

Chatterbox #86 – Hobbies

Transcript

Harp: Hello everyone. This is Harp.

Maura: And your old pal Maura.

Harp: And we're here at Culips English Learning Podcast, bringing you another exciting episode.

Maura: And don't forget to go to our website, Culips.com, that's C-U-L-I-P-S.com, because on our website is where you can become a member. And when you become a member, you get so much more out of each episode. You'll get the transcripts, more detailed explanations of the expressions we use, and a quiz.

Harp: Exactly. And also check us out on Facebook.

Maura: Now, let's get to our episode today. Today we're going to do a Chatterbox episode and that is where Harp and I chat about all different kinds of topics; cultural topics or sometimes we interview people, and today we are going to do an episode that was an idea from our listener.

Harp: Yeah. Thanks Igor from Brazil! We're doing an episode today about hobbies.

Maura: Yes. So, it was thanks to you, our listeners, for giving us a great idea. You can keep sending your ideas to us on Facebook.

Harp: Definitely. So today, we're gonna break it down. We're gonna start with talking about common hobbies in North America, then we're gonna talk about how to talk about hobbies.

Maura: And then we're gonna share some of our own hobbies, past and present.

Harp: Yes. So let's get started.

Maura: Common hobbies in North America today. Hmm.

Harp: Hmm.

Maura: Well, people like to spend their **free time** in so many different ways that it's almost hard to say specifically what people do.

Harp: Yup. Definitely. It's hard because people have so many different interests and I would say that one common hobby is sports.

- Maura: Yes. A lot of people like to be physically active in their **spare time**. So they might play a sport or they might go to the gym and exercise. For them, it might be like a kind of hobby.
- Harp: Definitely. And obviously, in Canada, a lot of people love hockey. So hockey is a common... a common hobby to have, to play hockey. And a lot of people I know play street hockey or field hockey or ice hockey.
- Maura: Right. And even though they might be part of a team, it's not really competitive. It's just a bunch of friends who get together and play for fun. So in that way, the sport is more like a hobby.
- Harp: Exactly.
- Maura: Other people are more laid back and chill and they might like quieter things. A really traditional, but popular, hobby is reading.
- Harp: Yes. And if you listen to Culips, you know that Maura and I both love reading. It's a really common hobby here in North America.
- Maura: And now with the Internet, there's so much more to read. You can read the news or you can read blogs. Or even on Facebook, really, you're reading.
- Harp: Exactly. Another hobby that many people have is playing some sort of instrument or really just enjoying music.
- Maura: Yes. A lot of people, if they can't play music, love to listen to it. Or, again, they can go online and find new music. That's one thing the Internet has brought us, is a way to discover new music.
- Harp: Yes, definitely. You can find so many different **artists** from all around the world on the Internet.
- Maura: Yeah. There are all kinds of different sites where you might listen to one song that you like and then you have other songs and other bands recommended to you.
- Harp: Yup. And another thing with the Internet and music is that I find there are a lot of YouTube videos on teaching people how to play the guitar or how to play the piano, little instructional videos **out there**.
- Maura: Yeah. Sometimes, you're wondering how to do something and you realize you could just look it up on YouTube and someone's gonna tell you how to do it.
- Harp: Yeah, exactly.

- Maura: Another hobby that has become pretty popular is to do crafts.
- Harp: Yup. And when we talk about crafts, we mean all sorts of things: **knitting** or **scrapbooking** or **cross-stitching**.
- Maura: Right. **Knitting** used to be something that you'd only think of older women doing, but more and more, younger people, and some guys too, are **knitting**.
- Harp: Yup. I often see people on **the metro** or the bus **knitting**, actually. Younger people even.
- Maura: Yeah. I **went through a phase** where I was **knitting** a few years ago myself, and it is fun. It's something to keep your hands busy and at the end of it, you have a nice scarf or a hat, or something else that you can wear.
- Harp: Yeah, exactly.
- Maura: I guess this would be particularly popular in Canada, because we wear scarves and hats for a good portion of the year.
- Harp: Yeah, definitely. It's a useful hobby because you can wear what you've made.
- Maura: **Scrapbooking** is also really interesting because it seems to be pretty popular.
- Harp: Yeah. So **scrapbooking** is basically where you create a photo album but you put in little other pictures or maybe some ticket stubs from a concert you went to and there's a picture of you at the concert. It's where you make, basically, a kind of memory of the picture.
- Maura: Right. So, like you said, it's just like a photo album except it's nicer because it's more personalized.
- Harp: Yeah, exactly.
- Maura: So you can buy all kinds of stuff for **scrapbooking**; books and the paper that goes in it and all kinds of little stickers and extra things to put in the book.
- Harp: Yeah. I've definitely made some **scrapbooks** in my life.
- Maura: You know, one thing that I always remember is when I was in Japan, we often got profiles of our students before, so we got information about what the person's job was and there was also a part that said what their hobbies were.
- Harp: Oh, that's interesting.

