

## Chatterbox #106 – Introducing Emily

### Informal Contractions in this Episode

Informal contractions are unofficial short forms of other words, and they're usually only used in casual conversation. For example, when a native English speaker talks casually, they might say *gonna* instead of *going to*, or *whaddya* instead of *what do you*. Even though informal contractions are usually only used in spoken English, we include them in the Culips written transcripts to help you get used to how they're used and what they sound like.

These are the informal contractions used in today's episode, along with their meanings:

- **'cause**: because
- **gonna**: going to

### Transcript

Maura: Hello everyone. It's Maura, and I am back with another Culips English episode for you. Now, if it's your first time listening and you've never heard of us before, you should definitely go to our website, Culips.com, that's C-U-L-I-P-S.com, because only on our website can you become a member. And when you become a member, you have access to the transcripts for all of our episodes, more detailed explanations of the expressions we use, and quizzes. This can only help to enrich your Culips experience. You can also visit us on Facebook.

Now today's episode is a Chatterbox episode, and that is where we chat about all different kinds of topics and sometimes we also interview people. And that is what we're going to do today. And today I'm super excited about our guest. Our guest today is my friend Emily, and she is originally from Montreal, although she has lived in a lot of different places and she's done a lot of travelling. And whenever she comes back from one of her stints abroad, she always has really great stories to tell, so I'm really excited for her to share some of that with you.

Currently, Emily is living and working in Montreal. And she trained as a nurse, and so a lot of her work has been done around nursing and public health. So, the first question I wanted to ask you, Emily, is what made you decide to become a nurse? How did you get interested in nursing?

- Emily: I'm not sure exactly when I decided to become a nurse. I think it was just gradual. I was always interested, when I was young, in the human body and how humans work and how we think. And eventually, when it became time to choose a program at university, I looked at all the things I was interested in and what's important to me, and it became clear that that's where I would start, with a degree in nursing 'cause I felt that I could continue my interest in health and biology. And we also do a lot of psychology in nursing, and teaching, and health promotion, things like that. So that's... I ended up deciding that nursing would be the best fit for me.
- Maura: OK. Cool. And after you finished your nursing degree, did you work around Montreal, or in Canada, or did you just **take off** right away?
- Emily: I stayed in Ottawa at first, for 3 years. That's where I attended university, and I worked there as a pediatric nurse for 3 years in different parts of the Children's Hospital in Ottawa.
- Maura: OK, OK. Then at some point after these 3 years, you decided that you wanted to move around and do nursing in the US. So I'm really curious how all that **came about** and how you decided that you wanted to go try working in America.
- Emily: So going back, I guess, to why I became a nurse, that was also one of the reasons, was because I enjoy travelling and seeing other cultures. So after having a few years in one place to introduce myself to the profession and become more comfortable, I felt I was ready to try and work in a different place, a different setting, and also to explore another part, and I chose the United States because I had some friends and colleagues who were also interested and I thought it would be a great way also to learn some more Spanish, 'cause I wanted to work on Spanish as well, and I know in a lot of parts of the United States that is the second language spoken and there's a lot of opportunity to practice. And I also was interested in trying a different part of the continent, different climate from Montreal and Ottawa.
- Maura: Well, now I'm curious, because I didn't know that. Spanish? Did you actually get a chance to work on your Spanish while you were there?
- Emily: I did, actually. I had taken some courses before moving... And before moving, yes, I had spent about 4 months in South America as well, where I was able to learn some more Spanish. And then I started working in California, where the majority of the patients I would see every day were Spanish, and often Spanish-speaking only, so I was able to practice, and hopefully, I believe they did understand me a little bit, practice with patients and families and continue that part of my learning.

