

Chatterbox #23 – The Early Bird Special!

Transcript

Maura: Hello everybody, this is Maura.

Rita: Hi, and this is Rita.

Maura: And we're bringing you the Chatterbox episode at Culips. This is the episode where we chat and we talk about something going on or something interesting about Canadian or North American culture. And Rita?

Rita: Yes?

Maura: Where do you go if you want to have the transcripts for any of our episodes at Culips?

Rita: You go to Culips.com.

Maura: Exactly.

Rita: C-U-L-I-P-S.com.

Maura: That's it, thank you. And when you're there you can become a member and check out our Lipservice, where all of that good stuff is. So today's episode is called, ***the early bird catches the worm***. So first we're going to talk about that **proverb**, then we're also going to talk about the customs of being on time. So how important is it to be on time in North America, especially Canada? Then Rita and I are going to talk about some stories where we were almost too late. And the last thing we're going to look at is another expression, ***carpe diem***. It may sound funny because it's Latin but we do use it in English too. So let's look at the first **proverb** or expression, which is...?

Rita: ***The early bird catches the worm.***

Maura: Yes, ***the early bird catches the worm***. This one you can actually think about and it makes sense.

Rita: Yup, absolutely, you just have to kind of think about nature and what happens in nature.

Maura: The first bird that wakes up in the morning and is looking for worms, is looking for something to eat, has the best chance at finding something.

- Rita: That's right. Worms are usually **up** early in the morning because it's moist, so if a bird wants to catch one he's gonna have to wake up early.
- Maura: Right, so the first bird that starts looking for worms will probably find one. Yeah, so the real meaning of that expression is that if you're the first person there then you have more of a chance of being successful.
- Rita: Absolutely, I think that it kind of means that there's more opportunities. If you get **up** early, you'll have more opportunities.
- Maura: So for example, maybe there's a special sale going on and there's a limited number of items, like only 200 items, if you're the first one there, there's a better chance that you'll get one of those items. So the earlier the better.
- Rita: That's right.
- Maura: Yeah. Another time when someone might use it is if you're giving advice to wake up early. If you wake up early in the morning and you have a lot to do, there's more of a chance that you will accomplish everything you need to accomplish. So this expression, **the early bird catches the worm**, is actually a pretty old expression.
- Rita: How old is it?
- Maura: Well, it goes back to the 17th century.
- Rita: Wow, that's old.
- Maura: Yeah, so even back then, it was important to be early and to be early meant that you had more of a chance of being successful.
- Rita: Excellent. I think it applies to a lot of different situations.
- Maura: Yeah, people could use it in any situation where being early might mean you'll have a better chance of being successful
- Rita: So yeah the expression is so common and so popular that even restaurants use it: it's called **the early bird special**. If you go for dinner or sometimes breakfast earlier than most other people then you can get a really good price on your meal.
- Maura: Yeah, there's actually a breakfast place, close to where I live, and if you go for breakfast before 9 o'clock then you get half-price breakfast.
- Rita: **Sweet**, that sounds like a great **deal**.

- Maura: Yeah it's **an early bird special** that I like to take advantage of.
- Rita: Very good.
- Maura: OK good, so the **proverb** was ***the early bird catches the worm*** and it really tells a lot about what's important in our culture.
- Rita: Absolutely. Being on time is important here.
- Maura: OK, so now let's look at how important it is to be on time, in Canada for different situations.
- Rita: All right.
- Maura: OK, so what about work? Is it really important in Canada to be on time for work?
- Rita: Yeah, you have to be on time for work. Being punctual just means you're responsible and organized.
- Maura: Yeah, that's true, in most places you need to be on time for work.
- Rita: Right, so unless your boss is pretty easy-going, or you have a special kind of work situation, in general you should be on time for work.
- Maura: Right. Especially with a new job.
- Rita: Right. Of course.
- Maura: In some offices, if you're 5 or 10 minutes late, it's not a big **deal** but in other offices it's very important. So what about being on time if you're going to meet a friend?
- Rita: Um, I always try to be on time, that's for sure. I like to be punctual. And...so if we say we're gonna meet at 3:00, I will definitely be there, **give or take** 5 minutes but usually I'm there on time.
- Maura: Yeah, it's not as strict as when you're working but when friends say they're going to meet at a time, generally you're there that time—maybe 10 or 15 minutes late is not really a big **deal**.
- Rita: I have this rule that if I'm going to be more than 15 minutes late: send a text message. **Love technology**. It can really help in this situation.

