

Chatterbox #58 – Who has to go to the bathroom?

Transcript

Maura: Hello everyone! It's Maura.

Harp: And Harp!

Maura: And we're here with your Culips ESL podcast.

Harp: Yes, where we help you learn English.

Maura: And we look at all kinds of different expressions and idioms and cultural stuff

going on, in every episode.

Harp: Yes. And make sure you go to our website, that's Culips.com,

C-U-L-I-P-S.com, because there you can become a member and have access to the learning materials, which includes a detailed explanation, the

complete transcripts, and even a quiz for each episode.

Maura: Yeah, check it out. And you can also help us out by making a one-time

donation. We appreciate all the support that we get.

Harp: Yeah, thanks to everyone who's already donated.

Maura: Thank you so much. Now, today's episode is a Chatterbox episode. And if

you listen to our podcast, you know that Harp and I like to chat.

Harp: We definitely like to chat, a lot.

Maura: And in our Chatterbox episodes, we talk about all different kinds of things.

We might talk about some cultural aspect, something that's going on in the

news, or we might interview people, all different kinds of shows.

Harp: All sorts of fun and exciting things.

Maura: And today we're going to talk about something that people usually don't talk

about.

Harp: Yeah, it's a bit of a different subject.

Maura: Today we're going to talk about using the **washroom**. Well, not just using it,

but the way we talk about using it and all kinds of interesting little details

about using the washroom.

Harp: First, we're gonna talk about how we talk about it, specifically for Canada.



Maura: Right. So, what words we say to talk about the **washroom**. And then we're

going to talk about different slang terms for going to the **washroom**, because there are lots of different ways to say it, so we're gonna tell you a few of

them.

Harp: Yup. And then finally, we're gonna talk about how, when, and where.

Maura: Right. And all of the ins and outs—ew!—all of the details of using the

washroom.

Harp: Yes, so let's get started, Maura.

Maura: OK. So the first thing we said we're gonna talk about is how we talk about

this in Canada. And we already really gave one away, because we're Canadians and we already talked about it, which is that we call it *the washroom* and people say that *I'm going to go to the washroom*.

Harp: Yes, exactly. Or *Can I use the washroom*?

Maura: Right, exactly. So we use the word **washroom** to talk about that place where

you might have a bath or a shower, but where there's definitely a toilet and a

sink.

Harp: Definitely a **toilet** and a sink, and we call it a **washroom**.

Maura: Yes. What else might we call it?

Harp: A **bathroom**.

Maura: Right. So, we could call this space a **washroom** or a **bathroom**. So we

definitely use these when we're in a private space like a friend's house or a

relative's home.

Harp: Yes, but if you're in public you can also use the word *restroom*.

Maura: Yeah. So if you're in a restaurant or if you're at the mall, you might talk about

it as *the restroom*. But we should be clear about this because when you're in a public place, you can say *restroom*, but you could also say *washroom*

or **bathroom** and that's acceptable too.

Harp: Yeah, definitely. You can ask, *Where is the washroom?* or *Can I use the*

bathroom, please?, Where is the **restroom**?

Maura: Right. And when you're in someone's home, you wanna use only **washroom**

or **bathroom**. You wouldn't say **restroom** in someone's home. It just doesn't

work.

Harp: It's really only for public spaces.

Maura: Right. So, what about the word *toilet*, when people say they're going to the

toilet?

Harp: We don't really say that very often in Canada.

Maura: Yeah, it's not that common. Sometimes you might hear it, though; some

people might say it.

Harp: Some people might use it, but it really does lead to a visual picture, which...

Maura: It's a bit direct for Canadians, and I think a lot of Americans to the south of us

too, because we usually say *washroom* or *bathroom*.

Harp: Yeah, exactly. If you say, *Oh, where is the toilet*? It's very clear what you're

going there to do.

Maura: Yeah. It is true, though, that in England and Australia, they do say *toilet* and

it's very common.

Harp: Because it's common, I think it's not a big deal there, but because it's not

common here, it sounds strange when people say it.

Maura: Yeah. My sister, who we previously interviewed for Culips, lived in Australia,

and so when she was there, she got used to people saying toilet all the time

and she told me that when she came back and would use that word.

sometimes people—Canadians, here—would find it a little bit funny that she

would say *toilet*, just because we don't normally say that.