- Maura: And one thing that we all found was pretty funny was that a lot of students had written as a hobby, sleeping.
- Harp: Really?
- Maura: Yeah. So in Japan, when people were asked, "What's one of your hobbies?" they would often say that sleeping was their hobby, which seems funny because it's something we do every night.
- Harp: Maybe they meant napping?
- Maura: Well, I know that life can be pretty busy in Japan and that people often work long hours, so maybe if they get a free moment and they have extra time, what they like to do is just sleep.
- Harp: OK, that's so interesting. Let's move on to the next section.
- Maura: All right. The next section is how to talk about hobbies.
- Harp: Yes. And we decided on this topic because we had a little discussion. And often, in English lessons, they teach you to say or to ask, "What's your hobby?"
- Maura: Right. And I have to say that although the sentence is grammatically fine, I find it very unnatural. I don't feel that when people are together and they've met each other for the first time, they often say that.
- Harp: I don't think I've ever had someone ask me, "What's your hobby?"
- Maura: Yes. Something about it is too direct. I don't know why but it just doesn't sound like a natural question to ask.
- Harp: Yeah. I would say that people say, "**What do you do in your free time?**"
- Maura: Yeah. It would be a more casual way or a more indirect way to ask about hobbies, because sometimes people don't have hobbies. Sometimes they go to work, and they come home, make dinner, watch some TV, and go to bed. It's true.
- Harp: It is true, but a little bit boring.
- Maura: Yeah. You gotta have something to do in your **free time**, right?
- Harp: Yes.

- Maura: But I find, when I'm meeting a new person, I never directly ask them about their hobbies or what they do in their **free time**. It just maybe comes up naturally, where someone might say, "When I go to the gym on Thursdays..." Or they might say, "I really love this band. I went to a concert last week."
- Harp: Interesting. I feel I get asked that question a lot, you know, "What you do in your **free time**?" Or I feel I'm asking people that question often.
- Maura: Yeah. I think it's a question that maybe some people ask and other people don't ask. It's a perfectly normal subject to talk about, but people don't usually ask directly, "What are your hobbies?" or "Do you have hobbies"? They might ask something more casual, like you said Harp, "**What do you do in your free time?**" or "What are you into?"
- Harp: Yeah, exactly. "**What do you do in your spare time?**" "What do you do as a **pastime?**"
- Maura: Right. So all of these words can be used to talk about your hobbies: ***pastime, free time, spare time.***
- Harp: Exactly. It's a more natural and casual way to ask about someone's hobbies.
- Maura: Because you only do your hobbies when you're not working. Right?
- Harp: Exactly.
- Maura: Wouldn't that be great if you could somehow make a hobby into your job? Some people do that.
- Harp: Yeah, exactly. Some people definitely do that. For example, Sheena, who was on one of our past episodes, she used to make jewellery as a hobby and now it's her business.
- Maura: Right. OK, let's now talk about our own hobbies.
- Harp: OK. Well, the obvious one for both of us is reading.
- Maura: Yes. I **go through phases** where I read more than others. But I love reading at the end of the day, when I'm in bed. Just for a few minutes, maybe. And it just helps me calm down and relax and takes my mind to another place.
- Harp: I love reading all the time and I read often. I'm a bookworm. It's my favourite hobby.
- Maura: Do you have any other hobbies?

- Harp: Yup, but this is the hobby that's **stuck with me** since I was young. I've loved reading from a very young age, but I've done quite a few different hobbies over the years. I remember when I was young, I **took up knitting**. I really, really enjoyed it. I found it super relaxing and fun to use my hands and I liked the clinking of the **knitting** needles. But I have to be honest; I really **sucked at it**.
- Maura: It's hard to make the tension right so your pieces come out nice. It's true.
- Harp: And I have to be honest; I didn't actually ever make anything. I just **knit** long pieces that could maybe be a scarf, but I didn't know how to finish it, so I just **threw in the towel** and gave up **knitting**.
- Maura: Sometimes that happens, too. We start a hobby and then time passes and we realize that we're not interested, or maybe it's too difficult, like in your case, and you just want a change. You don't wanna do it anymore.
- Harp: Yeah, exactly. What about you? What were some hobbies you did when you were young?
- Maura: Well, when I was a kid, I took dance lessons.
- Harp: Oh, that's fun. What kind of dance?
- Maura: I pretty much took it all. I started in **ballet**, and I took tap dancing for a year or two, and the rest of the years I was doing jazz dancing.
- Harp: Oh, that's fun.
- Maura: It was pretty fun and I liked it, but when I become a teenager, I didn't really wanna do it anymore.
- Harp: OK. So you don't do dance anymore?
- Maura: Well, I like to dance but I don't do it professionally.
- Harp: Oh, OK, I understand. You know, that's funny because that's one of my hobbies now as an adult. I've taken ballroom dancing and I really wanna take salsa dancing.
- Maura: Yeah, it's fun. I did go to one ballroom dancing class with my friend and it was fun.
- Harp: Yeah. My only problem is that I **have two left feet**, so, not so good.
- Maura: Maybe you'll work your way out of it, the more you learn.
- Harp: I think so. I hope so, at least. Hopefully it's not gonna be like **knitting**.

