

Chatterbox #55 – The story of Culips

Transcript

Harp: Hello!

Maura: Hello!

Harp: This is Harp.

Maura: And your ol' pal Maura.

Harp: And we're here at Culips English Learning Podcast.

Maura: Yes. And this is the English Learning Podcast where we always give you fun, natural, everyday expressions that can help you improve your English.

Harp: For sure. And make sure you check out our website Culips.com, C-U-L-I-P-S.com, because there you can find lots of fun stuff. You can even become a member, and then you have access to the Learning Materials, which is a complete transcript, detailed explanations, and even a quiz.

Maura: Yes. And you could also help us out by making a one-time donation, because **we need all the help we can get** here.

Harp: Definitely. And today, we're doing a Chatterbox episode, and this is where we chat.

Maura: Yeah. We talk about all different kinds of topics. We might talk about something that's happening in Canada, or something that's been recently in the news, or just a general cultural topic that hopefully interests you.

Harp: Today, we have a very interesting topic.

Maura: Oh, today's topic is so interesting and it was suggested to us by a couple of our listeners, so thank you very much for the idea, because we're looking forward to this episode.

Harp: Because today, we're gonna talk about Culips.

Maura: Yes, we're going to first start by telling you about how Culips began and how we all met each other and got connected.

Harp: Yup. And then we're gonna focus on our own experiences with languages, either learning or teaching.

- Maura: Yeah. And then we'll also tell you how we came to Montreal and maybe a little bit about Montreal, because we're not from here. We're all from different places. So, how and why did we come to this city?
- Harp: Exactly. So let's get started.
- Maura: So, Maura and Harp, that's us. We met... It must be about five years ago. Is it five years ago?
- Harp: It is.
- Maura: Wow. So, it was almost five years ago that Harp and I took a French class together.
- Harp: Yup. Culips started with language, with us trying to learn French.
- Maura: Yeah. So, we started taking this very intensive French class, and it was from November to December, and it was actually a really great class, because there's still a bunch of us from that class that are friends.
- Harp: Yeah. A lot of my friends in Montreal are from that class.
- Maura: Yup. Or connections to other people that you made from people in that class. It was really just a good little class we had, wasn't it?
- Harp: It was.
- Maura: And so Harp and I met there, we became friends, we chatted.
- Harp: You know, Maura, I know we met in that class, but I don't remember the exact moment when we met, do you?
- Maura: I do, 'cause I remember it and it was so funny.
- Harp: What happened?
- Maura: Well, it was the very first day of class and before class started, some people were choosing a seat and some people were in the hallway talking, because they knew people. And it was my first class, so I felt kind of nervous there and then you came in, in front of me, and, very suddenly, just said, "Hey, how's it going? You're English, right?" And I was so shocked.
- Harp: That's so funny. That's how we started talking?
- Maura: Yup. But a lot of us that were friends from that French class are English native speakers. We have some friends that are Spanish speaking and Italian speaking too, because in the class, learning French, there were so

many different people from so many different places.

Harp: Yeah, it was funny to hear all the different accents when speaking French.

Maura: Yup, yup. And it definitely made French more difficult to understand sometimes, too.

Harp: Definitely.

Maura: So, we met each other, things were going good with us, but there's another important person in the origin of Culips story.

Harp: Yes. Yoshi is a key member of Culips. He's **behind the scenes**, so you might not know too much about him, but he's very important.

Maura: Yes. And if you go to our website, you can see a picture of Yoshi and find out a little bit about him. Yoshi, say hi!

Yoshi: Hi!

Harp: You know, I met Yoshi before I met you.

Maura: Yes. I do know that. You met Yoshi in a French class that you took before the class we took together.

Harp: Yeah. It was Level 3 French class and we met in Level 4 French class.

Maura: Right.

Harp: You know, I did the same thing with Yoshi though, I think. I think I turned to him and said, because I sat right beside him, and I think I said, "Oh, do you speak English?" And then we started talking and we were friends ever since.

Maura: OK. I remember that I met Yoshi in the break room at the school, because you already knew him and he was taking a French class too, but he didn't pass into Level 4, so he was still in Level 3, and I met him that way.

Harp: Yup. Yoshi had a very intense job so he took Level 3 a couple of times.