Harp: Yeah, it's funny.

Maura: So, you can use **bathroom**, **washroom**, pretty much anywhere. You wanna

use **restroom** only in a public place, and to say **toilet**, it does work, but it's a

little bit strange over here.

Harp: Yes, definitely. You know though, Maura? I don't ever say *bathroom* in

public.

Maura: Oh no?

Harp: Nope. In public, I would never say *Where's the bathroom*?

Maura: And why's that?

Harp: When I was young, I remember someone saying to me, "It's not a **bathroom**;

there's no bath."

Maura: Well, they have a point.

Harp: Yeah, but a lot of people say *bathroom* in public.

Maura: Yeah, technically they're correct, but people usually don't see any difference

or problem with that nowadays.

Harp: Yeah. So you could ask *Where is the bathroom?*

Maura: Yup, you'll be fine.

Harp: OK. So let's move on to our second section.

Maura: And this is where we talk about slang, so, the funny ways that we talk about

going to the bathroom.

Harp: You're very excited about this, Maura.

Maura: Well, like I said, it's something that we normally don't talk about. And, to be

honest, to all of you listening, we've talked about doing an episode like this for a while, but we always felt not sure of how to talk about it, because it is such a kind of **touchy** subject and sometimes hard to describe and be polite.

Harp: Yeah, and not be gross.

Maura: Yeah, exactly. So, hopefully we can get through this episode and not gross

anybody out.

Harp: Yeah, I hope so.

Maura: OK. So, yeah, we're gonna talk about slang for *going to the bathroom*.

Harp: All right. Let's start with *to go to the can*.

Maura: Right. So instead of saying, to go to the **bathroom**, you can say, **to go to**

the can.

Harp: Yeah. So slang for *bathroom* is *can*.

Maura: Right. Instead of saying, I have to go to the **bathroom**, you could say, I have

to go to the can.

Harp: Yep. It's a slang way of saying that you have to go to the **bathroom**.

Maura: And I imagine that this comes from people actually peeing in a can. Is that a

good theory, Harp?

Harp: You have thought about it too much.

Maura: I had to when I was preparing for this episode.

Harp: That's funny. Yeah, that's probably where it came from. That's getting into

the borderline gross section, Maura!

Maura: But, of course, now, to go to the can just means to go to the bathroom.

That's it.

Harp: Yeah, and it's very common to say this.

Maura: But we should also be clear that you don't say this with people who are not

close friends or family. And never talk like in a professional way. You only wanna use slang for *going to the bathroom* with people you're extremely

comfortable with.

Harp: Yes, definitely. I agree with you.

Maura: So you can say to go to the can, and sometimes people say to go in the

can.

Harp: Yeah, so people say *to go to the can* or *to be in the can*.

Maura: OK. So let's do an example dialogue with this slang expression.

Harp: OK. Let's do it.

Maura: So, you havin' a good time at the party?

Harp: Yeah, it's really fun. How about you?

Maura: Yeah, yeah. There are a lot of people here and some people that I know and

I haven't seen in a while.

Harp: Wait, hold that thought.

Maura: What, what's going on?

Harp: I have to go to the can.

Maura: OK, no problem. I'll be here when you get back.

Harp: OK, just a minute.

Maura: So, there's an example where someone might use the expression *to go to*

the can.

Harp: Yeah, it's very casual and fun to say.



Maura: Right. And can just replace to go to the **washroom**. Now, we have another

slang that also means to go to the washroom and to go to the can.

Harp: Yes, which is, *to go to the john*.

Maura: Yes. To go to the john. Poor John. So, in this case, john means toilet. To

go to the john is to go to the bathroom.

Harp: Yes, so to say **to go to the john** is to say to go the **washroom**.

Maura: And it's exactly like *to go to the can*. It's something that you would say with

friends or family in a casual place. You wouldn't use this in a professional

place or with people that you don't know because it would be very

inappropriate and a bit rude.

Harp: Yes, never say this at work.

Maura: Yeah, don't do it. So, let's give an example with *goin'* to the john.

Harp: Let's do it.

Maura: So hey, do you think this inning's gonna be over soon?

Harp: Yeah, **the Blue Jays** aren't playing very well. I think it's gonna end soon.

