saying something is absolutely impossible, it will never, ever happen, never in a million years. And so, these two expressions are, they're a little bit strong. These are strong expressions. You wouldn't use them with your boss necessarily, unless you are having an argument and you wanted to quit your job or get fired. They're more like casual expressions that you would use probably more likely with your friends, but they are, "Over my dead body," and "When hell freezes over." So, we're gonna break them down and teach you guys about them today in this episode. And Suzanne, why don't we just jump in and get started with the first expression. It is, "Over my dead body." Over my dead body. Could you tell us what this means?

Suzanne: Yeah. This expression is really showing strong refusal, right? Or opposition. It means like you're totally against something and it'll only happen if and when your body is dead. Right? Like it's not gonna happen while you're alive. So, if you're alive to see it, it's definitely not happening. And so, it is drawing a very clear boundary of dislike. I don't want that to happen. It's not happening. I'm not doing it, right?



Andrew: Yeah, it means no, absolutely not. That is what it actually means. Over my dead body means absolutely not. Never, never, never. I totally disagree. I totally refuse. And so, what I think if we think about the image behind this, it's like maybe Suzanne, you wanted to borrow my bicycle, but my bicycle, you know, I love my bike. I'm very particular. I'm the only one who rides my bike. Nobody else does, OK? So, you know, this would be a little bit harsh in this situation, Suzanne, because we're friends. I wouldn't say this to you probably, but just for an example, I could say, "Suzanne, no way, over my dead body, you're not borrowing my bike." OK? What it means is if you wanna ride my bike, Suzanne, you have to kill me. I have to be dead first, because if I am alive, there is no way it is happening, right? That is kind of the nuance to this. It's like, if you wanna do this, if you want me to do this, you'd have to kill me first, because if I'm alive, I'm not agreeing to it in any capacity, in any way at all.

Suzanne: Just be careful who you say that to, 'cause then if somebody takes you literally, then they might actually wanna off ya. No... for your bike.

Andrew: Right, you know, like if you're getting mugged in a dark alley, right, and the thief, the mugger has like a gun, and he says, "Give me your wallet," and you say, "**Over my dead body**." Well.

Suzanne: Yeah, maybe that's not a place to say it, or just give them the wallet. Yeah, if they have a gun, just give them the wallet. But this is definitely like, if somebody does suggest that you do something that you really don't wanna do, you're really not comfortable with in a very extreme situation, or even in a playful situation. We're going to a party, Andrew, and they're gonna make us wear costumes to that party, and Andrew might say, "Over my dead body. I'm not wearing a costume." Over my dead body, right? 'Cause he really doesn't wanna wear a costume. So, you might say it in a joking situation, not that you're serious, you don't want to wear a costume, but it's not high stakes, it's not life or death. But there might be situations where you don't wanna do something that



someone might be asking you to do, and you're, "Heck no, **over my dead body**." So, yeah.

Andrew: Yeah, with almost every expression and so much vocabulary in English, the tone, the context is going to dictate if it is a polite or rude expression, right? If you say it the way that Suzanne said, kind of like joking way, "Over my dead body," right? Then you're not being as rude, but if you say it very firmly, very strongly, then it can have that powerful impact as well. But at the end of the day, no matter how you say it, the meaning is the same, and it just means, "No, absolutely not, I don't want to do that," or, "I don't want to allow that to happen." So, guys, with that in mind, keep that meaning in mind, now we are going to listen to two conversation examples with this expression, "Over my dead body," and we hope you will be able to learn how native speakers use this in their natural, everyday lives. So, let's take a listen to the first example now. Here we go.

Sister: You know, I think we should sell the family house and move to the city.

Brother: Over my dead body! This house has been in our family for generations.

Sister: Yeah, but think about all the benefits of living in the city.

Brother: I don't care, I'm not selling the house!