- Maura: Oh, cool. So, the first place that you went was California. And what other places in the US did you live and work?
- Emily: Well, I was in California, on and off, for over... about 3 years. But in between, I did complete some contracts in Colorado and one in Massachusetts as well.
- Maura: So, hmm. What was your favourite place in the US? Because unfortunately, there's not enough time to ask you about every place, or I would. So which place was your favourite, and why?
- Emily: Well, that's difficult to answer, because I feel in a way it's... Comparing cities and states is like **comparing apples and oranges**, as we say, because they're quite different. And you might like something for a different reason.
- So I really enjoyed my time in California. I lived in three different cities: San Diego, Los Angeles, and San Francisco. And they are each quite different, but of course, I did enjoy living by the ocean and having that different type of climate and different type of culture from what I was used to in Montreal.
- And Colorado I enjoyed for the Rockies, the mountains, the huge mountains, and all the outdoor activities. And Massachusetts was nice because it felt closer to home, and it was quite similar, but still a different culture, and I was able to see what the East Coast of the continent was like in one particular city.
- Maura: You know, I can't help but notice that you said it allowed you to experience a different climate, which I know is probably a really nice way of saying that you could get away from the Canadian winter and be in California over those really cold months. Is that what you're trying to say?
- Emily: **In a nutshell.** I was looking forward to experiencing different types of climates, because in my travels, I tend to go in warm countries and I really do naturally enjoy that more, so that was a big draw to go to California, to be able to live by the ocean, have sun most of the days, surf, swim. So that was definitely a bonus that came with the work that I was doing.
- Maura: You know, I was just thinking about how lucky it is to have a job where you can travel so easily. I know it's the same with teaching and nursing too, where you're able to further your career and do work in an area that you love and travel at the same time.
- Now, after you spent some time in the US, you decided that you needed to travel even farther away, I guess, because then you got involved with the organization Doctors Without Borders, and you began travelling to even more foreign countries and doing work there. How did you decide to become involved with doing humanitarian work abroad?

Emily: I think I was always interested in what's going on beyond our own borders and what's going on in other countries and cultures, and I also felt quite fortunate having been born in Canada and having all the benefits that come from that.

So I felt it was time, again, for a change and time for different challenges, so that's when I joined the organization. I had known some colleagues who had worked for the organization, and as a student in university, I had worked on a volunteer project in Africa, in Malawi, and that really **piqued my interest** to continue more of that work. So after having a few years of experience **under my belt**, I decided I was ready for the new challenge.

Maura: You know, I'm learning even more about you today because I'm asking questions and then you mention that you also went to Malawi, and you were in South America, so wow! Anyway, there's a lot I still don't know, I guess.

So, you have a handful of really amazing experiences doing humanitarian work abroad and I know that every time you came home I was always excited to see some of the pictures that you took and hear the stories of what it was like, and again, I wish I could ask you about all of them, but I'm hoping you can think of one really interesting or intriguing story that you experienced while you were away in one of these faraway places.

Emily: Each project I did in humanitarian work was different, and they were usually in response to a humanitarian emergency such, as a famine or a disease outbreak, like an epidemic, and sometimes after a natural disaster, such as an earthquake.

So, again, each was very different. I think maybe what I also learned from it and took away from it was realizing how similar every... we all are, no matter what country or culture you're in. And that's often the big lesson that you learn when you do travel, is that everyone is pretty similar and does want the same things out of life, but sometimes things such as natural disasters or wars or other events **get in the way**.

I've been lucky to experience a lot of different cultures and work in a lot of different settings, so I do have a lot of stories, but just thinking of one, maybe going back a couple of years now, I was working in the Democratic Republic of Congo for a vaccination campaign, so to respond to a measles outbreak, or epidemic. And part of the population that we were trying to reach to give vaccinations and to find people who were sick who needed medical care, lived along the Congo river, which is a very long river that runs across the country, and so it goes basically from the east to the west of the continent almost.

So we had to reach those villages, but there was no roads, so they themselves get around via the river and through... in canoes and boats, so it was a challenge for our team 'cause normally we work... We're able to get to places in trucks or cars or motorbikes or bicycles.

So we had to first find a boat that we could rent that was big enough and safe enough to hold all of our vaccines, our medication, our staff, and so that we could sleep for about a week or longer, so tents and supplies and some food and first aid kits and things like that, so it was quite an adventure.

At one point, I was able to go with one of teams down the river so we basically packed up a big boat with all of our things but we weren't able to find a boat that didn't have any holes, so with the boat came a full-time bailer, which is the person who runs from one end of the boat to the other trying to fix the holes and scoop out the water with a bucket, and that was a full-time job for our boat ride, which... We were **on the water** probably about 4 or 6 hours a day.