Maura: OK, I'll **hold it** then. I gotta **go to the john**.

Harp: Yeah, it should be over soon.

Maura: All right, I'll **hold it**.

Maura: So there you go. Another example with the slang term for *the bathroom*, this

time it was to go to the john.

Harp: And one note that I wanna say is that it's mainly men who use *to go to the*

john. it sounds a bit odd when a woman uses this expression.

Maura: You're right. Men do tend to use these expressions more often. I guess they

just like using slang for **bathroom** more than woman do. I don't know why.

Harp: Yeah, I typically just say *I have to go to the ladies' room*.

Maura: Oh, you're so feminine and polite. OK. So let's move on to the third and last

section, which is when we're gonna talk about when and how and where,

and, again, try not to be gross about it.

Harp: Yes.



Maura: It is a little bit of a strange subject to talk about, because people don't talk

about it and they don't feel comfortable saying it. This is true so much so that some people don't even tell others when they're going to the **bathroom**. They might just say, *Oh, I'll be back in a minute*, and you don't really know where they went, but they went to use the **toilet**, but they don't tell you

directly.

Harp: Yup, people are quite private about this.

Maura: Yeah. Especially at work, I feel, people are more inclined to be indirect and

not say exactly where they're going. Like, I'll just be back in a second, or

Excuse me just for a moment.

Harp: Yeah, you know, there's a guy in my work who doesn't even like to use the

bathroom on the same floor as us?

Maura: Why is that? He's too afraid **to run into** anyone there?

Harp: Yeah, he doesn't wanna see anyone he works with when he's going to the

bathroom.

Maura: I have to say that I don't really like going to the **bathroom** with people at

work either. I don't go out of my way to use another **bathroom**, but when I **run into** someone, I'm like, *Oh*, *gosh*, *now I have to make weird bathroom*

conversation.

Harp: It can be a bit odd. It's awkward, almost like **elevator talk**, you know? Like,

you're going there to do something private, but it's in a public space and

there are other people there with you.

Maura: Yeah, and you just wanna, kinda, wash your hands and get outta there.

Harp: Yeah. Sometimes I go into the **bathroom** and I see girls having very in-depth

conversations. Really? Can't you do that somewhere else?

Maura: But most of the time, again, especially at work, when I run into someone, we

do have a little bit of an exchange. You can't just smile and walk out, 'cause it might be a bit rude. You really do have to say, *Oh*, *hi*, *how are you today?*

or something like that.

Harp: Yeah, definitely. You have a small exchange.

Maura: Yeah. Just keep it brief. But people are comfortable with all kinds of different

things. So some people won't talk to you very much and other people will talk

to you when they're in the stall beside you going to the **bathroom!**

Harp: That's true.



Maura: That's not one of my favourite things to do, but some people do, they talk to

you the whole time you're in the **bathroom**.

Harp: Yeah, if it's someone I know really well, I would probably talk to them, but it's

a bit awkward.

Maura: It is, it's a bit awkward. I think when you're in the **bathroom** stall with the

door closed, that's private time.

Harp: I agree.

Maura: One thing that I've heard from a few different people who are from other

countries is that our stalls in the **bathroom** surprise them.

Harp: Really? Why?

Maura: Because the walls on either side of the stall don't go all the way to the

ground. So that if you really want, and you bend down, you can see the feet

of the people next to you and so you're not completely isolated.

Harp: That doesn't seem odd to me, but I can see that if you're used to having the

walls going all the way down that it would be strange.

Maura: Yeah, it doesn't seem very odd to me either, again, because we grew up in

Canada, that's how it always was, but I have had experiences in stalls when

the walls go all the way to the ground and actually it's kinda nice.

Harp: Yeah, more private.

Maura: Yeah.

Harp: You know, the thing I liked a lot when I was teaching in South Korea?

Maura: What's that?

Harp: In all of the **bathroom** stalls, in public places, they had little machines where

you could press a button and it would make noise and so it would become very private, because you couldn't hear people outside, they couldn't hear

you.

Maura: Yeah.

Harp: It's very private.

Maura: Yeah, that is nice. And in Japan, the stalls did go all the way to the ground,

which is nice because, again, you have more privacy.

Harp: Yeah.

