

## Chatterbox #178 – High school dances

### Episode description

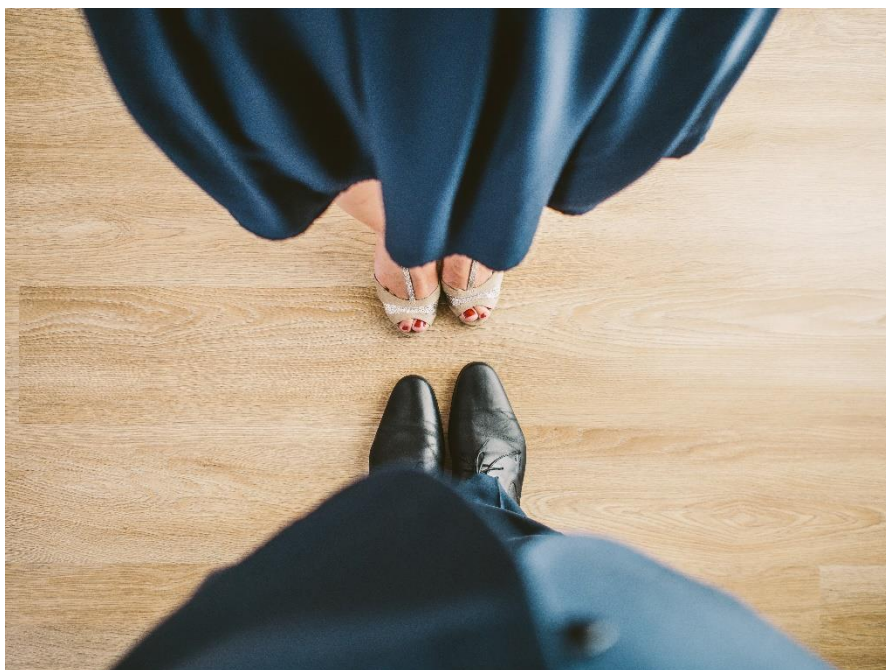
Everywhere in North America, high school dances are big events for teenagers. There are, however, some interesting differences between dances in Canada and those in the United States. In this episode, Andrew and Suzanne will teach you about some of the cultural differences between high school experiences in the two countries. If you've ever watched American movies and wondered if high school is really like that in America, this is the episode for you!

### Fun fact

In the United States, the average household spends almost \$1000 USD on prom-related expenses. In Canada, the amount is about 25% lower, at \$725 USD, but in the United Kingdom, the amount is significantly higher, at about \$1500 USD.

### Expressions included in the learning materials

- Carnival
- A mouthful
- To show off
- In a nutshell
- One-up



## Transcript

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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.

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Andrew: Hey, everybody. My name is Andrew.

Suzanne: Hey, everyone. I'm Suzanne.

Andrew: And guess what? We're back again with another Culips episode.

Suzanne: Yeah!

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Andrew: Hey, Suzanne. Good to speak with you again.

Suzanne: You too, Andrew. How are you?

Andrew: I am doing really, really well. I'm just lovin' life these days. How about you?

Suzanne: Oh, that's great. I'm really loving the fall weather.

Andrew: It's so nice after the hot summer, isn't it?

Suzanne: Yeah, and all of the colours in the trees. All of the colourful leaves in the trees, it's so beautiful.

Andrew: Oh, man, I was out for a hike last weekend.

Suzanne: Yeah!

Andrew: Through the woods, and it's just so beautiful to see all the leaves changing colour. Amazing.

Suzanne: Amazing. One of my favourite things is that the air starts to get cooler, and you can smell the winter coming. And I'm going home this weekend to see my family.

Andrew: Mmhmm.

Suzanne: And I love being back home. And one of my favourite things when I go back home in the fall is to go back to my high school for the homecoming game. And I get a hot chocolate or a spiced apple cider and stand in the bleachers and watch the football game.

Andrew: Ooo.

Suzanne: It's a lot of fun.

Andrew: OK, Suzanne, wait just one second. The homecoming game, what is the homecoming game?

Suzanne: Well, Andrew, I'm glad you asked. The homecoming game is in the fall when the alumni or the graduates of the high school, the hometown high school, come back and visit for a weekend. And you get to see all the old friends and the old school, and watch the football game. It's kind of like a little reunion in the fall.

And there's a special game, and there's also a dance on Saturday night. On Friday night, there is the football game. And then on Saturday night, there is a dance, and they even crown a king and queen of homecoming.