Maura: Right. He took it because he was busy and he didn't have enough attention to focus on it, but since then, he's completed all the courses up to Level 6 and finished.

Harp: Yup. I think he actually speaks French better than I do now.

Maura: Oh, maybe! So, I remember talking to him and we were talking about Japan, because Yoshi is originally from Japan and I taught in Japan, so we were talking a little but about that. And I also remember being so impressed with

his English because Yoshi speaks English really, really well.

Harp: Yup. He does.

Maura: Yeah. And he's really a great guy. It's too bad that **you guys** don't get to know him more.

Harp: Mmhmm.

Maura: So, then we all knew each other for maybe another year.

Harp: I think so. I finished to Level 6 for the French class. What about you?

Maura: No, I just did to Level 5 and then I got too busy, so I've never finished Level 6.

Harp: Yeah, but we all stayed in touch. We were all friends during that year and then, at some point in the summer, we had a dinner.

Maura: Yeah. I remember that it was a **going-away party** for you, Harp, but I don't know if you remember that.

Harp: Where was I going away?

Maura: I think you were just going back to Edmonton for maybe even a month. I dunno.

Harp: I'm so special I have a **going-away party** for a month-long visit home.

Maura: Yeah, well, you know, it was just a good excuse to get together. So, there was, again, a bunch of us from the French course, or the French school, and we met at a restaurant. And Yoshi was there too, and I was there, and of course you were there, and Yoshi started talking about this idea that he had, that he wanted to create an English podcast because, of course, he had lots of experience learning languages. He thought a podcast would be a great idea and he loves learning idioms and expressions, so he thought that would be something fun to focus on.

Harp: Yeah. I remember that was the first time we spoke about creating a website, or doing something together and it just **snowballed** after that. We met numerous times and we thought more about the idea and how we could do it and we tried of lots of different things. That's where it all started.

Maura: Yeah. It's funny to think that just a **chance encounter** with each other turned into such a big project. So, then of course there are other people who are involved in Culips: Asami, who we cannot forget, because Harp and I cannot make a website.

- Harp: At all.
- Maura: So, we definitely need someone who has expertise in that area and Asami has built up our website and she created our little cartoon icons. She's done so much for the site.
- Harp: Definitely. Super creative and also very strong technically.
- Maura: Yeah. And we've also had Robin, who's done some podcasting with us.
- Harp: Yes. He moved to Toronto last year, or a year and a half ago, so we miss him, but he's too busy now to come to Montreal to record with us all the time.
- Maura: Yeah.
- Harp: Maybe he'll make a future appearance.
- Maura: Yeah. And I met Robin when I was teaching English as a second language in Montreal and so was he. And he taught in Japan, so we just got along great and I thought he would be a good addition to Culips.
- Harp: Yeah. And Robin has a great podcast voice.
- Maura: Yeah. We miss that voice.
- Harp: Definitely. I'm sure everyone out there misses him as well.
- Maura: Yeah. And **last but not least** is Jessie.
- Harp: Yes. And I'm sure you all remember Jessie, because she comes on every once in a while.
- Maura: Yeah. She's just been a bit busy recently so you haven't heard her voice as much, but she's still definitely working **behind the scenes**.
- Harp: Definitely. She does so much work for Culips. She does all of the editing.
- Maura: Yup. She's really an excellent writer and she helps us with the writing and, yeah, edits all of our Learning Materials—that's the transcript and the more detailed explanation and the quizzes that you get when you become a member. So Jessie edits all of that.
- Harp: Yeah. So we talked about what Jessie does, what Asami does. Yoshi is our audio man. He does all of the audio editing and makes it sound so good and puts in all the music...
- Maura: Yeah. That's probably his main job, but he does so many other things too. He's involved in marketing and the business side of things, and he is always

interested in coming up with new, fun ideas for podcasts.

Harp: Definitely. And he's always the host, 'cause we always record at his apartment.

Maura: That is true. He has the place with the equipment and the microphone.

Harp: Yup, he's moved a couple times and Culips has just moved with him.

Maura: That's true. And Harp, well, Harp, of course, as you know, is one of our very special voices that you hear often, and she also helps create some of the episodes, too.

Harp: Yes. I like to do the Chatterbox ones because I like to chat, so they're the easiest podcasts for me to create and think about before.