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Maura: I think we should stop while we're ahead, because I think we've done a pretty

good job at not grossing anybody out.

Harp: Yes, we have done a good job with that.

Maura: At the same time, there are still so many more expressions that exist that are

connected with really disgusting things when you go to the **bathroom**.

Harp: How 'bout we leave that for the learning materials?

Maura: Yes. We'll definitely give you a more detailed list, for example, what **number**

1 and number 2 mean, and all kinds of other gross stuff.

Harp: OK, good plan. So remember, you have to become a member, 'cause that's

how you get access to the learning materials, where you can find out more

about this gross list.

Maura: Yeah. So go to our website to become a member, to learn more about us,

and to see our photos. That's Culips.com. It's C-U-L-I-P-S.com.

Harp: And like us on Facebook or rate us on iTunes.

Maura: But stay in touch, 'cause we love to hear from you.

Harp: Yeah, send us a quick email.

Maura: But I gotta go now, I gotta go to the can.

Harp: You're so dorky, Maura. I love it.

Maura: OK. So, we hope you learned something in this episode and had fun at the

same time.

Harp: That's it for us today.

Maura: We'll talk to you soon.

Harp: Bye!

Maura: Bye everyone!



Detailed Explanation

The ins and outs

When you're talking about *the ins and outs* of something, you're talking about all the details. If you want to know **the ins and outs** of a project, it means that you want to know everything about it and how it works. To remember this phrase, you could think of it as the fact that you want to know about everything that's going into the project and everything that's coming out of it too.

We always try to give you **the ins and outs** of the expressions we talk about at Culips, because we want you to know all the details. But this is going to get a bit gross now! Maura uses this expression in this episode and then says *Ew* because she was making a joke. Wanting to know all the details of going to the **bathroom** is quite disgusting!

Here are a couple of examples with *the ins and outs* that aren't so gross:

Tim: How's the new job going?

Freda: It's going all right. I'm still getting to know the ins and outs of the office though.

Ben: What do you know about baseball? I've got to learn about it fast. Tell me all **the ins** and outs.

Michael: OK, I'll tell you everything I know.

Washroom, bathroom, restroom, toilet

All of these words, *washroom*, *bathroom*, and *restroom*, are pretty much interchangeable. Here are some general rules about their different uses:

In a home, you can use the words *washroom* or *bathroom*.

In a public place, you can use the words *washroom*, bathroom, or *restroom*. *Some people might say that the word *bathroom* is not appropriate in a public place, because there's no actual bath. But this word is used quite commonly in Canada, and we think it's just fine!

Also, remember that Canadians and Americans don't usually use the word *toilet* when they have to go. If you use it, you'll be understood, but it's not common.

Being indirect

When a person wants to be polite, one way to do this is **to be indirect**. A person might **be indirect** in order to be polite in all kinds of situations, including when talking about going to the bathroom. As we talk about in this episode, some people have mixed feelings about even going to the bathroom in public washrooms. Some people prefer not to directly say where they are going, just to say that they will return soon.



In Canada and the US, saying that you have to go to the toilet is more direct than saying that you have to go to the bathroom or saying that you will return shortly. Polite **indirectness** is the reason why people in Canada and America do not usually say *toilet*.

In Canada and the US, the word *toilet* is used only to mean the actual fixture where waste is deposited, whereas in the UK and other English-speaking countries, the word is used to talk about the entire room, as a synonym for *bathroom*. This is why saying that you're going to the toilet is more common in these countries. In the UK, you could be going to the toilet just to wash your hands, use the mirror, etc. Whereas in Canada, if you're going to the toilet, it can only mean that you need to do one thing!

Touchv

If something or someone is described **touchy**, it means they are sensitive and must be handled carefully. If a person is described as **touchy**, it means that they are sensitive, usually to some specific topic, which upsets them in some way. You have to be careful speaking to someone who is **touchy** about a certain subject. If something is described as **touchy**, it means that it must be handled carefully.

In this episode, Maura says that the subject of bathrooms is **touchy**. This means that the subject has to be handled carefully, so we don't gross out our listeners or say something disgusting.

Here's another example with touchy:

P.J.: I wanted to talk to Shelly about her divorce, but I wasn't sure if it was a good idea. Vicky: I think it's still a **touchy** subject for her, but if you're careful not to hurt her feelings, I'm sure she'd like to have someone to talk to.

