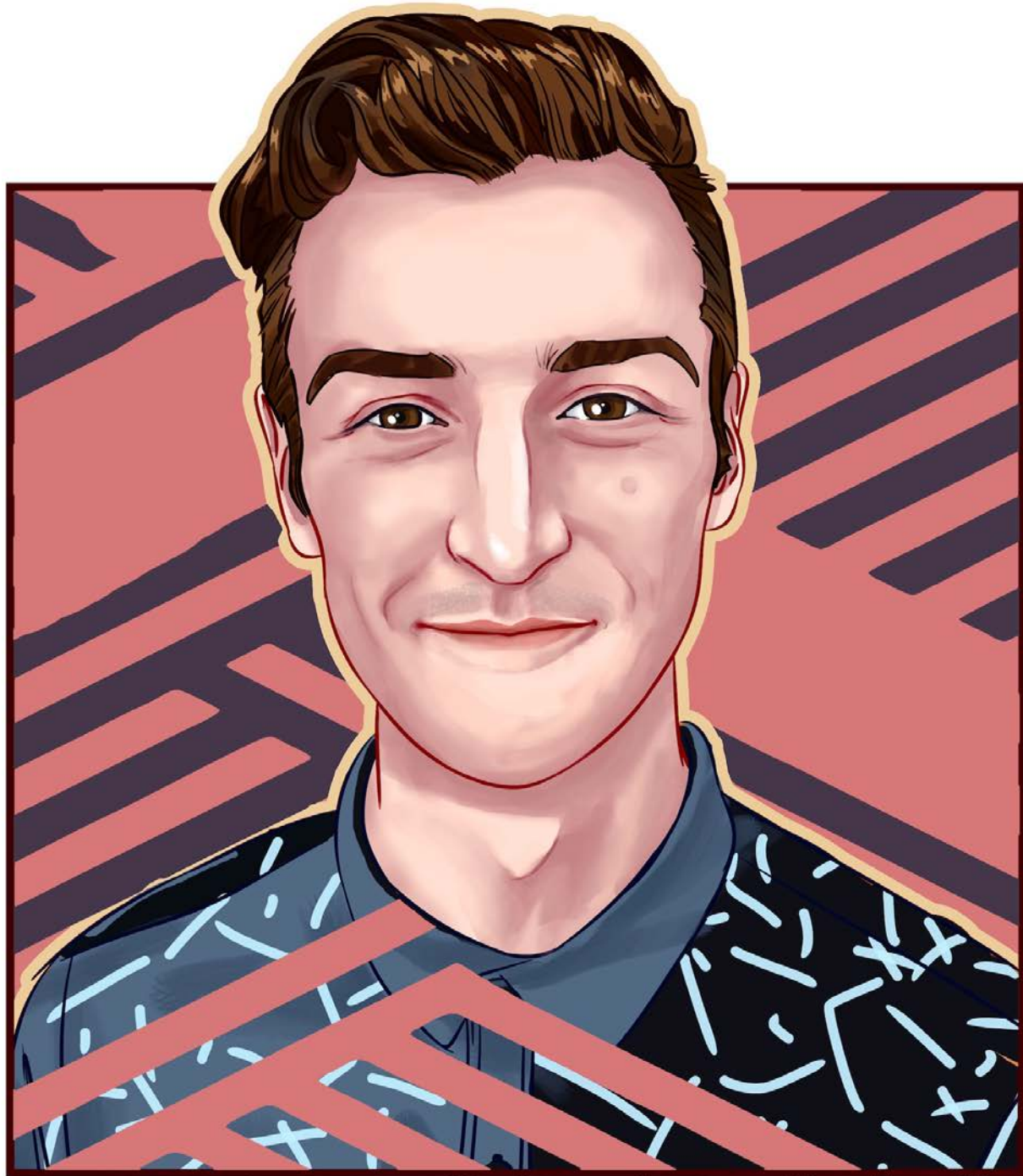


# Jeremy's English Tips

Episode #10: The last straw



**Culips English Podcast**

# Transcript

Hello everyone, this is Jeremy and you're listening to Jeremy's English Tips, a series by the Culips English Podcast where I teach you interesting expressions or share language learning tips.

I will be sharing an idiomatic expression with you today. I hope you're excited. Now before I get started explaining the expression, I'd like to remind you that we have a study guide available for this episode at [Culips.com](https://culips.com). If you head on over to [Culips.com](https://culips.com), you can find out how to download that study guide and follow along as you listen. So, our expression for today is **the last straw**, the last straw.

Now, straw, these days, we tend to think of straw as something that you drink out of. But that's actually not what this expression means. In this expression, straw is something that horses eat, or camels eat. Large animals like that they eat hay. H-a-y is another word for it. And one piece of hay, sometimes we call straw, a straw. Now, this expression comes from a longer expression, and the longer version is less commonly used, but still, most native English speakers will know this phrase, so I'll share it with you as well. The phrase is **the straw that broke the camel's back**.