Andrew: All right, Suzanne, in that example, we heard my Canadian accent come out when I said the word "house." That's the word that I hear my Canadian accent on the most, is when I say that word, "house." So, listeners, let's break down this example. To me, Suzanne, it seemed like maybe we heard a brother and sister arguing about the family house, like maybe it was their grandparents' house or something, and one of the grandparents passed away, and then they had to think about what to do with the house. The sister, she said, "Oh, we should sell the house," and the brother firmly disagreed with



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that suggestion. He said, "**Over my dead body**," meaning absolutely no way we're not selling the house. He really firmly wanted to say no. He disagrees with that idea.

Suzanne: Yeah, like it's never gonna happen. That's not happening.

Andrew: Never gonna happen. If you wanna sell the family house, you would have to kill the brother too, because if he's alive, he's never going to agree with it, that kind of message.

Suzanne: That sounds like a big weekly drama that we can tune into on Netflix or something, right?

Andrew: Yeah, it sounds like the start to one of those true crime podcasts, almost, something like that, yeah. All right, let's take a listen to the second example now.

Brother: I'm gonna borrow your car for the weekend. **Is that cool**?

Sister: Over my dead body you are. You're a terrible driver, and I just got it serviced.

Brother: Come on, I'll be careful.

Sister: No, no way, it's not happening.

Andrew: Suzanne, I think this example was also like a brother and sister, and the reason why I think so is just because of the casual way that the brother asked to borrow the car. He didn't ask, he just said, "I'm gonna borrow your car, **is that cool**?"

Suzanne: Yeah, "**Is it cool**?" Is like kind of getting permission, but not really asking for permission, right? And yeah, the sister is like, no way, it's just not happening. You want the



car, you gotta kill me first, that's it, **period**. These are some very strong words, so use them in your joking way, but also know that they do hold a lot of power when you say that, so if you're serious, you know be serious, make sure you really feel that way.

Andrew: Exactly. OK, so Suzanne, let's move on to the second key expression for this episode, which is another kind of stronger expression, and really, I think what makes these two expressions so strong is the language inside of them, right? Dead body is like not a nice image, it's an unpleasant image, and also the second expression is "When hell freezes over." and hell obviously is also not a place that is very pleasant, right? An unpleasant place to be, I would imagine. So that's what makes these expressions really strong, and so we'll focus in on the second one now, it is when hell freezes over. Now, Suzanne, hell is a place that I imagine is supposed to be very hot, right? It's supposed to be a hot place on fire.

Suzanne: Yeah, so freezing over is not ever gonna happen in hell, right? Like there's no freezing in hell, things will melt.

Andrew: Right, there's a lot of burning and melting and heat, but there's no ice and cold and cool, right? So, **when hell freezes over**, this is like something that is impossible, it will never happen. So that is what this expression means, right? If you are saying, "Yeah, I'll do that **when hell freezes over**." It means that you're never going to do it because hell is always going to be on fire, it's never going to be cool and wintery, so it's never gonna happen.

Suzanne: It's kind of like when pigs fly.

Andrew: Yeah, that's another similar meaning.



Suzanne: It's another idiom that is similar, like pigs will never have wings, we don't think ever, I mean, we don't know, but probably not. So yeah, it's the same, "When hell freezes over," "When pigs fly", it's like, this will never happen.

Andrew: Exactly, yeah, that's great. Those two expressions have the same meaning, although I think it's maybe more common to say, "**When hell freezes over**." I personally would never say "When pigs fly," but it is an expression.

Suzanne: I think it's an older expression, like my mom would say "When pigs fly."

Andrew: Yeah, or if you just wanted to be more polite, right, it is expressing exactly the same idea, but just in a way that is a little more, well, it's a cuter expression, right? It's cute, yeah.

Suzanne: It's cuter, 'cause then you actually picture pigs flying and it's kind of cute, yeah.

Andrew: Yeah, it's just a way of saying that the chances of something happening are 0%, it's never gonna happen, right? So, like we can use it to say no as well, right? Like Suzanne, if you asked to borrow my bicycle, I could say, "Yeah, you could borrow my bicycle **when hell freezes over**", right? Like it's not gonna happen. So, let's take a listen to a couple of examples with this expression now. Here we go.