Maura: Yeah, they're fun. And Harp also has the job of transcribing everything. So that means after we've recorded an episode and after Yoshi has edited it, Harp listens to it and transcribes everything that we say so that when you see that, you follow along and every word matches with what we're saying.

Harp: Yes. I type out word for word everything we say.

Maura: And I'm sure you've noticed funny little things that we do or say all the time.

Harp: Definitely. I say "exactly" and "definitely" all the time.

Maura: I know there are some little expressions that we repeat all the time but, you know, I really think that people naturally repeat things like that all the time, so it works.

Harp: Exactly. And Maura is my beautiful co-host and she also does almost all of the writing for Culips, all of the Learning Materials, and she does the editing, she does a lot of writing on the website, and she creates almost every episode.

Maura: Yup. It's a lot of work but it's really fun and it's really interesting for me because a lot of the time, I still learn about expressions, so I'll think of an expression for an episode and then I wonder too, do we know what the origin is? And so I get to do a little bit of research and find out more about the expression too.

Harp: Definitely. And I think it's always fun when we're out at a party and someone uses an expression and we both just look at each other and think "Culips!"

Maura: Yup. I love it. I was just telling Harp earlier that I heard an expression recently, today, in a show, that we recorded an episode for and I love it

because I know that it's going to be useful.

Harp: Yup.

Maura: So, that's really how Culips came to be, over the almost four years that we've been together, we've changed a lot, we've tried different formats of podcasts, we've used different equipment.

Harp: Yeah. I remember the first episode; it was with a little tiny microphone. We didn't have real equipment. It was pretty funny.

Maura: Yeah. And then we realized that it was worth it.

Harp: Yup. So we invested in a good microphone.

Maura: Yes.

Harp: It seems **just like yesterday** we started.

Maura: It sure does. But, you know, **times flies**.

Harp: It does. **Time flies when you're having fun**.

Maura: Yep. Yep, for sure. So, now let's talk about our own experiences with language, whether that be teaching or learning.

Harp: Yeah. I have the funny experience of actually learning English and remembering it, because I didn't speak English when I was a kid.

Maura: So, how is that? Because you were born in Canada and grew up in Canada. Tell us about that.

Harp: Yeah, I was born in Canada, but in a very small town in Northern BC and my parents had come from India about five years before I was born and they didn't speak very much English. And at home we spoke only Punjabi, so I didn't start speaking English until my older sister went to school, and then I started picking up a little bit from her and then when I went to kindergarten. And, yeah, I was in ESL when I was a bit younger, grade 2, grade 3, I was in ESL and then... Now it's me. I speak English very well, I think.

Maura: That's honestly really hard to imagine because, yeah, you speak English so well, but it's amazing how fast young kids can learn a new language, isn't it?

Harp: Yeah. It's funny, I still remember being about 9 or 10 and having to spell a word in English. I was at school, and I couldn't think of the English alphabetic letter and I was thinking of the Punjabi letters and it was all mixed up in my head so it did take a couple years to all **get smoothed out** and **straightened out**.

- Maura: Wow. And now how's your Punjabi?
- Harp: It's very bad. Very bad. Once I'm with my parents or when I go to India and I'm surrounded by the language, I pick it up very quickly but...
- Maura: Say something!
- Harp: OK, I'm gonna speak in Punjabi, but if anyone out there is listening and knows Punjabi, please don't laugh at me. [Punjabi] Umm... That's it! So I said hello to everyone who's listening to us.
- Maura: Oh, cool. Sounds fun.
- Harp: Yes, it is a fun language. It's very phonetic, so we have 45 alphabet letters and then 9 vowel sounds. So one letter, one sound, that's it.
- Maura: Hmm, interesting.
- Harp: Very easy to learn. Much easier than English.
- Maura: Oh, that's very interesting. And, so, what about teaching English? Because you did that too.
- Harp: Yup. I taught English in South Korea for a year and I also taught a little bit when I was in France because I was a nanny in France for about five months and I taught the kids there. And when I first moved to Montreal, I taught English here.
- Maura: Cool. My first experience learning another language and teaching English happened at the same time. I moved to Quebec, not Montreal, but Quebec City, and that was the first time that I lived in a place where I didn't speak the language.
- Harp: Well, that was a long time ago though, eh?
- Maura: It probably was about eight or nine years ago.
- Harp: OK. Before you went to Japan?
- Maura: Yup, before I went to Japan. And so, I moved to Quebec City and then a couple months later, I was teaching English as a second language and that was my first job teaching English as a second language, too.
- Harp: That must have been interesting. So you were learning French and at the same time teaching English.