So that was quite an experience, because in the river were hippos and **crocs** and lots of fish, but that was something to think about with the holey boat. So it was a really interesting experience, because I got to see a lot of villages, got to see people who live on these small islands, sometimes reed islands that are almost like floating islands, and they make their living through fishing, mostly, and also trade along the river.

So it was great to experience that culture. And they were great, wonderful people, and happy to see us and very welcoming for us to stay with them for the week.

Maura: Wow. Yeah. I can only imagine what that must've been like, and it does sound amazing. I'm sure for a lot of people listening, as well, it's something that they can only imagine. Or who knows where people are listening from? Maybe it sounds very familiar and you've done something like that too. I don't know. We all have different experiences.

I just realized, as well, that I've never even asked you to tell us which countries that you had gone to to do humanitarian work. Can you just tell us which countries you visited?

Emily: Sure. Umm... The first one after doing the project in university, in Malawi, after that was I went to Uganda for 6 months. And that's in East Africa. Following that, I worked in Haiti, in **the Caribbean**. And then in Chad, which is in, almost, north-central Africa. And then in the Democratic Republic of Congo, and then I went back to Chad again last year.

Maura: Wow. I'm jealous a little bit, I have to say. I love travelling and visiting places, especially places so different from our own countries. It's really an **eye-opening** experience.

So, now, with all of this amazing travelling, how and why did you decide to stop doing it? Because, as I said at the beginning of this episode, now you are working and living in Montreal. So why did you decide to stop?

Emily: Well, I don't say I've stopped, I'm just unpacked for a while because I was... I did enjoy the life and the challenges and the excitement, but after a while I was craving no longer **living out of a suitcase** for a little bit, being able to unpack and having my own space and being able to enjoy my friends and family here in Montreal.

So I was also ready at that point of my career to do a little bit more of specialization in public health so that if I did continue with humanitarian work, I would have new skills and more to offer to the job. So that required staying in one place and working and re-specializing. So it's almost been a year that I've been back here in Montreal.

Maura: I was just gonna ask you that: how long it's been. And so how's it been going? How do you like working a **quote unquote** regular job and living in one place. How has this past year gone for you?

Emily: Well, it's been interesting. It's the first time in my life I've had a Monday-to-Friday, 9-to-5 job, and the first time in 8 years that I have been living in one place for longer than a few months.

So, I think... It was very fun at first to be home and experiencing all the things, and you really appreciate the things that you have missed. And it's great to come back and just have... Let's say, look at how huge our grocery stores are and all the choices and be able to see your friends and family, not miss events. So I do like that.

And the 9-to-5, Monday-to-Friday, was nice also, to have a bit of a normal life. It does take adjustment because I'm used to working very hard a lot of hours, and then having larger chunks of time off, so this is more of a regular life, regular schedule, but it's allowed me to participate in more activities at home.

Maura: And do you still get **that itch** once in a while? Are you still thinking about where you could go? Or maybe daydreaming that you were going somewhere?



Emily: Definitely. For the first few months, I was happy just to be home and be unpacked and not **live out of a suitcase**, as I said before, but after a few months, I do start to... especially I have a lot of colleagues and friends who are still doing that type of work and still travelling a lot.

And so I know they work very hard, but as we sometimes say, **the grass is always greener on the other side**, so it's nice to... Sometimes I do wish I could pack up and **take off**, but I do enjoy my work here and my life, and I think I will continue to travel. But sometimes you just need to stop for a little bit and regroup and think about what's next.

Maura: Yeah, I definitely agree. It's nice to have **a home base**, as well. Now, we've talked about the fact that you're from Montreal and that you've travelled all over, you've had these amazing experiences and now I'm gonna bring the question back home again.

What do you think, after having been to all these places, what does Montreal have to offer? What makes it an interesting city and a good place to live or visit?

Emily: Well, that's a pretty broad question, but a good question. I do think it's a great city, and I think I can say that because I have lived in many other places, which I enjoyed, but when you've been able to leave home and come back, you do appreciate it more.

I like Montreal. It's not... It's one of the major cities in the country, but it's a relatively small city, so it's... I feel like we have a lot within such a small city... a lot of... It's very multicultural, the artistic scene is very important here, and culture, and museums and art and shows. and I do like the multicultural influence we have. So you kind of have access to almost every little part of the world here, within a relatively small geographical space.