Andrew: The homecoming king and the homecoming queen.

Suzanne: Yes.

Andrew: I've definitely seen that in the movies before.

Suzanne: Yes, it's very much like the movies. It's totally like the movies.

Andrew: Well, this is so interesting to me as a Canadian speaking to you, an American. Because at least in my high school in Canada, we didn't have homecoming. This is something ...

Suzanne: OK.

Andrew: That I've only experienced through the movies. So it's really cool to hear about it from you, firsthand.

Suzanne: Yeah. Well, high school dances in the US are pretty interesting.

Andrew: Yeah, so let's talk about it a bit today. Actually, our topic for this Chatterbox episode is high school dances. And so we're just gonna have a natural conversation, chew the fat a little bit about this topic, high school dances.

And, OK, let's spend just a little bit more time on homecoming. Because I have a couple more questions for you, if you don't mind.

Suzanne: Sure.

Andrew: So you mentioned that the school alumni come back and visit the school. They come home during the homecoming game.

Suzanne: Mmhmm.

Andrew: Now is this just recent graduates, or is this all the graduates that are still in the area? How far back does the alumni go?

Suzanne: A lot of the times, there are mostly recent graduates because those are usually the people that are still around in the neighbourhood or in the area.

Andrew: Sure.

Suzanne: But if you are a graduate and you live there, or if you're coming home just for the holidays, it can be 20 years, 30 years. I mean, it doesn't matter. If you've graduated from there, and you're around, come on by.

Andrew: OK. Very cool. So it's open to all alumni, essentially?

Suzanne: Yes. And they usually have a lot of festivities around the football game. Like there are little **carnivals**. They'll set up festivals where you can have cotton candy, and you can play those silly games where you throw darts at the balloons. Or you know, things like that.

Andrew: I love that game.

Suzanne: Yeah, me too. I like squirting the water gun into the mouth of the clown. I like that one.

Andrew: What about a dunk tank?

Suzanne: Yes, they totally have dunk tanks. They do a lot of fall activities, too. Like there's apple bobbing.

Andrew: Apple bobbing, yeah.

Suzanne: You have some apples with a coin inside them. There's a big bucket of water and apples that are floating in there, and you have to—with your mouth—find one and bite it and pull it out. And if yours has the lucky coin in it, you win a prize.

Andrew: Oh, OK.

Suzanne: Yeah. So there are a lot of activities around homecoming. But most of the graduates, or the alumni, they only hang out for the game and those activities on Friday night, for the football game.

Saturday, and the dance on Saturday, is just for the high school students that are currently going to the school.

Andrew: OK.

Suzanne: So the alumni do not participate.

Andrew: Well, that makes sense. It would be a little silly for, I don't know, a 30-year-old man to be at a high school dance. It just wouldn't seem appropriate.

Suzanne: Exactly. I don't think anyone wants to see me in a homecoming dress either, at my age. But it's interesting. So on Friday, how it works is someone asks someone else to go to the dance. So it could be a girl asks another girl, a girl asks a guy, a guy asks a girl, a guy asks another guy.

Andrew: Sure.

Suzanne: And they become your date to the homecoming dance.

Andrew: OK.

Suzanne: And then usually, when I was younger, the guys would buy the girls these big, big things called *mums*.

Andrew: Mums, how do you spell that word?

Suzanne: Its m-u-m-s.

Andrew: OK, *mums*.

Suzanne: I think it's short for *chrysanthemums*.

Andrew: That makes sense. A type of flower, the chrysanthemum. Wow, that's a hard word to say.

Suzanne: Chrysanthemum, yeah.