- Maura: Yeah for sure, since cell phones came around, there are a lot less people standing waiting for a friend.
- Rita: That's right.
- Maura: But maybe it also makes people later because they know that they can send a text message.
- Rita: **There's two sides to every story** Maura.
- Maura: Ok, so yeah, depending on the friend but in most cases you want to come on time.
- Rita: Yes, yes.
- Maura: Now, what about for a party?
- Rita: Well I have to admit I like being **fashionably late**. I like...if the party starts at 9:00, I'll usually get there around maybe 10:00, 10:30, just **to make an appearance** to make sure that everybody sees me when I walk in through the door.
- Maura: Right. If you wait a little bit, then you definitely know that the party will be **in full swing** when you arrive.
- Rita: At least there'll be some people there, yes.
- Maura: Exactly. So that's a big difference, I know, just compared with my time in Japan.
- Rita: Is that right? How is it different?
- Maura: So in Japan if a party starts at 9 o'clock, the guests should arrive at 9 o'clock.
- Rita: Are we talking about a dinner party?
- Maura: No, just a regular party. Yeah, so in Canada if you have a party that starts at 9 o'clock, it's pretty rare to have guests arriving at 9 o'clock. I would usually wait 'til at least 9:30.
- Rita: Just again to be **fashionably late**, to make sure that everybody can see you when you walk through the door.

- Maura: Yeah. So if you're **throwing a party** in Canada and you want it to start at 9 o'clock, don't expect any guests to show up at that time. They'll probably start showing up closer to 10 o'clock.
- Rita: I agree, if you want them there for 9:00, you better say the party starts at 8:00.
- Maura: Yup, that's true. But you made a good distinction Rita, and that was about the dinner party.
- Rita: Ah, yes, the dinner party.
- Maura: That's different than just **a regular old bash**.
- Rita: Absolutely, somebody is in the kitchen preparing a meal. They've purchased food and they're making it and timing it, you definitely want to be there on time for dinner.
- Maura: Right, so if I invited you to a dinner party at my place and I said it started at 9 o'clock, then you would be there at...?
- Rita: 9 o'clock.
- Maura: Exactly. Good. So that's true. It definitely is different when there's food involved.
- Rita: Absolutely, I would be there at 9 o'clock with a bottle of wine **in one hand** and some dessert **in the other**.
- Maura: Yup, that's an important thing to remember too. When you're invited to someone's house for dinner often you bring a little something extra. It could be flowers or even a cake.
- Rita: Sounds awesome!
- Maura: OK, good. Now I have to ask you about your personal experiences Rita.
- Rita: Uh oh.
- Maura: Have you ever been late for something?
- Rita: Yes, of course. Yes, I have been late for a few things.
- Maura: So have you ever been too late for something?

- Rita: Yes, unfortunately, I have. There was a time I was going to the opera. Some nice boy had bought me tickets and we were going together but I arrived late. And with the opera, if you arrive late you have to wait for intermission before you can go in.
- Maura: Oh, so you missed the whole first part of the opera?
- Rita: I missed the whole first part of the opera and my date was waiting inside for me. It wasn't a good situation.
- Maura: No. But now you're OK. You've **moved on**?
- Rita: I've **moved on**. The situation **worked itself out**.
- Maura: Good. I don't think I've ever missed something but I've been almost too late. I remember when I was in Paris. By chance, one of my friends was also in Paris, so we had arranged to meet and I didn't really know my way and I underestimated the time it would take, so I was really late. I think I was almost one hour late.
- Rita: Wow, that's late!
- Maura: Yes but I got there just in time, because my friend was thinking about leaving but she hadn't left yet, so I caught her.
- Rita: That's really lucky. I guess she understood you were in a strange city.
- Maura: Yup. But I should've planned ahead. I'm actually pretty punctual, so I felt really bad about being late.
- Rita: Yeah, I feel the same way when I'm late. I feel bad about it. I don't like making other people wait.
- Maura: OK, let's look at one last expression that I really like.
- Rita: Yup, I like this one too.
- Maura: It's a good one.
- Rita: It is. It's quite positive.
- Maura: Yeah. **Carpe diem**.
- Rita: **Carpe diem**.