- Maura: You know, there are so many hobbies that we can do, but we only have such a limited time to do them. I wish that I had more time to try more hobbies.
- Harp: What's a hobby you would do if you had more **free time**?
- Maura: You know, something that I would really like to do is to take a class in how to restore furniture. I really like older furniture and I would love to be able to buy a piece and fix it up, maybe build it a new leg or sand it down and paint it a new colour.
- Harp: That's really cool and kinda funny, because one of my hobbies is to watch TV shows about that, but I don't think I'd ever be good at doing it.
- Maura: Yeah. I don't know, but it's been a few years since I've been interested. I just don't have the time.
- Harp: Maybe one day.
- Maura: Maybe one day. Well, that's about it for today's episode, I think.
- Harp: Yup, definitely. So we'll do a quick recap. We started with some common hobbies in North America.
- Maura: Then we talked about how to talk about hobbies, how to ask someone what their hobbies are or what words to use to talk about hobbies.
- Harp: Yup. And then we finished with talking about some hobbies we've done in the past and some we do now.
- Maura: And if you have any hobbies **out there**, especially ones that are specific to whatever your culture is or whatever your country is, I'd be really interested to hear what your hobby is.
- Harp: Exactly. Leave us a note or a comment on Facebook.
- Maura: Right.
- Harp: Make sure you check out the website, Culips.com, that's C-U-L-I-P-S.com, and become a member. It's really awesome. You'll learn more English and you support us.
- Maura: Talk to you soon. Bye!
- Harp: Bye everyone!

Detailed Explanation

Free time, spare time, a pastime

Free time and **spare time** are expressions that refer to time that you are not doing anything, such as the time after work or after school. In this episode, these expressions are used a lot because **free time** and **spare time** is when people do hobbies.

A pastime is a hobby or something else that you do in your **free time** or **spare time** to pass the time.

Here is an example with all three of these expressions:

Dan: I can't wait until class is over! I really need some **free time** to myself.

Mike: Me too. What do you do in your **spare time**?

Dan: Well, my favourite **pastime** is reading, but I really like to play golf too.

An artist

An artist is anybody who creates paintings, sculptures, music, or any other kind of art. In this episode, Maura uses the word **artists** to refer to musicians. The conversation between her and Harp is about music, so we know that when she uses the word **artists**, she's talking about musicians. If Maura and Harp were discussing sculptures and Maura said **artists**, we'd know that she was talking about sculptors.

Out there

To say that something is **out there** is another way of saying that it exists or is available. In this episode, Maura and Harp discuss all the methods that are available to learn to play a new musical instrument. Harp says that there are a lot of instructional videos **out there**.

What Harp means is that there are a lot of instructional videos available online for the public to see.

Here is an example with **out there**:

Sally: Have you found a place to take dancing lessons yet?

Mike: I've been looking, but I can't decide. There are so many places **out there**, and so many different types of dancing available. It's difficult to choose!

Knitting, scrapbooking, and cross-stitching

Knitting, **scrapbooking** and **cross-stitching** are types of crafts. Doing crafts is a very popular hobby, and it usually involves making things that are for personal use or that are useful in everyday life.

Knitting is a craft where you make clothing and accessories out of yarn by knotting the yarn using two small rods called **knitting** needles. **Knitting** is a very popular hobby and has become very trendy with younger people in North America over the past few years.

Cross-stitching is another type of craft. In **cross-stitching**, you sew coloured thread through a piece of fabric to make designs in the fabric. This type of craft usually produces pictures and other designs and decorations that are prettier to look at than they are useful.

Scrapbooking, as Maura and Harp discuss in this episode, is when you create a photo album, but instead of putting just photos in there, you include other memorabilia or souvenirs like ticket stubs. Sometimes people will also write things in the **scrapbook** to remind them of something about the picture they include. **Scrapbooks** are like a visual journal.

You can learn more about these crafts and see lots of examples of them by searching for their names online.

The metro

In Canada, **the metro** is an expression that is unique to the city of Montreal, where it refers to their underground transportation system. In other Canadian cities, an underground transportation system is called a subway.