Friend 1: Do you think your boss will give you an extra week off for vacation so we can finally go on that trip to Mexico?

Friend 2: That's funny. He'll give me extra vacation time **when hell freezes over**. He's the most strict manager I've ever had.

Friend 1: Oh man, I don't think we're ever gonna go on that trip.



Andrew: All right, so Suzanne, let's break this example down for everyone. We heard two friends talking about a trip to Mexico that they are planning on taking, but in order for them to take the trip, one of the friends needs to get some time off of work, some vacation time on his job, an extra week. So, he wants to ask his boss, but he is very certain his boss will never give him the extra time off. In fact, he says, he'll give me extra vacation time **when**

Suzanne: That's just so sad. I'm just really sad for them 'cause it's so nice in Mexico.

sounds like they won't be able to take their dream trip to Mexico.

hell freezes over. Meaning he'll never get that extra vacation time. So unfortunately, it

Andrew: That's true, Suzanne, I'm sure it's a very nice place. Never been there myself, but hopefully I'll get to go there before **hell freezes over**. And with that segue, that cheesy segue, why don't we move into the second example for this expression?

Roommate 1: Do you think there's any way we could negotiate with our landlord to lower the rent for our next contract?

Roommate 2: Lower the rent? I mean, he's always increasing it, not lowering it. Yeah, he'll lower the rent **when hell freezes over**.

Roommate 1: But it's worth a shot, right? I mean, I won't hold my breath, but let's at least try.

Roommate 2: You can try.

Suzanne: So, we have two roommates, right? Roommates or whatever, maybe they're a couple or roommates, and they are wanting, well, one of them really wants to ask the landlord if they'll lower the rent. They can negotiate at least to lower the rent a little bit in the next year that maybe they'll sign the contract. And the other roommate is like, "Hello, come back to reality. This landlord is only raising the rent. He's never lowering the rent.



The only time he'll ever lower the rent is **if hell freezes over**, which we know is never." So, it's not happening. But I guess the other roommate still has a little bit of gumption or a little bit of, you know, courage and hope. So maybe he's gonna try his luck and see if he can be lucky enough to maybe make it happen.

Andrew: Yeah, maybe a hundred years ago, this kind of happened. But these days I've never heard of anybody's rent going down, just goes up, up, up, unfortunately. It's too bad. but that's seemingly the way that it goes these days. Suzanne, I just wanted to go back a little bit because I heard you use "If hell freezes over." So that's a good point. We can use this with the word "if" and also "when," right? "When hell freezes over," "If hell freezes **over**." It means exactly the same thing. So, guys, don't be confused about that. Both are totally fine and interchangeable in every situation, I think.

Suzanne: Yeah, exactly. And similarly, to what you had mentioned about the bike, right? You said, if hell freezes over, then you can borrow my bike. You know, you can use it like in that situation. Like, yeah, you can borrow my bike if hell freezes over or when hell freezes over, same scenario.

Andrew: Exactly, very good. Well, everyone, that will bring us to the end of this Catch Word episode. So, we hope that you enjoyed this one and you were able to add these two expressions "Over my dead body" and "When hell freezes over" to your vocabulary and that you will be able to understand these and maybe even use these in your own English speaking in the future. So, take care, everyone, and we'll be back soon with another brand-new Culips episode. Until then, goodbye.

Suzanne: Bye bye.

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

Detailed Explanations

Over my dead body

Idiom

The expression "over my dead body" is used when someone wants to show strong refusal or opposition to something. If you say "over my dead body," it means you are completely against something, and it will only happen if you are no longer alive. For example, if someone asks to borrow something that is very important to you, like your favorite bicycle, you might say, "Over my dead body!" This means you absolutely do not want to lend it to them, and it won't happen as long as you can stop it.

Similarly, imagine your wife asks you whether she can have the last piece of birthday cake from last night's party. If you really want to eat the cake, you can humorously claim the last piece by saying, "Over my dead body will you eat that cake!" When we add a verb after "over my dead body," it comes before the subject, as if in the question form. Another example of this would be, "Over my dead body are you allowed to borrow my car!"