- Maura: Yeah. So, when I was teaching English, I also learned a lot about English because, in Canada, we often don't learn much English grammar in schools and so I really didn't have that much knowledge of English grammar. And so, I would learn it and then teach it. And now, after so many years, I know English grammar well and I really feel like knowing grammar has improved my own English and improved my writing skills too.
- Harp: Yeah. We don't teach a lot of English grammar in school here.
- Maura: No, it's really interesting. But I also started learning French, which, to be honest, was **like a slap in the face**, because I'd never learned another language and I had no idea how difficult it is. I just had no idea how complex languages are and how difficult and long my journey was going to be.
- Harp: Definitely. Same for me. I started learning French much later in life, so...
- Maura: Yeah. Well, I was in my early twenties when I started and, of course, I had a good base in French, but, phew, it was still so tough.
- Harp: Definitely. I agree with you.
- Maura: But it also is really fun when you hear different expressions or even different grammatical structures that you've learned.
- Harp: Yeah. And then when you're able to recognize them, it's very fun. For me, it's really fun when I recognize a slang expression that someone's saying that I just learned. It's fun.
- Maura: Yup, I agree. So, now let's also talk about Montreal and how in the world we ended up here, because not one of us is from Montreal or even the province of Quebec.
- Harp: Yup. I know Yoshi came here for work, Asami came here for work, Jessie came here...
- Maura: Because she wanted to improve her French and then she got a job after she was here.
- Harp: And is Robin from here? Nope, Robin's from Toronto.
- Maura: He also moved here because he was interested in improving his French too.
- Harp: Yes. He lived in a small town to learn French, as well. I think he lived in Chicoutimi?
- Maura: Yeah. He lived somewhere small and did a special program that was like a French immersion for a few weeks.

- Harp: Yeah, exactly. And I came here because I lived in France and I learned quite a bit of French and I wanted to continue, so when I moved back to Canada, I choose Montreal.
- Maura: It's interesting that a lot of people move here because they wanna learn French, and it helps. Because the main reason that I moved here, to be honest, is because my partner is francophone and is from Quebec and we decided to move here. But, just like everybody else, I really wanted to learn French, and so I was happy to move to Quebec. In Quebec, the province of Quebec, Montreal is the most English-speaking place here, so even though French is still the dominant language, there's a lot of English speaking in Montreal and especially downtown, when you go into a store, you can get served in English or French. And really, when I lived in Ontario, and I used to come and visit, I loved Montreal. It was so fun and funky and diverse and one of my most favourite things about Montreal was the winding staircases.
- Harp: I agree. I always wanted to live in a place with winding staircases, but since I've been in Montreal, I haven't.
- Maura: I have, and I totally **take it for granted now**, I don't even appreciate it anymore. And if you wanna know what we're talking, about, go check out our Facebook page, because we have pictures of these apartments. It's very typically Montreal. In no other cities do we have that as much, especially not outside of Quebec.
- Harp: No, definitely not.
- Maura: Yeah, so, there are apartment buildings, two or three floors high, and the stairs are outside of the building, and they don't go straight up to the door, they twist and curve, and it just looks a little bit fancy.
- Harp: Yeah. They're fun and pretty, except I really wouldn't wanna have to carry a fridge or a washer or dryer up those stairs.
- Maura: I've also been on very dangerous ones, where the railing is really low and the stairs are old and rickety, so it can also be scary.
- Harp: Yeah. But for me, I love Montreal and I've loved it since the first time I came to visit. And I think it was such a contrast for me because out west, it's a newer place. Edmonton's a younger city; all the buildings are new looking. And when you come to Montreal, it's got so much history, and it looks so beautiful with all the old architecture. I love it here.
- Maura: Yup. It really is a great city, and right now is the perfect time to enjoy it because Montreal is the best in the summer and any Montrealer will tell you that it's the best time to visit.