Maura: Hmm. I like the way you said that, that we have access to many different parts of the world in Montreal. I think that's a good way of looking at it.

OK, so like I said—I've said this so many times in this episode, but I feel like we could talk so much more, because I know that you have so many amazing experiences to talk about. And I think that a lot of people listening to our podcast as well love travelling and love learning about different cultures because, well, they're learning English and that's definitely one language that opens the door to many cultures, too. So, I will say thank you so much for letting me interview you.

Emily: You're welcome.

Maura: And don't forget to visit our website, Culips.com, that's C-U-L-I-P-S.com. And become a member, because when you become a member, you have access to additional learning resources, that we call Learning Materials, that include a transcript, more detailed explanations, and a quiz for every episode. Don't forget, you can also talk to us on Facebook and say hi on Twitter. Harp and I are online. So we will talk to you again soon.



## Detailed Explanation

### To take off

**To take off** means to leave and go somewhere else, usually after staying in one place for a while. This comes from an expression used for airplanes. When an airplane starts to fly after speeding down the runway, this is called taking off.

In this episode, Maura uses the expression **to take off** to ask Emily whether she left to go travelling right after school, or whether she stayed home for a while to work.

Here's another example with **to take off**:

Fiona: Hi! I didn't know you were going to be at this party! I would've come earlier.

Diego: Yeah, I've been here for a few hours. I may **take off** soon. I'm getting tired.

Fiona: I understand. Will you dance to one song with me before you go?

Diego: Sure!

### To come about

**To come about** means to happen or to take place. This expression is often used when discussing the cause of something happening, or what made something take place.

In this episode, Maura uses this expression when asking Emily what caused her to go to the US to work after working in Canada for 3 years. Maura asks Emily how that decision **came about**, meaning that she wants to know what caused Emily to make that decision.

Here's another example with **to come about**:

Madison: I can't believe we'll start college in a month!

Vlad: Actually, I'm taking a year off before I go to college.

Madison: Oh, really? How did that **come about**?

Vlad: I just want to travel and see more of the world while I'm young.

Madison: That's great! Have fun.

### To compare apples and oranges

**To compare apples and oranges** means to compare two things that can't really be compared. This is an expression used when someone is trying to see similarities in two completely different things, or using the qualifications or definition of one thing to describe or evaluate something completely different. If someone asked you to compare the taste of an apple to the taste of an orange, it would be difficult, because they are so different. In the same way, if someone called an apple a bad orange, this wouldn't necessarily be incorrect, but it would be silly because an apple is not an orange, so it can't be compared to one or described as though it should be like one.

In this episode, Emily uses this phrase to tell Maura that comparing cities seems impossible, because they are so different that comparing them would be like using the criteria and traits of an apple to describe an orange.

Here's another example with **to compare apples and oranges**:

Hailey: Have you heard from any of the colleges you applied to?

Juan: I have, and I got accepted into both of them!

Hailey: Oh, wow! How will you decide which one to go to?

Juan: It's going to be difficult, because it's sort of like **comparing apples and oranges**.

Hailey: How so?

Juan: Each school has different specialities, so it all depends on what I decide to major in. One school focuses on drama, and the other focuses on science. So, they're very different schools.

Hailey: Ah, I see. Well, good luck making your decision!

### In a nutshell

**In a nutshell** means in summary, or in short. It's a way to say that you are describing something in very few words, or just giving a short description of something. It can also mean that you are describing only the most significant or important part of something. **In a nutshell** is another way of saying to make a long story short.

The origin of this expression goes all the way back to the Roman philosopher Cicero (as far back as 106 years BC), who apparently said that he once saw the entire Iliad, a famous Greek poem, written on a single piece of parchment that could fit inside a nutshell. Since the Iliad is actually a very long story (about 15,693 lines), fitting it inside a nutshell would literally be making a long story very short.

Here's another example with **in a nutshell**:

Alma: How was your weekend?

Jayden: Stressful. I met my girlfriend's parents for the first time!

Alma: Oh, that can be scary! How did it go?

Jayden: It's a long story, but **in a nutshell**, we spent most of the weekend in awkward silence not talking to each other.