This expression can be used in serious situations or in a joking way, depending on how you say it. If you say it firmly, it sounds very serious and strong, but if you say it with a lighter tone, it can be used playfully among friends. You should avoid using this expression in formal situations or at work.

Similar expressions include "when hell freezes over," "not in a million years," and "not on your life."

Here are a few more examples with **over my dead body**:

Becca: Steven, I've been thinking. Maybe we should move in with my parents for a while so we can save up money to buy a house faster.

Steven: What?! **Over my dead body**. You know how much your mom despises me. That would be a nightmare!

Josie: Daddy, can I sleepover at Cynthia's house this weekend?

Nathan: That depends. Are her parents going to be home?

Josie: Um, no...

Nathan: Josie, over my dead body are you going to spend the night at your friend's

house unsupervised.



When hell freezes over

Idiom

"When hell freezes over" is an expression that you use when you want to say that something will never happen. It's like saying, "There's no way this will ever take place." The idea behind it is that hell is a place that's always hot and full of fire, so it could never freeze. This makes the expression a strong way to say that the chances of something happening are zero. You would use "when hell freezes over" when you want to emphasize how unlikely or impossible something is.

For example, if someone asks if you think a very strict teacher will cancel a test, you might respond, "Yeah, that'll happen when hell freezes over," meaning you believe it's never going to happen. Another example might be that your brother tells you he's going to wait for housing prices to go down to buy his first home. If you believe housing prices will only get more and more expensive, you could sarcastically tell him, "Good luck, maybe you'll get to buy a house when hell freezes over."

It's important to note that this expression is quite strong and should be used in the right context. It might sound too intense or rude if used in formal situations or with people you don't know well. For example, if your boss suggests an idea, it might not be wise to respond by telling him it will succeed "when hell freezes over!"

Here are a few more examples with **when hell freezes over**:

Emily: Hey, I'm having a party on Saturday night. I think about twenty people are coming. My parents are gone for the weekend, and they said they didn't mind if I had some friends over.

John: Wow, are you serious? I'll be there. Your parents are so cool. Mine would only let me have a party at our house when hell freezes over.

Emily: Yeah, I'm lucky they're so lenient!

George: Did you ask Dad if we could skip the family reunion this year?

Brittany: Yeah, and he said we could skip it **when hell freezes over**.

George: Ugh, I wish we didn't always have to go. I can't stand our family reunions, they're

so boring.

Brittany: I know, but let's make the best of it.



To be cool Slang

In the second example conversation for "over my dead body," the brother casually asks his sister, "I'm gonna borrow your car for the weekend. **Is that cool**?" In this sentence, he's not asking about temperature or if borrowing her car is an awesome thing to do – he's asking for permission.

When someone asks if something **is cool**, they're essentially asking if it's fine with you. For example, if you want to stay at a friend's place for the night, you might say, "**Is it cool** if I crash at your place?" If you're planning to borrow a friend's book, you might ask, "Can I borrow this book? **Is that cool**?" Another example is if you want to play music in the car, you could ask the other passengers, "**Would it be cool** if I put on some music?"

You can use **to be cool** in your response as well. You can say, "Sure, **that's cool** with me," or "Yeah, **that's cool**." If you want to refuse the request, you might say, "**I'm not cool** with that," or "**That's not** really **cool** with me."

This slang expression is often used among friends or in informal settings. It would be inappropriate to ask your boss, "Are you cool with that?" when asking permission for something at work. In these more formal situations, it's better to say something like "Is that acceptable?" or "Is that all right?"

Here are a couple more examples of how to use "to be cool":

Charlie: I'm going to take the last slice of pizza. **Is that cool** with everyone?

Daria: Go for it. I'm full.

Charlie: Sweet, thank you!

Liam: I'm thinking of bringing a few friends over for a movie night tomorrow. Would that **be cool** with you?

Maya: Yeah, that sounds fun. Just as long as they're okay with watching something light—I've had a tough week and could use a good laugh.