- Harp: Exactly. It makes you almost forget about winter.
- Maura: So, on that note, I think that we should end this episode and get outside.
- Harp: I agree. Let's go.
- Maura: So, we really hope you enjoyed this episode, learning about how Culips came to be and what happens **behind the scenes**.
- Harp: Exactly. And if you have any other questions, you know where to find us.
- Maura: Yeah, check us out at our website, Culips.com, C-U-L-I-P-S.com.
- Harp: Or on Facebook or on iTunes.
- Maura: And thanks again to our listeners for suggesting this episode, because **I had a ball**.
- Harp: Me too.
- Maura: See you later. Bye!
- Harp: Bye everyone!

Detailed Explanation

To need all the help you can get

Here is an expression that means just what it says. Aren't those the easiest expressions to understand? When someone says that **they need all the help they can get**, it means that they need a lot of help, and that they will take any and all help offered. Sometimes people also say that they'll *take* all the help they can get.

In this episode, Maura says that **we need all the help we can get** at Culips. We all work hard, but there's always more to do, and more sound equipment and web services to pay for, so any financial help we get from people is very greatly appreciated!

Here are a couple more examples with ***to need (or to take) all the help you can get***:

Ernest: Do you want any help with organizing the party?

Kyle: Sure! **I need all the help I can get**. There's still so much left to do!

Michelle: Joe has been really busy with work lately.

Chris: I know, I heard. I was thinking about maybe offering to take care of his kids on Thursday night so he can get some rest.

Michelle: You should. I think he's **taking all the help he can get** right now.

Behind the scenes

This episode is all about what happens **behind the scenes** at Culips. If you imagine a stage set for a scene in a play, there are many walls and large objects on the stage.

Behind those objects, there are people who are responsible for moving the scenery, helping with props, changing costumes, and even the lighting and sound. This is all very important to the success of the play, even though the audience never sees these people. What happens **behind the scenes** is the actions you don't see, but that are very important!

Now, this expression isn't used only to talk about plays. It can be used for any kind of presentation, including podcasts! It could also be used to talk about radio, movies, or television shows.

We use this expression a few times in this episode. Here's another example:

Rebecca: I really loved the performance. And the lighting was incredible! It made the show that much more interesting to watch.

Lori: I know! There must have been a lot of work going on behind the scenes.

You guys

This is super popular slang! It's especially popular in casual situations, but can also be used in more professional situations with people you know well. People say **you guys** when they're talking to more than one person. In this episode, Maura uses the term **you guys** to address all Culips listeners.

As you probably already know, in English, *you* is the singular and plural form. When native English speakers talk to a group of people, they often say **you guys** to be clear that they are talking to everyone in the group and not just one person.

People might say **you guys** to a few friends in a casual conversation, or they might also say this when standing before a larger group of people. It's a very casual way to speak, and so it should only be used in a situation where a casual tone is appropriate.

This slang expression is acceptable to use with both females and males. A girl can say **you guys** to a group of female friends, or a guy can say it to a group of males and females, or any other combination! A *guy*, singular, is always male, but **you guys** is not gender specific.

Here are a couple more examples:

Vince: What are **you guys** doing tonight?

Luke: I'm not sure.

Sheila: Me neither, do you have something in mind?

Pia: It's such a beautiful day.

Anne: It sure is. I'm so glad **you guys** invited me to come swimming!

A going-away party

A **going-away party** is a kind of party that people have when they're about to go away for some time. Harp laughs about having a **going-away party** because she wasn't going away for very long. Most people have **going-away parties** when they're moving away permanently or going on a long trip. We think that Harp was only going back to Edmonton for about a month, but Harp loves parties, so why not have one anyways?

To snowball

Have you ever made a big snowball, like the ones use to make snowmen? If not, this is how you do it: you begin with a little bit of snow and then pack more and more snow around it until it gets to the size you want. You can also make a snowball by rolling a little bit of snow on the ground. As the small snowball rolls, it picks up more and more snow. If you take a little bit of snow and roll it down a hill, it will eventually make a big snowball.

Now that you've had a little Canadian lesson on how to make snowballs, let's look at the verb **to snowball**. When something **snowballs**, it becomes larger and larger, often at a faster and faster rate, just like an actual snowball does when it's pushed down a hill.