Andrew: **A mouthful.**

- Suzanne: What's funny is, like, chrysanthemums are naturally fluffy, kind of, flowers. And they have these things made where, in Texas where I went to high school, you put like twenty of them in a big bunch. And with ribbons and sparkles and weird little trinkets, and sometimes teddy bears and things that hang down all the way to your feet.
- So it almost takes up your entire body, this mum. And the guy brings it to you.
- Andrew: Wait, wait. I gotta get some clarification here. So ...
- Suzanne: OK.
- Andrew: Twenty flowers, all joined together with sparkles and ribbons, and maybe even teddy bears, attached.
- Suzanne: Oh yeah.
- Andrew: And so how does this look? Is it like a bouquet?
- Suzanne: You know what it looks like? You know when you win a prize at a ... Like at a ... You know, like a dog show?
- Andrew: I have won lots of prizes at dog shows, so I guess I know exactly what you're talking about.
- Suzanne: Oh, my gosh. You know how you have, like, a round disk, with ribbon around it?
- Andrew: Ah.
- Suzanne: And then two ribbons that sort of hang down that say "First Place" or "Second Place"?
- Andrew: I know. Sort of like at a country fair. Like what you'd get if you were a prize winner, yeah.
- Suzanne: Exactly. So if you picture that, only a hundred times bigger. It's like the flat part would actually cover your entire chest.
- Andrew: Wow. So you wear this kind of, almost like a piece of clothing.
- Suzanne: Yes. We're gonna have to put some pictures up on the Facebook because this is something you have to see.
- Andrew: See to believe, yes. And it's my understanding that this is really unique to your home state of Texas, this tradition ...

- Suzanne: Yes.
- Andrew: That other parts of the country, and definitely not in Canada, we don't celebrate our dance, our prom like this. So, yeah, this is really cool to hear about. And if you can, please put some pictures up on our Facebook page for us to see, 'cause I need to see it myself too.
- Suzanne: Yeah. And maybe we can speak to some of my friends back home and get some of their experiences of homecoming and prom.
- Andrew: Ooo, I'd love to hear it right from the source. That'd be amazing.
- Suzanne: Oh yeah. Well, Andrew, have you ever been to prom? Do you know about prom?
- Andrew: Prom, so prom ... Let's see if it's the same for Canada and the USA. Prom in Canada is a dance and a party ...
- Suzanne: Mmhmm.
- Andrew: That is at the end of the school year, in your final year. So it's kind of your graduation celebration.
- Suzanne: Yes.
- Andrew: Yeah. So I did go to my high school prom. Yeah, it was, well, a long time ago now. But I remember it being equal parts fun and equal parts awkward, which I think is high school **in a nutshell**.
- Suzanne: I absolutely agree. So you only had a senior prom, then? You didn't have a junior prom?
- Andrew: That's correct.
- Suzanne: OK.
- Andrew: Or maybe there was a junior prom. If there was, I don't remember going. But I think probably just a senior prom, yeah.
- Suzanne: OK. So prom is short for *promenade*, actually.
- Andrew: Mmhmm.
- Suzanne: I think that's where the word comes from.
- Andrew: Right.

- Suzanne: And *promenade* is like *to walk*, right? It's like to parade, yeah, display and parade.
- Andrew: To parade, yes.
- Suzanne: And um, that's kind of what you're doing, right? You're sort of **showing off** I'm graduating, I am dressed up, and you're parading through on to the next level of your life.
- Andrew: Mmhmm.
- Suzanne: What did you wear to prom? Did you have to dress up in something fancy?
- Andrew: I did dress up. I dressed up in a suit and a tie. I think I even ... If I remember correctly, I bought a suit for the occasion, so ...
- Suzanne: Wow.
- Andrew: Yeah, this was a big deal for me. I had never really dressed up formally for anything before. And, yeah, a lot of my friends were all dressed up, too. All the girls wear a prom dress.
- Suzanne: Yes.
- Andrew: A special dress that ... Maybe you know better than I do, but a lot of my friends that were girls, they put a lot of time and effort and money into really picking a dress that was unique and special.
- Suzanne: Absolutely. It does take a lot of time. And apparently families—in the US, anyway—spend an average of almost \$1000 on prom.
- Andrew: I believe it.
- Suzanne: And everyone was really interested in sparkles.
- Andrew: Mmhmm.
- Suzanne: And I was not one of those girls.
- Andrew: Mmhmm.
- Suzanne: So I found an old-fashioned pattern, like a dress pattern I found. It was from the '40s, and I have a friend whose mom is a seamstress, or someone who makes clothes. And she had offered to make my dress for free as long as I paid for the materials. So that was super nice. And not only was it less expensive, but it was unique and it was made just for me. So it fit me really well. It was really great.