- Maura: Yeah.
- Rita: **Seize the day.**
- Maura: Right, so **carpe diem** is Latin but we say it in English.
- Rita: We do. We use it.
- Maura: Or, like you did Rita, you can also say the translation, which is **seize the day**.
- Rita: That's right.
- Maura: So what does that mean, **seize the day**?
- Rita: It's a little bit like **early bird catches the worm**, only I guess it covers everything. Take every opportunity you see and make sure you **live every day to the fullest**.
- Maura: Yeah, so **seize the day** really means do what you can today and **live your life to the fullest**.
- Rita: Absolutely, **make this day yours**.
- Maura: Yeah, don't be too concerned with the future but enjoy the pleasures of today.
- Rita: That's right. So, a nice positive expression.
- Maura: Yeah, this expression also even older.
- Rita: I would imagine. It's in Latin.
- Maura: Right, it was written by a Latin poet in 65 B.C.
- Rita: Wow, that's old!
- Maura: Yeah, it's actually pretty impressive that we still use it today. So I think we should **seize this day**, Rita, and get outside. What do you think?
- Rita: Let's do it. It's gorgeous!
- Maura: Ok great. So the two expressions we looked at in this episode were **the early bird catches the worm** and **carpe diem**. And what other important information is there to recap?

Rita: Being on time is important in Canada, certainly for work, and when you're meeting a friend.

Maura: Yup, but if it's a party?

Rita: It's OK. It's a little bit more flexible.

Maura: Right. Good. Thanks for listening to this Chatterbox episode and you can go to our website, Culips.com, to get more information on this episode or all of our other episodes. So thanks again Rita for doing this episode with me today.

Rita: Oh, **my pleasure**.

Maura: OK talk to you later.

Rita: Bye.

Detailed Explanation

Proverb

The early bird catches the worm is a **proverb**. A **proverb** is an expression that expresses some useful advice or truth. A **proverb** is an expression that has existed for some time, so a **proverb** is never a new expression. Some people might simply call *the early bird catches the worm* an expression. It is an expression but it is a special kind of expression known as a **proverb**, which means it is old and tells of some truth.

The early bird catches the worm

The early bird catches the worm is a proverb that means that if you are early to arrive or early to begin some action, your chances of success increase. Like we say in this episode, this can apply to many different kinds of situations.

There is a literal meaning in the proverb too. The bird that wakes up early in the morning has more of a chance at getting the worms!

Up

This preposition usually tells us what direction something is: **up**! In this episode the word **up** is used to mean *awake* or *out of bed*. *To get up* also means *to wake up*. Here is another example:

Joan: Hey, are you still sleeping?

Bonnie: No, I'm **up**!



The early bird special

The early bird special is the special low price that customers get when they eat a meal earlier than most people. For example, if we say that most people in North American eat supper after 5 p.m. then an **early bird special** in some restaurants might be for eating supper between 3 and 5 p.m.

You may see signs in the window advertising an **early bird special**. Other restaurants might offer a special price for people who eat early, but might not call it **the early bird special**.

Sweet

We've looked at this word in other Culips episodes but it is worth talking about again. Rita uses the word **sweet** to mean cool, great, or interesting. **Sweet** is another positive slang term that started being used in North America in the past 15–20 years.

Deal

In this episode we use the word **deal** a few times, but we use it in different ways. We talk about a **deal** meaning a good price. For example, paying the early bird special price for a full meal is a **deal**.

Then just a little later in the episode, Maura says "it's not a big **deal**." In this case, she is not talking about price anymore. To say something is a big **deal** means it is important, and to say it is NOT a big **deal** means it is not important.

Here are a couple examples with the different ways of using **deal**:

Don: Do you still want to see a movie tonight?

Travis: It's not a big **deal**. We could stay home too.

Karla: Do you want to see a movie tonight?

Yvonne: Sure. It's Tuesday so there's a **deal**.

Did you know that this is actually true? In many movie theatres in North America movies are cheaper—sometimes half price—on Tuesdays.

The first example used *not a big deal* to mean that something is not important, and the second example used **deal** to talk about a good price.

Give or take

This is a great natural expression to use and that you may hear. We use the expression **give or take** when we are estimating or speaking more generally. Rita says that she is on time, **give or take** 5 minutes. This means that she is on time generally, but sometimes she may be 5 or 10 minutes early (give) or, 5 or 10 minutes late (take). With this expression we say **give or take** and then estimate or guess what the range may be. We can also simply say just **give or take**.