Harp uses **to snowball** when talking about how Culips started. We were all together and Yoshi shared his idea of making a podcast for people learning English. We met again, and discussed different concepts, and the idea for Culips kept getting bigger and bigger. It **snowballed** into the website and podcast that you know and love today!

Here are a couple more examples with **to snowball**:

Nicole: I owe so much money now. I thought I was only spending a little at a time.

Theo: That's usually how it feels, but it can easily **snowball** out of control.

Stan: How's the office cleaning job going?

Jack: Good. I was just doing it a little on the side at first, but it **snowballed** into a real business. I'm doing it full time now.

A chance encounter

Saying that meeting someone was **a chance encounter** means that it was not planned. The encounter was not organized or arranged by anyone and the people met by accident.

When Maura uses this expression, she's talking about the meeting between all of us at Culips. It was really by chance that everyone took a French class at the same time and we all met each other.

A chance encounter doesn't necessarily have to be meeting someone for the first time. It can also be used to talk about unexpectedly running into someone you already know.

Here's another example with **a chance encounter**:

Herb: You'll never guess who I saw at the mall last night.

Yasmina: Who?

Herb: Brian!

Yasmina: What a chance encounter. How's he doing?

Last but not least

The expression **last but not least** is used when naming items or people in a list. Sometimes when people make lists, they put the most important items at the top and the least important things at the end, making the last thing the least important. Other times, everything on the list is just as important as everything else, so an item that's listed at the end is just as important as one at the beginning.

This expression is used to introduce an item or person who's at the end of the list, but is also important. Using this expression is like saying, "This last item on the list is just as important as all the other items."

In this episode, Maura and Harp talk a little bit about everyone at Culips, and Jessie happens to be the last person they talk about. Maura says, "And **last but not least** is Jessie." This means that even though Jessie is the last person mentioned, she's just as important as everyone else at Culips. It's true; we couldn't do it without her!

Here are a couple more examples with **last but not least**:

Nathan: We're going to name off all the people who are invited to join the swim club. Go ahead, Dean.

Dean: Bob Anderson, Sandra Black, and, **last but not least**, Fred Wilson.

Jacob: Is that everything we need to pack for our camping trip?

Ryan: I think so. Oh! **Last but not least**, we also need to bring our sleeping bags!

Jacob: Good thing we didn't forget those.

Just like yesterday

When an event is described as feeling or seeming **just like yesterday**, it means that it doesn't feel like much time has passed since the event. It could also mean that the person remembers the details of the event so well, it's as though it happened very recently.

When someone says an event feels or seems ***just like yesterday***, it might be because the time since the event has passed so quickly because it has been a fun, happy time. It might also be because it was such an important event that one cannot forget it.

At Culips, we started meeting almost four years ago! But Harp says that it seems ***just like yesterday*** because we've had so much fun working together and creating podcasts for you since then!

Here's another example with ***just like yesterday***:

Stephan: I can't believe how big your daughter is now.

Jed: I know! It feels ***just like yesterday*** we were bringing her home from the hospital.

Time flies

This expression is a popular one! It has come up in previous Culips episodes too, and will probably come up again. When someone says ***time flies***, it means that time goes by quickly. The full expression is ***time flies when you're having fun***, but you really only need to say ***time flies*** and people will understand that the reason time has flown is because you've been having fun.

Time flies and ***just like yesterday*** are very similar in meaning. They usually both mean that since a certain event in the past, time has gone by quickly, because life has been pleasant. In this episode, both of these expressions are used to talk about how fast the time has gone since our first Culips meeting!

Here's another example with **time flies**:

Lindsay: I had such a good time at Sam's party.

Linda: I know. Me too. It's hard to believe that it's already been two months since then.

Lindsay: I know. **Time flies!**

To get smoothed out/straightened out

To get smoothed out or **to get straightened out** means to get solved or resolved, as in some confusion getting cleared up or a problem getting fixed. In this episode, Harp uses these two phrases to talk about her English ability. Harp says that when she was young, she spoke Punjabi at home and so when she went to school, the two languages were confusing for her. As time went by and she continued to learn English, the difference between the two languages became clear and she didn't have any problems keeping them separate anymore.

In this episode, Harp says **to get smoothed out** and **to get straightened out**, but you can also use the active forms, **to smooth out** and **to straighten out**.