- Andrew: That's amazing.
- Suzanne: I loved that dress.
- Andrew: Yeah, I bet. A custom ... Do you still have it?
- Suzanne: I don't have it here in Montreal. I'm wondering if my mom has it. I don't know. That's a really good question, actually.
- Andrew: Well ...
- Suzanne: It was very classic, so it's something that, like, you could wear, you know, for ... Forever.
- Andrew: For every day.
- Suzanne: Every day. I think I really enjoyed my prom. Maybe I can post a picture from my prom also on the Facebook page. My prom date was famous—is famous, actually, now.
- Andrew: Is famous? Whoa.
- Suzanne: Yeah. You know Matt Bomer? He was the actor in *White Collar*, the TV show *White Collar*. Um ...
- Andrew: Hmm, not familiar with him, but I have heard of the TV show.
- Suzanne: Yeah. He also just won a Golden Globe Award. He was my prom date. We were, like, best friends in high school. And I wasn't gonna to go to my prom because I was so busy. I had so much going on right that month, and he was like, "You have to go to your prom. You're going to regret it."
- So I was like, "Well, I don't have a boyfriend. I don't have a date. Like, I don't care." He's like, "Well, then I'll be your date and I'll go." Because he was a year younger than me. So ...
- Andrew: OK.
- Suzanne: He was a junior when I was a senior. So I was like, "OK, sure. If you want to go just for fun." And he's like, "Yeah, that's great." So he was my prom date. I gotta say it was way more fun to go with a friend than with a date, because I think it was less pressure.
- Andrew, so when you went to prom did you do a promposal?
- Andrew: Promposal? What's a promposal?

- Suzanne: I didn't know what it was until more recently, because it's become a big deal, a big fad, among high school seniors.
- Andrew: OK.
- Suzanne: The boys make a big, elaborate event out of asking the girl, almost like an engagement, you know? Like where you get people to sing and dance, or maybe ... I don't know, hide the ring in a cake or something.
- Andrew: Almost like an engagement proposal?
- Suzanne: Yes!
- Andrew: Wow.
- Suzanne: It's crazy. They go into such detail. And they make big, elaborate events out of asking each other to prom.
- Andrew: Wow.
- Suzanne: A lot of times the people have to **one-up** each other, meaning, "Oh, well, he already did it that way so now I have to ask her out by doing it this way." And make it with, you know, violins and dancers and whatever. And they spend an average of \$300 on this promposal.
- Andrew: What? Ah ...
- Suzanne: Can you believe that?
- Andrew: I'd like to say that I'm shocked, but these days nothing surprises me.
- Suzanne: Ah, I guess anything for an Instagram photo.
- Andrew: Yeah. Well, that's true, right? These days, you know, with the internet you could see other people's promposals.
- Suzanne: Yeah.
- Andrew: And that would just up the game. And if it's a competitive thing, then you just have to go bigger and better than the next guy. Wow.
- Suzanne: I think that's it, mmhmm.
- Andrew: I'm glad I'm not a student right now because it sounds like a lot of pressure, a promposal.
- Suzanne: I know!

- Andrew: Plus you have to study.
- Suzanne: I know.
- Andrew: Oh! It's a tough life.
- Suzanne: Yeah, plus you have to graduate? Come on. And take the SAT.
- Andrew: Oh, it'd be horrible if you spent all your time on the promposal, and then you ended up failing because you didn't study. And then you had to try again next year and do another promposal. Two of 'em.
- Suzanne: Oh, that's terrible, a nightmare.
- Andrew: A nightmare.
- Suzanne: Well, thank you so much for talking to me today about all of these dances. It was fun to bring up these memories.
- Andrew: Yeah, I thought this episode might be a little painful to go back and relive some of my weird high school days. But it wasn't so bad at all.
- Suzanne: Good.
- Andrew: And I also want to thank all of the listeners for listening. We really do appreciate your support. And if you like us here at Culips, you like what we do, we'd love it if you could return the favour and visit iTunes and leave us a five-star review. We'd love it if you could help us out.
- Suzanne: Yeah. And also visit us on Facebook, at [facebook.com/culipspodcast](https://facebook.com/culipspodcast), and leave us a comment about maybe your experience with a high school dance. Or maybe you've seen a movie with a high school dance and you have questions about it. So leave us a comment and also visit our website at [Culips.com](http://Culips.com).
- Andrew: All right, we're signing off now. Thanks again, everybody. We'll be back soon with another Culips episode. Bye.
- Suzanne: Bye.

## Detailed Explanations

### Carnival

In North American English, a **carnival** is a public festival, usually outdoors, that includes games and other activities.

There are multiple terms for this sort of public event. It's common to refer to **carnivals**, fairs, and festivals interchangeably. These events usually happen every year around the same time. For example, many towns and cities will have summer and/or fall **carnivals**. In this episode, Suzanne talks about a **carnival** that happens every year for homecoming.