Alma: Oh no. Well, when you have more time, I want to hear all the details! I'm sure it wasn't as bad as you think.

### To pique someone's interest

**To pique someone's interest** means to excite or provoke their interest. When writing this expression, people sometimes mistakenly write **peak** or **peek**, because these words are pronounced the same way.

But this expression comes from the French word *pique*, which means to give a shot or injection. When you go to the doctor to get a shot, the injection is usually to boost your immune system or increase your health. In the same way, **to pique someone's interest** is to give their interest a boost, or increase their interest. The spelling of the word in the English expression is a bit different than it is in French, but the meaning is pretty much the same.

Here's another example with **to pique someone's interest**:

Zoe: What classes are you taking this semester?

Pedro: I'm pretty much taking the same courses as last semester, just the next level up.

Zoe: Oh, really? But there are so many new electives offered this semester!

Pedro: I know, but none of them really **piqued my interest**, so I'm just going to stick with my old ones.

#### To have something under your belt

**To have something under your belt** means to have accomplished, succeeded in, or finished something that may be of use in the future. The origin of this expression is believed to be related to eating food. If you've eaten a meal and it's now in your stomach, it's under your belt. Food is nourishment and fuel for life, the same way that experience or education is. So, if something **is under your belt**, it's something good for you that you have finished.

Here's another example with **to have something under your belt**:

Rosalie: How'd the job interview go?

Aziz: Pretty well. I think they liked my education and experience. They were really impressed with my knowledge of Italian.

Rosalie: I hear that it's really good to know another language when you apply for jobs.

Aziz: Yeah. I was really glad **to have Italian under my belt**. I think it may have gotten me the job.

#### To get in the way of something

**To get in the way of something** means to block something from happening. In this episode, Emily uses this expression to talk about her experiences doing humanitarian work overseas. Emily says that while doing this work, she realized how similar people are, and how we all want the same things. She also realized that sometimes things like wars and natural disasters **get in the way of**—or block people from—achieving this goal.

Here's another example with **to get in the way of something**:

Yasmine: Do you want to watch a movie tonight?

Barbara: I do, but I really have to finish this assignment.

Yasmine: Can't you take a break? The movie will only be a couple of hours.

Barbara: I know, but I find that taking breaks **gets in the way of** me finishing assignments. I get really easily distracted and then I get lazy.

Yasmine: OK, maybe on the weekend we can see a movie then.

### On the water

**On the water** can mean a variety of things. In the way it is used in this episode, when Emily talks about being on the water, it means on a boat or raft or some other floating device.

**On the water** can also mean near the water, like when talking about a cottage or a house. A cottage is said to be **on the water** if it is by the shore. **On the water** can either mean on top of or floating on the water, or it can mean right beside the water, but it never means in the water. For example, if you are swimming, you are not **on the water**, you're in the water.

Here are another couple of examples with **on the water**:

Effie: Do you want to come to my cottage this weekend?

Ethan: I didn't know you had a cottage!

Effie: Yeah, we do. It's on Lake Huron, right **on the water**.

Ethan: Wow! Do you have a boat?

Effie: We have a couple of canoes. I love to get out **on the water** on a nice day.

Ethan: Sounds great. I'd love to come!

### A croc

In this episode, Emily uses the word **crocs**. For people who don't speak English regularly, this may sound like a new type of animal. But the word **croc** is actually just short for *crocodile*. There are a few types of animals that we often shorten the names of. This is not very consistent, and sort of random. For example, crocodiles can be called **crocs**, alligators can be called gators, rhinoceroses can be called rhinos, and hippopotamuses can be called hippos.

### The Caribbean

**The Caribbean** is a group of islands, coasts, and bodies of water that are located to the southeast of Mexico and to the north of South America. **The Caribbean** is made up of several countries, territories, and regions. Cuba, which is a republic, is considered to be part of **the Caribbean**, as well as the island country of Jamaica, and the Commonwealth of Puerto Rico. What all these places have in common is that they are located in the **Caribbean Sea**. The **Caribbean Sea** is a body of water that is part of the Atlantic Ocean.

In English, there are two ways to pronounce the word **Caribbean**. In one, the emphasis is on the third syllable: care-uh-BEE-in. In the other, the emphasis is on the second syllable: cuh-RIB-ee-un.