These two expressions can be used literally for physical things. For example, you could **smooth out** a wrinkled shirt or you could **straighten out** a tie that's not straight.

The opposite of smooth is rough and the opposite of straight is crooked. When speaking figuratively, if something is rough or crooked, it means that it's not correct or not perfect. So you can use **to smooth out** and **to straighten out** figuratively to talk about correcting or perfecting something, such as Harp perfecting her English!

Here are a few more figurative examples:

Kenneth: I'm not sure how we're all going to get to the show tonight.

Derek: OK, I'll call everyone and **get it straightened out**.

Lisa: I'm upset that Connor and I are still not talking to each other. I feel so bad about our argument.

Teresa: You really should call him and **smooth things out**.

Like a slap in the face

This expression sounds very extreme! If a person actually received a slap in the face, it would probably make them feel surprised or insulted, and that is exactly what this expression means. When something is described as being **like a slap in the face**, it means that it made the person feel unpleasantly surprised or insulted.

Maura says that when she started learning French, it was **like a slap in the face**. This is because she was so surprised at how difficult it was! She was shocked that learning a new language turned out to be such a challenge.

Here's another example with this expression, where a person was also insulted by the surprising event:

Shawn: I can't believe that Marie didn't get the promotion again.

Lynne: I know! It's **like a slap in the face**. She's done so much for this company over the years!

To take something for granted

To take something for granted means to not fully appreciate something good. One reason that a person might not fully appreciate something is because they've always had it or they've gotten used to it over time. You can **take a thing or a person for granted**.

If you think of a person who has been rich their whole life, they might not really appreciate money because they've never had to work hard to get it. Or someone who has a really happy family might **take it for granted** because their family has always been happy and they don't know what it's like to be in a family that isn't happy.

Maura says that she loves the typical Montreal apartments with the twisted staircases, but now she **takes them for granted**. Because she's lived in Montreal for a while, she doesn't fully appreciate how interesting they are anymore. She's gotten used to seeing them every day.

Here are a couple more examples with **to take something for granted**:

John: Marc doesn't seem to appreciate his girlfriend very much.

Kylie: I know. She's so always nice to him, but he really **takes her for granted**.

Hailey: You're so lucky to have air conditioning. It's so hot outside!

Carmen: You're right, but I think I **take it for granted** now that I've had it for so long.

To have a ball

This expression was the name of a past Culips episode. **To have a ball** means to have fun. Any time you want to say that an event was fun, you can say that you **had a ball**.

Here's another example with **to have a ball**:

Stacey: How was your weekend getaway?

Ben: Great! **We had a ball**.

Quiz

1. Which of the following expressions means to need a lot of help and to be willing to accept whatever help people offer?
 - a) to take all the help you have
 - b) to take all the help you can get
 - c) to take the help from all you can get
 - d) to take help you can get

2. With which kind of people should you probably NOT use the slang *you guys*?
 - a) females
 - b) males
 - c) friends in a casual situation
 - d) readers of a formal report

3. This episode gives you an idea about what goes on _____ at Culips.
Please fill in the blank with the most appropriate expression.
 - a) behind the scenes
 - b) behind the curtains
 - c) in front of the scenes
 - d) in front of the curtains

4. Which of these winter things is also a verb: to _____?

- a) mitten
- b) snow fort
- c) snowball
- d) flurry

5. Which expression means that the last item on a list is just as important as all the others?

- a) last but not least
- b) least but not last
- c) last place is important
- d) least place is important

6. _____ when you're having fun.

Please fill in the first part of this expression.

- a) It's just like yesterday
- b) Times goes fast
- c) Time flies
- d) It was yesterday

7. Neil: All the plans are mixed up. I need to talk to Charles and _____.

Please fill in the blank.

- a) straighten things out
- b) straight shoot
- c) smoothen it
- d) smooth up the wrinkles

8. What does the expression *to take something for granted* mean?

- a) to not like something
- b) to not appreciate something
- c) to appreciate something
- d) to achieve something

9. Jane says that she had a ball. Which of the following statements is definitely true?

- a) Jane didn't have a good time.
- b) Jane had a great time
- c) Jane had an OK time.
- d) Jane played with a ball.

Answers

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