Now, imagine that we're looking at a camel, OK? Camels are very commonly used to carry things on their back long distances, usually through the desert or hot places. And so, let's imagine we are placing pieces of hay or straws onto the camel's back, one by one by one by one. Now, of course, this would take a long time, but eventually, you would make the load of hay too heavy for the camel. At some point, inevitably, the load would become too heavy for the camel to carry. There is a point where one single straw will make the load too heavy and will break the camel's back. This is how we got the expression, the straw that broke the camel's back, and it is often simplified or shortened to **the last straw**.

So, what is the meaning of this expression? The meaning is the last event, usually this is an event, like something that someone does or something that happens. **It is the last in a series of events that causes a big problem, and usually, it is a small thing, like a straw.**

So, let's look at two situations to help you understand how this phrase is used. In situation one, let's say that Jeremy hates his job, and has been thinking about quitting for a long time. He is talking to his coworker.

You know, I've been thinking about quitting for a few months now. But when Alex took my parking spot on Monday, I decided to put in my two weeks, that was **the last straw**.

In this example, Jeremy explains how he has been thinking about quitting his job for quite some time. Over that time, we can infer that lots of things happened that Jeremy did not like. Over time, those little things accumulated and when his coworker Alex took his parking spot, that was the last straw. We can also infer that at this company, each person has their own assigned parking spot. Sometimes this is common in companies in North America.

Also in this example, Jeremy says that he decided to put in his two weeks. What this means is that he decided to quit. It is also common with many North American companies to give your company a two week or one month notice before you actually quit. So, instead of quitting one day and not showing up the next day, you tell your company that you are quitting and give them some time to find a replacement.

Now, this small thing, Alex taking his parking spot, was the last straw. It was the last in a long series of events that pushed Jeremy over the edge, we can say, or made him decide to quit. Now let's look at the second situation here.

Jeremy is having trouble with his neighbors at his apartment complex. The neighbors play music very loud all day and even late at night. A friend of Jeremy's is visiting him and his friend notices the loud music and comments on how loud it is.

Friend:	Wow, it's 11pm and it sounds like they're having a dance party over there. What the...?
Jeremy:	I know, right? You know what, that's <b>the last straw</b> . I'm calling the police. I've tried telling them to keep it down multiple times, but clearly they're not listening. This is ridiculous!

In this situation, Jeremy is fed up with his neighbors. He has no more patience. He has tried to tell his neighbors to turn down the music multiple times. But this time he realizes it's not going to work. So, he decides to call the police and let them handle it.

In many places in North America, there is a noise curfew. That means that any loud music or excessively loud noise after a certain time at night, usually 10pm, is considered a crime. This is meant to preserve the silence and maintain a comfortable living situation for everybody in the area. Jeremy's neighbors have not respected this rule. And as a result, he is calling the police. This single event is the last event in a long series of events that has caused Jeremy to make the decision to call the police. In other words, this was the last straw.

Okay everyone, I have a feeling that all of you will find a way to use this in your life. But if not, you will definitely hear it. If you are watching movies or tv shows in English or if you are conversing with English speakers, this phrase the last straw is very, very commonly used. So, I would like to challenge you to go out and find it in the real world and let us know.

You can contact us on social media, Instagram, Facebook, Twitter, YouTube, you name it, we're there. You can also send us an email at [contact@culips.com](mailto:contact@culips.com), if you'd like as well. Thank you for listening today and I'll catch you in the next episode. Bye for now.

# Extra example sentences

- My husband cheating on me was the last straw. I filed for divorce right after I found out.
- Getting my car broken into was the last straw. After that, I finally bought a car alarm.
- The terrible sales report was the last straw. When he saw it, the CEO instantly fired the management team.
- I'm warning you this is the last straw! If you are late for class one more time, you're going to get an F!

## Writing and Discussion Questions

1. In your life, have you ever had a “last straw” moment, where an event finally pushed you to make a decision or take action? Describe that time.
2. In your native language, do you have an idiomatic expression that is similar to **the last straw**? Write or talk about how it is similar or different.
3. In this episode, Jeremy explains some important concepts about North American company culture. In your country, is it common for employees to have a reserved parking space? When someone quits, do they have to give two weeks notice? Discuss the similarities or differences in business culture in North America and your home country.

# Study Challenges

1. Write five example sentences using the expression **the last straw**.
2. Find an example of a native English speaker using **the last straw** in a movie, TV show, or podcast. Email us at [contact@culips.com](mailto:contact@culips.com) to let us know where you found it.

## Credits

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