Liam: Totally, a comedy sounds great. I'll make sure to grab some extra snacks at the grocery store after work, too.

Maya: Great!



Period

Interjection

"Period" is an emphatic interjection used in English to show that a statement is final and non-negotiable. It is often used to emphasize that there is nothing more to say on the matter, and the speaker does not want to discuss it further.

This expression comes from the punctuation "." which signals the end of a sentence. In spoken language, saying "Period." after your statement adds emphasis, much like saying, "And that's final" or "End of story." It is often used in informal settings when someone wants to assert their opinion or decision in a way that leaves no room for debate. However, because "Period." can come across as strong or even aggressive, it's important to use it carefully.

For example, you might hear someone say, "I'm not going to that party, **period**," to express that they have made up their mind and are not willing to discuss it further. Similarly, a parent might say to their child, "You are not going out tonight, **period**," to indicate that the decision is final.

Another fun, similar expression to **period** is "No ifs, ands, or buts." This refers to the kinds of words people might use when they are trying to argue or persuade someone to change their mind. For example, if someone says, "But I need more time!" or "What if I do it later?" or "And also, I have other things to do," they are trying to convince the other person to be more flexible. By saying "No ifs, ands, or buts," the speaker is shutting down any of these arguments before they even start. It's a way to say, "Don't even try to argue with me."

Here are a few more examples with **period**:

Tiffany: Can we reschedule the meeting to next week?

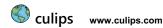
Richard: No way. We've already postponed it twice. It's happening tomorrow, **period.**

Tiffany: Alright...

Larry: Baby, give me one more chance! I'm sorry I lied to you. I really am. It won't happen again.

Evelyn: No, Larry. I have given you so many chances and you have betrayed my trust time and time again. It's over between us. **Period.**

Larry: Please, I need you in my life! Don't be like this!



It's worth a shot

Expression

The expression "It's worth a shot" is used when you think something is worth trying, even if it might not succeed. In the second example dialogue for "when hell freezes over," one roommate suggests asking their landlord to lower the rent, even though the other roommate is doubtful it will work. The first roommate acknowledges that it might not be likely, but thinks it's still worth attempting, saying, "It's worth a shot."

The expression means that although the chances of success are low, trying might still lead to a positive outcome, so it's better to try than not to try at all. For instance, if you apply for a job you don't feel fully qualified for, you might think, "Well, why not? **It's worth a shot,"** because there's always a chance that you'll get it.

To remember this expression, think of shooting an arrow at a target. You probably won't get a bullseye, but why not try? There's no harm in trying to shoot the arrow – **it's worth a shot!**

Common mistakes to avoid:

- Don't use it's worth a shot for situations where the outcome is certain. For
 example, if you know the answer to a simple math problem, saying, "I'll try to solve
 it. It's worth a shot!" wouldn't make sense.
- Don't use it's worth a shot if there's a significant chance of harm or risk. For instance, you would NOT say, "Why don't you spend all of your life savings on the lottery? It's worth a shot!"

Here are a couple more examples with it's worth a shot:

Riley: I heard about this new startup company that's hiring, but I don't have much experience in that industry. Do you think I should apply?

William: Startups are usually looking for fresh perspectives. Even if you don't have the exact experience, your skills could still be valuable to them. **It's worth a shot!**

Rudy: I'm considering reaching out to my old college professor for a recommendation letter, but we haven't spoken in years. Do you think he'll remember me?

Amanda: Professors meet a lot of students, but if you remind him of who you are and what you accomplished in his class, he might be happy to help. Even if he has forgotten you, what's the worst that could happen? **It's worth a shot.**



To not hold one's breath Idiom

In the second example dialogue for "when hell freezers over," two roommates are discussing whether it's possible to negotiate with their landlord to lower the rent. One of the roommates suggests trying to ask, even though they doubt it will work. The other roommate responds, "I won't hold my breath," which means they don't expect the landlord to agree.

"To not hold one's breath" is used when you think something is unlikely to happen, or you have little hope that something will succeed. Saying "I'm not holding my breath" is like saying, "I don't expect this to work out."