Depending on the **carnival**, there will be different activities to enjoy. In this episode, Suzanne and Andrew discuss some of the activities and games that are common for **carnivals**, like apple bobbing and dunk tanks. Some **carnivals** travel around from place to place and bring rides, like Ferris wheels and bumper cars.

So, while each **carnival** might have slightly different activities and events, the key aspect of every **carnival** is that they are public events that are designed to be fun and entertaining.

Here are a couple more examples with **carnival**:

Dan:	Hey, what do you want to get up to this weekend?
Jessica:	I dunno. I think we should take advantage of the nice weather before it gets all snowy and cold.
Dan:	That's a great idea. How about going to a <b>carnival</b> ? There's a fall festival a bit outside of town this weekend.
Jessica:	If it's one that has rides, I'm in! I haven't been to a <b>carnival</b> like that since I was a kid.

Jonathan:	How was your weekend out in the country?
Paula:	It was nice! It was good to visit my family, and we even went to the town <b>carnival</b> . I wasn't sure if I was going to enjoy it, but it was a lot of fun.
Jonathan:	Oh yeah? What won you over?
Paula:	I can't lie; the bake sale was my favourite part. I ate so much tasty food!

## A mouthful

There are two main meanings of the noun **mouthful**. The first is what you might guess: a quantity of food or drink that fits in a mouth at one time. If you take a big bite of food that takes up all the space in your mouth, that's **a mouthful**! We usually use this meaning only when talking about food and beverages.

The second meaning of **a mouthful** is to do with words. When speaking, **a mouthful** is some phrase or collection of words that is difficult to articulate. Something can be **a mouthful** to say because it's difficult to pronounce or because it's long and complicated—or both!

Take, for example, the longest word in the English language: pneumonoultramicroscopicsilicovolcanoconiosis (a type of lung disease). Try saying it out loud. That was really difficult, wasn't it? That's because it's a real **mouthful**; in other words, it's a complicated and difficult word to say.

Here are a couple more examples with **a mouthful**:

Diane:	No fair, your dinner looks so much tastier than mine. I made the wrong choice!
Lance:	I won't lie to you, this curry is pretty delicious. I'm sure yours is good too, though!
Diane:	Yeah, it's OK. Let me have a bite of your food. I have to know how it tastes. I won't take a lot, just <b>a mouthful</b> .
Lance:	Hey! Just <b>a mouthful</b> ? You just took a quarter of my meal!

Shirley:	So I'm getting ready to send out invitations for Christmas Eve dinner. Do you have anyone you want to make sure I invite?
Javier:	One of my coworkers mentioned that she's going to be all alone this holiday season. She can't get the time off to go home and visit her family. I don't know her all that well, but I think it would be nice to have her for dinner.
Shirley:	Absolutely! Give me her full name and I'll make her an invitation card.
Javier:	Oh, I don't think her full name will fit on that little card. It's Maria Teresa García Ramírez de Arroyo.
Shirley:	Wow, that's quite <b>a mouthful</b> !

## To show off

**To show off** is a phrasal verb that means to display so that other people pay positive attention. The goal in **showing off** is always to gain the approval of other people. You can both **show off** and **show off** something (an object, talent, etc.).

When you **show off**, with no object following the phrasal verb, you are trying to impress people and display your best qualities. In other words, to **show off** is to try to attract positive attention to yourself.

In this episode, Andrew and Suzanne talked all about a situation that is designed for **showing off**: graduation dances, or *proms* in the United States. As they mentioned in this episode, many people spend a lot of money and put a lot of time and effort into looking good for their graduation dance. Every student wants to dress up and look their best. In other words, they are all trying to **show off** how good they can look.

When you **show off** something, you are doing the same thing but for that object. For example, if you **show off** your new pet, you are trying to attract the attention of others to your pet. We **show off** things when we are excited about or proud of them, and want to share our feelings about that object.

Here are a couple more examples with **to show off**.

Luke:	I had no idea Adam was so talented!
Marlene:	Oh, he is, is he?
Luke:	Yeah, I was just talking to him earlier. Did you know that he can play twelve instruments, and that he's a trained opera singer?
Marlene:	Wow, he's really trying to <b>show off</b> . I know him pretty well. What he said might sound impressive, but he's not telling the truth.
Luke:	What a shame.