Here are a couple more examples:

Jon: What temperature do you think it is outside right now?

Noah: Um...25 degrees, **give or take** 3 degrees.

Zack: How much farther to the cottage?

Paul: About 10 km, **give or take** a few.

Ryan: Was the party fun?

Erin: Yes, for sure. There were lots of people there. There were about 100 people there.

Ryan: One hundred people?

Erin: Yeah, **give or take**.

Love technology

Rita does something here that native speakers do without thinking about it: They drop the subject. Instead of saying "I love technology," Rita says, "**Love technology**." When we do not say the subject, it is assumed that the subject is *I*.

Here are a couple more examples:

Fred: Do you like camping and the outdoors?

Carmen: Hate camping. I like hotels!

Lily: What are you doing this weekend?

Nancy: Going to the beach.

There are two sides to every story

This expression means that for every story there are at least two perspectives on what happened. For examples, Sheena says that last night she saw a cat flying. But Brian was there too and he says it was a big bird. Those are the two sides to one story.

People might use the expression **there are two sides to every story** when one person tells one side but some information is missing or what happened isn't clear. For example, Jennifer was supposed to meet Martin for a date but he didn't come. Jennifer's friend may say, "**There are two sides to every story**." In this case it means that they need to hear Martin's side of the story. Maybe Martin had an emergency or got lost. We don't know his side of the story.

Did you notice that Rita says, "**There's two sides to every story**" and here we have written "**There are two sides to every story**"? We don't always use perfect grammar when we're speaking, but because **two sides** is plural we should really use **there are**.

Many native speakers say **there is** when speaking about something plural. Using **there is** for plural sentences has become such a common error that English grammar textbooks sometimes mention this and are even beginning to accept **there is** for both singular and plural nouns.

Fashionably late

Rita says that she likes to be **fashionably late** to parties. **Fashionably late** means that you intentionally come late to a party or any event where there are many people. The

reason you come late is so that the place will already be full and the people who are already there will notice when you arrive.

Another reason we may call this being **fashionably late** is that the person arriving looks busy and important. They could not have come earlier because they were so busy with their social life.

To make an appearance

When you are fashionably late, we can also say that you **make an appearance**. **To make an appearance** means that you arrive somewhere to be seen, you want people to see you. If someone **makes an appearance**, it could also be only for a short time—just enough time to be seen.

This expression can also be used to talk about famous people. For example, I heard that Madonna is going to **make an appearance** at the Justin Timberlake concert tonight. This means that she will go on the stage, and probably perform, for a short time.

In full swing

Maura says that when someone is fashionably late they arrive when the party is **in full swing**. If an event is **in full swing** it means that it is at its highest level of action, so there are lots of people there, lots of talking and socializing. If something is **in full swing** it means that it is going well.

Here is an example:

Yasmina: What time did you get there?

Jenn: I don't remember, but everything was already **in full swing**.

To throw a party



To throw a party is simply another way of saying to have a party. This is a rare case that *to throw* means *to have*.

Here is another example for you:

Fiona: What are your plans for this summer?

Lisa: I am going to go on vacation for a week, take it easy around my place, and I think I'll **throw a party** at the end of August.

A regular old bash

There are two expressions to talk about here. The first is the word **bash**. **Bash** is a slang word for a big party.

There are tons of synonyms for party. Here is a short list of some of them:

Gathering
Get-together
Celebration
Affair
Soiree
Shindig

The other part of this phrase is “**a regular old** _____” To describe something as **a regular old** _____ means that it is known, simple, or not special. Here are some examples calling something **a regular old** _____.

Bruce: What kind of car did you rent this past weekend?

Nathan: Nothing special. It was just **a regular old** car.

(Remember that this does not mean that the car was old in age, just that it was not special.)

Sara: How was your night out last night?

Ron: It was just **a regular old** night. It was fun though.

In one hand...in the other

Rita says that she would come to a dinner party with a bottle of wine **in one hand** and a dessert **in the other**. We use this two-part expression not to literally describe what one would bring in their hands; although it might be the case when someone does literally have one item in one hand and another item in the other hand.

We use the expression **in one hand...in the other** to mean that you will bring items that are necessary. This expression also implies that you will bring all that you can carry, as you will have something in both of your hands.