To gross someone out/To be grossed out

When something is gross, it is disgusting, and can possibly make you feel ill. **To gross someone out** is to do or say something that they will find gross. For example, a person might have a cut on their leg from a recent fall and show their friend. The friend might be **grossed out** because they find the cut disgusting. Somebody else might not be grossed out by the cut at all.

We use this expression a few times throughout the episode. The reason is that the subject of this episode could possibly **gross some people out**. We tried to keep things as pleasant as we could!

Just like you can **gross someone else out**, you can also be grossed out yourself by something or someone else. We hope you weren't grossed out by this episode!



Here's another example with to be grossed out and to gross someone out.

Greg: Last Halloween I was really **grossed out** when I went in the haunted house. Josianne: Was it all the fake dead people? Yuck! Those things **gross me out** too.

To go to the can/To go to the john

These are two expressions that people might use to mean to go to the washroom. **To go to the can** and **to go to the john** are used by people in very casual situations with very good friends. Even in a casual situation, these expressions can seem a little gross, so make sure you only use them if that's the kind of impression you want to make.

Here's one more example:

Sabrina: Where's Colin?

Ivan: I think he went to the can.

Sabrina: Gross, Ivan! Couldn't you just say that he'll be back in a minute?

Borderline

When something is described as **borderline**, it means that it comes close to a border, and so is close to crossing that border. Although when **borderline** is used, it is not talking about a physical border like one between countries. In this episode, **borderline** was used when some of our comments were approaching the border between appropriate and gross. **Borderline** can be particularly used when something someone has said is a little bit upsetting, disgusting, or rude, but not so bad that it's really offensive.

Borderline is often used with an adjective that follows it, which is more specific. In this episode, Harp tells Maura that a comment she made was **borderline** gross.

Here's another example with **borderline**:

Hannah: Be careful when you criticize Sue's work next time. You don't want to seem rude and what you said back there was **borderline**.

Mandy: Oh, thanks! I didn't mean to be rude. I'll try to be more sensitive next time.

Hold that thought

One person tells another person to **hold that thought** when the first person needs to briefly interrupt the conversation and the second person was speaking or about to speak. This is exactly what happens when Harp uses this expression in this episode. In one of our dialogue examples, Harp says **hold that thought** to temporarily interrupt a conversation to go to the washroom. **Hold that thought** means remember what you're thinking (and talking) about so we can get back to it shortly.



Here's another example with hold that thought.

Mohammed: Oh! And I have to tell you about what happened last weekend, too. Craig: **Hold that thought**! I really want to hear your story, I just have to go turn off the oven first.

This is expression is not flexible. It is always given as an order from one person to another. You CANNOT say, for example, she was holding that thought or I need to hold my thoughts.

To hold it

To hold it is another expression associated with going to the bathroom. **To hold it** means to not go to the bathroom even though you feel like you could or need to. The word *it* is used in this expression to be politely indirect, since mentioning what exactly it is that you're **holding** in would be gross!.

This expression is used in this episode when Maura and Harp are doing a dialogue example about going to the washroom during a baseball game. Maura says she will **hold it** (meaning that she will wait to go to the bathroom) until the inning is finished.

Here's another example with to hold it.

Child: Mom, I have to go to the bathroom.

Mom: Can you hold it for a few more minutes? We're almost there.

The Blue Jays

In this episode, Maura and Harp give an example about baseball. In the example, they talk about a team called **the Blue Jays**. **The Blue Jays** are a Toronto baseball team. **The Toronto Blue Jays** are part of Major League Baseball and they are the only team that's not American. The blue jay is a blue, white, and black bird native to North America.

To go to the ladies' room

In this episode, we only talk about a few different ways that people might say they have to go to the bathroom, but there are really tons of ways. Depending on where you are in the English-speaking world, there are different expressions, too.

Harp mentions in this episode that she might also say that she has **to go to the ladies' room**. This is another way that a female might say that she has to go to the washroom. This is a more polite and more formal way to say it, and would only be used in a public place. The equivalent for males would be *the gents' room*, but this is more popular in England and used less in North America.