For example, if someone is waiting for an important email reply but knows the person usually takes a long time to respond, they might say, "I sent the email, but I'm not holding my breath for a response today." This means they don't expect a quick response, so they're not getting their hopes up.

The origin of the expression comes from the idea of holding your breath (purposefully stopping breathing). Since you can't hold your breath for very long, saying "I'm not holding my breath" means you don't expect the event to happen anytime soon, or maybe not at all. To remember this expression, think of waiting for something while holding your breath—if it's going to take a long time or might not happen, you wouldn't keep holding vour breath.

Some similar expressions include "Don't get your hopes up" and "I wouldn't count on it."

Here are a few more examples with **to not hold one's breath**:

Tom: I'm thinking of asking my boss for a raise. I've been working really hard this past year.

Isabella: It's worth asking, but **I wouldn't hold my breath** if I were you. He's known for being pretty stingy when it comes to raises, especially with the recent company budget cuts.

Jessica: My cousin said she might be able to get us free concert tickets for next weekend. Isn't that awesome?

Derrek: That sounds great, but I'm not holding my breath. Remember last time when she promised those football tickets and it never happened?

Jessica: Good point...



Expression Quiz

1. If someone says, "You can eat the last cookie over my dead body," what do they mean?

- a) They do not care if you eat the last cookie.
- b) They will allow you to eat the last cookie.
- c) They will bake more cookies.
- d) They refuse to let you have the last cookie.

2. Which of the following situations would it NOT make sense to use the idiom "When hell freezes over" for?

- a) Your friend asks if you'll run a marathon with them, but you hate running.
- b) Your colleague suggests asking the boss for an extra week of vacation, but the boss is known for never granting extra time off.
- c) Your friend invites you to attend a music festival with several of your favourite musicians.
- d) Your sibling asks if you'll lend them money, but you strongly believe they won't pay you back.

3. If someone says, "Is it cool if I invite Sarah to the party?" what are they asking?

- a) If it's acceptable to invite Sarah.
- b) If Sarah is a cool person.
- c) If the party will be air-conditioned.
- d) If inviting Sarah would be an awesome thing to do.

4. Which of the following is a situation where you might say "It's worth a shot"?

- a) You're sure you'll win the lottery.
- b) You're considering trying something new, even though it might not work.
- c) You know you're guaranteed to get the job.
- d) You're planning a trip that you've already booked.

5. When someone ends a sentence with "Period," what are they indicating?

- a) They are asking a question.
- b) They are being sarcastic.
- c) They are emphasizing that there's no more discussion on the matter.
- d) They are open to further conversation.



Listening Comprehension Quiz

- 6) In the first example dialogue for "over my dead body" with the brother and sister, what is the sister suggesting?
- 7) What does the brother ask to borrow in the second example conversation for "over my dead body"?
- 8) What cuter synonymous expression does Suzanne share as an alternative for "When hell freezes over"?
- 9) In the first example for "when hell freezes over" with the two friends, what does one friend want to do that the other thinks is impossible?
- 10) What do the two roommates want to negotiate with their landlord in the second example dialogue for "when hell freezes over"?

Writing and Discussion Questions

- 1. What is something you would try "when hell freezes over" (in other words, something you would never, ever try)? Please explain.
- 2. Have you ever told someone "Over my dead body!" or "Not in a million years!" or "Absolutely no way!" What did you refuse?
- 3. Have there been any situations or challenges in your life that seemed unlikely to succeed but you decided it was worth a shot and tried anyway? Did it work out in the end?
- 4. What's a risk you would never take, even if the potential rewards were high?
- 5. Can you think of a commitment or promise you would never break, no matter the circumstances? What makes it so important to you?



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Quiz Answers

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

6. The sister suggests selling the family house and moving to the city.

- 7. The brother asks to borrow his sister's car for the weekend.
- 8. When pigs fly.
- 9. One friend wants to ask for an extra week off for vacation, but the other thinks it's impossible.
- 10. The cost of their rent.

Episode credits

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