Let's look at a couple more examples:

Hannah: Are you looking forward to the barbecue?

Megan: Yes! I'll be there with hotdogs **in one hand** and buns **in the other**.

Pascal: Are you ready to write this test?

Ben: Yeah, I have my pencil **in one hand** and my eraser **in the other**.

To move on

To move on can be used to talk about emotions not just physically movement. It is used to talk about negative emotions connected to an event. If something happens to make you sad, you **move on** when you stop being sad about it.

Rita and Maura use it to talk about an experience Rita had. Rita was late for the opera, which was disappointing. But she didn't stay sad about it forever, she **moved on**. In this way **to move on** means to accept a situation and forget it, and to not continue to feel bad.

Here are a couple more examples:

Ivan: How are you feeling since you broke up with Karl?

Jessica: I'm feeling better. I'm starting to **move on**.

Kevin: What are you going to do now that you failed the test?

Tyson: All I can do is **move on**. I can't keep thinking about it and feeling bad.

To work itself out

This is a great expression to talk about a problem that is solved naturally and easily. If something **works itself out** it means there was a problem and no one worked to solve it, but it was solved anyway. It could have been solved by actions people did, but they were not intentionally trying to solve the problem.

Here are some examples of problems that **worked themselves out**:

Jackie: Have you figured out how we're going to get to Chicago?

Isla: Yeah, it **worked itself out**. Jean has a car so now there's enough space.

(The problem was solved because of Jean, but he wasn't necessarily trying to solve the problem.)

Ted: How are things going with you and Genna?

Pierre: The problems we had **worked themselves out**. Everything is fine now.

You may have noticed that we can say **it worked itself out**, or **they worked themselves out**. It can be singular or plural, but these are the only two options because we can only use this expression to talk about things.

Carpe diem

This Latin expression is very old but is still used by English speakers to mean that you should take every moment and every day to do the things you would like to do. The most common English translation of **carpe diem** is *seize the day*.

Other expressions that have the same meaning as **carpe diem** that we mention in this episode are *live every day to the fullest* and *make this day yours*. These kinds of expressions can often be heard in inspirational films.

The expression **carpe diem** was first written by Horace

My pleasure

At the end of this episode, Maura thanks Rita for doing the episode with her. Rita responds by saying, **My pleasure**. This is another expression that can be used to respond to someone saying *thank you*. The full expression is **it was my pleasure**, but Rita dropped the first part and just says **my pleasure**.

Here are two examples:

Jim: Thanks ever so much for your help.

Kim: **It was my pleasure**.

Doug: I really appreciate your help.

Penny: No problem. **My pleasure**.

Quiz

1. What is a proverb?

- a) a slang term for getting up early
- b) a new expression that is absurd
- c) an old expression that expresses some truth about life
- d) an expression about worms

2. Which of the following expressions means that someone who arrives early has more of a chance of being successful?

- a) The early bird catches the worm.
- b) The worm catches the early bird.
- c) Birds love worms.
- d) The late bird catches the early worm.

3. What is an early bird special?

- a) a low price in restaurants for meals eaten early
- b) a high price in restaurants for meals eaten early
- c) a low price in restaurants for meals eaten late
- d) a high price in restaurants for meals eaten late

4. Naomi: Don't we need to pack everything first? Chris: No, it's not a big deal. We can pack it later.

What does the expression *it's not a big deal* mean?

- a) It is very important.
- b) It is not very important.
- c) It is a good price.
- d) It is not a good price.

5. Adam will be at the office at noon, give or take a few minutes.

When will Adam be at the office?

- a) at noon exactly
- b) after noon
- c) before noon
- d) around noon

6. Dorothy: Do you know this song that's playing right now?

Jeff: Love this song!

Who is the subject of Jeff's response: Love this song?

- a) Dorothy
- b) Jeff
- c) you
- d) Maura

7. What do we call someone who arrives at a party late to make sure that the party is full and so that other people can see them arrive?

- a) give or take
- b) in full swing
- c) fashionably late
- d) throwing a party

8. Sebastian: I've been so sad since my girlfriend left me.

Charles: You need to get over her. You should _____.

Please fill in the blank.

- a) move in
- b) move up
- c) move out
- d) move on

9. What does the expression *seize the day* mean?

- a) Carpe diem.
- b) Live each day to the fullest.
- c) Make this day yours.
- d) all of the above

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