To run into someone

This is a very common expression and it's been explained in many of Culips' previous Leaning Materials. We'll explain it here again because it's so common. The expression *to run into someone*, not to be confused with actually running into someone, means that you meet someone by chance.

Harp's friend at work uses a washroom on a different floor because he doesn't want to **run into** anyone, or meet anyone in the washroom unexpectedly.

Here's another example with to run into someone:

Billy: You'll never guess who I **ran into** the other day. Joan! Ken: Oh, wow. It must've been awhile since you'd seen her.

Elevator talk

Elevator talk is conversation that happens in an elevator between strangers or people who don't know each other very well. Conversations in an elevator between strangers are awkward and boring because there is often not much to talk about with someone you don't know. **Elevator conversations** are often about something that is happening in the building, the weather, or the news.

Because **elevator talk** is often awkward and unnatural, Harp compares it to talking to people you only know a little bit in the bathroom. Conversations in the bathroom are often awkward too.

Canadian restrooms

Canadian restrooms—washrooms in public places—are quite varied. Some restrooms are only one private room for one person at a time. Other bathrooms have stalls, which in most cases have walls and doors that do not go all the way to the floor. Male and female restrooms are almost always separate, with only some very rare clubs, bars, or restaurants with unisex restrooms.

Some restrooms have toilets with automatic flushing. The toilet flushes on its own as soon as you stand up, without you having to touch anything. A restroom might also have automatic soap dispensers and automatic faucets at the sinks that turn on when you put your hands under them. But many restrooms are manual and you need to operate all of the above yourself.

After you wash your hands, there are two common options available to dry your hands. You will usually see either a hand dryer, which blows out hot air, or a paper towel dispenser, or both.



Number 1 and number 2, and more!

If you're easily grossed out, don't read this section! In addition to having indirect slang terms for going to the washroom, sometimes people can be even more direct and a bit gross. Some of these expressions might also be used in movies and on TV.

Here's a short list of slang for *to urinate*. Saying *to go pee* is the most common way that people say it. We don't really recommend using any of the following, but they are interesting to know anyway!

Slang expressions meaning to go pee:

To go number 1

To go wee or to go wee-wee (These are sometimes used with small children.)

To take a leak

To piss (This one is considered pretty rude.)

To tinkle

Slang expressions meaning to defecate:

To poop (This one is sometimes used with small children)

To go number 2

To take a dump

There are plenty more slang terms, including extremely rude ones (and a swear word), for talking about this subject, but we just can't bring ourselves to write any more of them here. If you're really interested, a quick Internet search will probably return lots of results!

Remember, in North America, there's pretty much no time that it's polite to talk about what you actually do in the bathroom, unless perhaps you're talking to a very young child who's just learning how to use a toilet, so you need to be more direct with them.

Quiz

1. Which expression means to know all the detail	1.	Which exp	ression	means	to	know	all th	ne de	tail	s?
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- a) to know the outs and ins
- b) to know the ins and outs
- c) to know it indoors and outdoors
- d) to know it on the outside

2.	Which of the following	y words should onl	v be used to talk about	a public place

- a) bathroom
- b) washroom
- c) restroom
- d) toilet

3. In Canada, which of the following would be considered direct (not indirect) when talking about going to the bathroom?

- a) Excuse me. I'll just be back in a minute.
- b) Sorry. Do you have a washroom here?
- c) Excuse me. I have to go to the toilet.
- d) Could you tell me where the washroom is?

4.	We hope	this episode	about bathrooms	didn't	

Please fill in the blank.

- a) gross you out
- b) gross you in
- c) be grossed out
- d) gross you

5. Which of the following is NOT a slang expression for to go to the bathroom?

- a) to go in the jar
- c) to go to the can
- d) to go to the john
- e) to go number 1



6. Which of the following sentences could be considered borderline gross?

- a) You're too nice and kind.
- b) She cut her hand open and blood started gushing everywhere.
- c) I have to go to the bathroom now.
- d) Politics is always interesting.

7. Which expression is used to interrupt a conversation temporarily?

- a) Hold that thought.
- b) Hold that sentence.
- c) Think twice.
- d) Hold it.

8. What does to go number 1 mean?

- a) to go to the washroom often
- b) to hold it
- c) to use the restroom
- d) to pee



Answers

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