Marlon:	I can't stand that Kelsey girl.
Jana:	Why not? I think she's nice.
Marlon:	She's always talking about how expensive her clothing is. I really don't like people who <b>show off</b> their wealth like that. It's nice for her that she has a lot of money, but I'm not impressed by expensive stuff.
Jana:	Fair enough!

## In a nutshell

When you say something clearly, in as few words as possible, you have said it **in a nutshell**. This might seem like a crazy expression, but it's easy to understand if you picture it.

Nuts are not large things, and so neither are nutshells. If you can fit something into a nutshell, it is a small, manageable size. So, if you explain something **in a nutshell**, you are explaining it in the shortest, simplest, most brief way you can.

For example, in this episode Andrew says that he remembers his high school graduating dance as “equal parts fun and equal parts awkward, which ... is high school **in a nutshell**.”

In other words, describing high school as “equal parts fun and equal parts awkward” is the most concise way Andrew can explain the experience of being in high school.

So, when you explain something with the smallest number of words you can, you're explaining it **in a nutshell**!

Here are a couple more examples with **in a nutshell**:

Gail:	Oh, look at the cute puppy!
Elijah:	Yes, it's very cute.
Gail:	Can we get one? I love puppies!
Elijah:	No, we're not getting a dog.
Gail:	Why not? Don't you like dogs? C'mon, why can't we get a puppy?
Elijah:	You want my answer? <b>In a nutshell</b> , I don't want a pet!

Kristi:	I got the weirdest letter in the mail yesterday.
Devin:	You got an actual letter in the mail?
Kristi:	Yeah! It was a letter from Harold, breaking up with me! To make things even weirder, it was really long. He wrote me 10 pages about why we're not a good couple. It went on forever! And then he ended it with, “And that, <b>in a nutshell</b> , is why I'm breaking up with you.” That was not <b>in a nutshell</b> !
Devin:	Wow, what a weird thing to do. I'm glad you're not dating him anymore!

## One-up

**One-up** is a term that can be an adverb, an adjective, and a verb. In each case, **one-up** is about having or trying to gain an advantage over another person, to outdo them.

As an adjective, **one-up** is the state of having an advantage over another person. **One-up** is not commonly used as an adjective, so we won't go into it further.

As an adverb, **one-up** means generally ahead of or better than someone else. It is usually used with *on*, where *on* indicates the person or thing that is at a disadvantage. For example, in this episode Suzanne mentions that people try to get **one up** on each other when making promposals. In other words, everyone tries to make their promposal better and more impressive than the other person's.

When used as a verb, to **one-up** is to do or be better than someone else at something. For example, Mary and Alfred have agreed to have a friendly cake-baking competition. Imagine Mary found out that Alfred was making a three-layer cake, and so decided to make a four-layer cake. Because Mary is trying to do something specifically more impressive, or better, than what Alfred is doing, she is **one-upping** him.

So, no matter what part of speech it's used as, **one-up** is all about trying to do better than another person.

Here are a couple more examples with the verb and adverb forms of **one-up**:

Garrett:	Wow, Rebecca—your apartment is gorgeous!
Rebecca:	Thanks so much. That's sweet of you to say. I've been here for a long time, so I've put a lot of effort into making it feel like home.
Garrett:	I just love all the art on the walls. It makes everything feel so cozy! It's definitely <b>one up</b> on my apartment back home.

Daryl:	I'm so tired! I can't believe I worked for 12 hours straight today.
Gertrude:	Twelve hours? That's nothing. Yesterday I was in the lab working for 16 hours.
Daryl:	You know, it's rude to <b>one-up</b> people like that.



## Quiz

1. **If you explain something in a nutshell, you've explained it:**
  - a) as quickly as you can
  - b) thoroughly and completely
  - c) with the fewest words possible
  - d) with tact and grace
  
2. **When you show off, what kind of response do you want from people?**
  - a) positive
  - b) negative
  - c) indifferent
  - d) surprised
  
3. **What is a term for a public event, usually outdoors, that has a variety of different activities to enjoy?**
  - a) a feast
  - b) a party
  - c) a carnival
  - d) a show
  
4. **When you one-up someone, you did something \_\_\_\_ than they did.**
  - a) faster
  - b) stronger
  - c) more
  - d) better
  
5. **Which of these names could be called a mouthful?**
  - a) Luke Christian
  - b) Mary-Lou Bethany Lavinia Saint Hubert
  - c) Hannah Ruth Smith
  - d) Bo Lee

## Quiz Answers

1.c    2.a    3.c    4.d    5.b

### Episode credits

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