Here's another example with **the Caribbean**:

Karolina: Do you know where you're going for your trip yet?

Hana: Well, we're thinking about somewhere in **the Caribbean**.

Karolina: I love **the Caribbean**! I think my favourite place is Jamaica, but Cuba is really nice, too.

Hana: Yeah, There are so many different places in **the Caribbean**! It's such a big region it can be overwhelming to choose just one place to go!

Karolina: Well, there are **Caribbean** cruises that travel to all the different regions.

Hana: Oh, that's a great idea. Thanks!

### Eye-opening

An **eye-opening** experience is one that broadens your perception of things or gets you to look at things from a different point of view. If you think about opening your eyes, it means that you are seeing something. So, if something is **eye-opening**, it implies that your eyes were closed before and it makes you open them. Of course, the adjective **eye-opening** doesn't literally mean that you open your eyes after they were closed. It means that you were unaware of or oblivious to something before seeing it, as if your eyes were closed to it.

Here's another example with **eye-opening**:

Georgia: What did you do this weekend?

Armaan: I finally went to that new exhibition at the museum.

Georgia: The one on ancient Egypt? How was it?

Armaan: It was awesome. It's so **eye-opening** to see how people lived so long ago. I can't believe how similar we really are. Even after all this time!

### To live out of a suitcase

**To live out of a suitcase** means to be a constant traveller who never stays in one spot for very long. **Living out of a suitcase** means that you don't really unpack your belongings, because you don't plan on staying somewhere long enough to unpack and set up. The expression **to live out of a suitcase** doesn't necessarily mean that you never actually put your clothes and shoes away. It just means that you don't really set up a place like you would if you were going to stay there for a long time. You may even put your clothes away, put your toothbrush in the bathroom, and maybe put a few pictures on the wall, but you don't really buy furniture or new things the way that you would if you were going to stay for a long time.

Here's another example with **to live out of a suitcase**:

Lou: How long have you been in Mexico now? I can't remember when you got here.

Greta: About two months.

Lou: Are you leaving for somewhere else soon? You said you only stay in one location for a few months at a time, right?

Greta: Usually, yes. But I really love it here in Mexico. I'm actually thinking about maybe staying here for a bit, maybe renting an apartment.

Lou: Really? That would be so great.

Greta: Yeah. I'm kind of tired of **living out of a suitcase**. It would be nice to have a place where I could relax and call home.

### Quote unquote

**Quote unquote** is a casual expression people sometimes use before beginning a sentence that is a direct quotation of something that someone else said. A quotation is a repeated or copied group of words that someone else used. Sometimes, a person may say **quote** before beginning the repeated sentence and then **unquote** after they are done, but usually they say the whole expression, **quote unquote**, before they say the quoted saying.

When speaking face to face, people sometimes use a hand gesture while saying **quote unquote**, or just use the hand gesture by itself, while quoting a sentence. This hand gesture actually looks kind of like the punctuation for a quotation: “ ”. You use both hands, and bend the first two fingers of each hand up and down, as if you were drawing quotation marks in the air with your fingers. If you want to see an example of what this looks like, try searching online for a photo or video using the keywords “air quotes.”

Here's another example with **quote unquote**:

Julia: How did your date go last night?

Mason: Not very well. He was really rude to our server at the restaurant.

Julia: Oh no, I hate when people do that. What did he say?

Mason: Well, at one point, the server accidentally dropped my date's fork on the floor. He quickly apologized and was very professional about it, but my date said, **quote unquote**, “How did you get a job here if you can't even hold a fork properly?”

Julia: Oh no, that's horrible.

Mason: I know. I talked to the server after and we joked about how rude my date was. And now I have a date with the server next weekend!

### An itch

**An itch** is a common English expression for a desire or an urge, usually for something that you recently quit or stopped doing. This is a metaphor, meaning it is a visual representation of an idea. When you have an actual itch, like after a mosquito bites you, you have the sudden urge to scratch it. This is similar to the English expression **an itch**, because it means you have a sudden urge to do something.



In this episode, Maura uses the expression ***an itch*** to describe how she feels about travelling. Maura used to travel quite a bit before settling in Montreal, and she still gets the urge to travel.

Here's another example with ***an itch***:

Lucas: Congratulations on your anniversary! I just heard that you've been working for the company for 5 years today!

Demeter: Yeah, that's such a long time for me. I'm actually starting to get ***an itch*** to move on to another job.

Lucas: Oh, really? Well, we'll certainly miss you here, but I know that you like to move around a lot.

Demeter: It's important to me to get a lot of experience before I decide on a permanent place to work.

### The grass is always greener on the other side

***The grass is always greener on the other side*** means that what other people have always seems to be better than what you have, although in reality it is often not. This is a very common English expression that is used when explaining to someone how good something you don't have looks, even though you know that it is not really any better than what you already have. Sometimes this expression is also said as ***the grass is always greener on the other side of the fence***.

This expression is a metaphor, meaning that it is a visual representation of an idea. If you imagine a group of cows eating grass on one side of a fence, you can imagine that the grass might look greener on the other side, because it hasn't been eaten or stepped on. In reality, the grass is exactly the same type of grass and probably tastes the same. But the cow's perception of the grass is that it is better, even though in reality it isn't.

Here's another example with ***the grass is always greener on the other side***:

Noor: Wow, your dessert looks fantastic. I sort of wish I had ordered the same thing.

Yousouf: Really? I was just thinking the same thing about yours! But, you know ***the grass is always greener on the other side***.

Noor: You're right. I bet that they're equally as delicious.

### A home base

***A home base*** is a permanent location that you call home. Often, this expression is used by people who are travelling or away from home a lot to describe to someone where they consider home. This expression has a few possible origins. It may reference ***home base*** is another word for headquarters, which is the main administrative centre of an organization. It may also reference a baseball term, because ***home base*** is also the name of the white plate that runners try to get to after they hit the ball.



Here's another example with **a home base**:

Lucy: How long have you been in California? Were you born here?

Ali: No, I've only been here for 2 years. My **home base** is actually Ontario, Canada.

Lucy: Oh, that's interesting. Do you plan on going back?

Ali: At some point, yes. I came here for work originally, and my contract got extended, so I ended up staying a bit longer. I'll probably head back home in a year or so.

## **Quiz**

**1. What does *to compare apples and oranges* mean?**

- a) to compare two things that can't really be compared
- b) to compare two things that are actually the same but have two different names
- c) to make decisions based on feelings rather than thoughts
- d) to travel more often than most people

**2. What does *in a nutshell* mean?**

- a) to travel by train instead of airplane
- b) to handwrite a letter rather than typing it
- c) to make a long story short
- d) to write a long letter and then put it in a small envelope

**3. What does *to pique someone's interest* mean?**

- a) to increase their curiosity
- b) to ignore them when they are talking to you
- c) to insult them when they are doing something for you
- d) to have trouble paying attention

**4. If you have something under your belt, what does that mean?**

- a) You want to do something but are unable to do it.
- b) You want to work overseas.
- c) You have accomplished or finished something.
- d) You ate something that you shouldn't have.

**5. What are four common short forms of longer animal names?**

- a) cat, croc, hippo, gator
- b) croc, gator, hippo, rhino
- c) hippo, rhino, croc, pillar
- d) croc, gator, frog, rhino

**6. What common element do all the territories and regions in the Caribbean have?**

- a) They do not have any permanent residents.
- b) They all speak Spanish.
- c) They are all considered part of the Republic of Cuba.
- d) They are all in or around the Caribbean Sea.

**7. What is an eye-opening experience?**

- a) A party or wedding that is held on an island.
- b) An event or experience that is a surprise and wasn't planned.
- c) An experience that changes your viewpoint.
- d) An experience that only adults can have.

**8. What is a common hand gesture for quoting someone?**

- a) Touching your two elbows together.
- b) Raising one hand and waving it in the face of the person you are quoting.
- c) Raising both hands and bending the first two fingers of each.
- d) Shaking both hands back and forth.

**9. What does the expression *the grass is always greener on the other side* mean?**

- a) No matter what you have, what someone else has always looks better.
- b) People who travel never feel like they have a home.
- c) People all over the world are actually very similar to each other.
- d) Experiences give you more knowledge than formal education does.

**Answers:**

1.a    2.c    3.a    4.c    5.b    6.d    7.c    8.c    9.a