An underground transportation system is basically a train that runs underground. This is a very popular mode of transportation in busy cities because it can carry a lot of passengers at one time.

This sort of transportation system is called different things in different cities. For example, in London, England, they call their underground transportation the tube or the underground. In New York and Toronto, they call it the subway. In Washington DC and Paris (like Montreal), they call their underground system **the metro**.

In this episode, Maura and Harp discuss knitting as a hobby, and Harp says that she sees people knitting on **the metro**. What Harp means is that she sees people knitting while they're riding Montreal's underground transportation system.

To go through a phase

To go through a phase means to go through a time in your life when you do something, but then you stop doing it after a while. A phase is a stage or a process that involves some sort of change. When someone talks about themselves or someone else **going through a phase**, they mean that they go through a temporary change in their life. This expression is often used when speaking about a stage that people go through in life that they outgrow or stop doing when they get older.

In this episode, Maura uses the expression **to go through a phase** when she talks about how she used to knit quite a bit. Maura doesn't knit that much anymore, so she calls the period when she did knit a phase.

Here is another example with **to go through a phase**:

Tom: What kind of music do you like?

Tami: Mainly classical, and some folk.

Tom: I **went through a phase** when I listened to a lot of folk too, but now I mostly listen to pop music.

What do you do in your spare time?

What do you in your spare time? This is a common way that people ask each other what their hobbies are or what they like to do when they're not working, going to school, or studying. Other ways to ask what people's hobbies are include "What are you into?" and "**What do you do in your free time?**"

As Maura pointed out in this episode, it is not very common to ask someone directly, "What is your hobby," although it is not incorrect or grammatically wrong to ask this. It's just not very common. Instead, people ask each other about what they do in their spare time or free time.

Here is an example with the question **What do you do in your spare time?**:

Melissa: Are you working tonight?

Stephanie: Yes, again! It feels like all I do is go to school and then work, and I never get time to myself. There's so much I want to do.

Melissa: **What do you do in your spare time?**

Stephanie: Well, when I do get free time, I really like to go horseback riding. It's my favourite hobby, and I miss it so much! Hopefully I get some spare time soon.

To stick with someone

When we say that an activity or a hobby **sticks with someone**, it means that the person keeps doing it for a long time.

In this episode, Harp tells Maura that her favourite hobby is reading, and that reading is the only hobby that's really **stuck with her**. What Harp means is that even though she may have picked up others hobbies, reading is the only one that's been consistent and that she's kept doing for a long time.

Here is an example with **to stick with someone**:

Jake: I heard you playing the violin earlier, it was really good!

Hanna: Thanks, but I'm not really sure it's something that'll **stick with me**.

Jake: Sometimes it's hard to find a hobby that you can continue with it for a long time. The only one that's **stuck with me** has been hockey, but that's because I play it with all my friends, so that keeps me motivated to keep doing it.

To take something up

To take something up means to begin or try out a new activity, such as a hobby or a class. When you start to do something new that you didn't do before, you can say that you **took it up**. **Taking something up** means that you are just beginning something.

In this episode, Harp tells Maura that when she was young, she **took up** knitting. What Harp means is that when she was young, she started knitting as a new hobby.

Here is another example with **to take something up**:

Terry: I'm bored.

Fred: You're always bored on the weekends. You should **take something up**.

Terry: Like what?

Fred: I don't know. **Take up** dancing or writing.

Terry: Maybe you're right. I should **take up** a hobby.

To suck at something

To suck at something is a very casual expression that means to not be good at something. This is actually a very old expression that is a short form of an older expression about farming and how baby animals drink milk from their mothers.

This expression is only used very casually now, and is not appropriate in formal speech or in writing. Some people even find it slightly offensive.

In this episode, Harp talks about knitting, and how she wasn't very good at it. She tells Maura that she **sucked at it**.

Here is another example with **to suck at something**:

Molly: How are your piano lessons coming?

Sam: Not very good. I love playing the piano so much, but I'm really, really bad at it.

Molly: Oh, no. I know how disappointing it is **to suck at something** you love so much. Keep at it, maybe you'll get better.

To throw in the towel

To throw in the towel means to give up and stop doing something. This expression comes from the sport of boxing, where literally throwing a towel into the ring signifies the end of a fight. Usually, the trainer or the fighter themselves throws a towel into the ring when they can't continue to fight anymore, and they want to give up and admit that they have lost.

In this episode, Harp talks about taking up knitting as a hobby. She says that she wasn't very good at it and didn't know how to finish anything she knitted, so she **threw in the towel**. What Harp means is that she gave up knitting as a hobby and stopped doing it.

Here is another example with **to throw in the towel**:

Debbie: I really love our new sewing class, don't you?

Jeff: I'm not sure. It doesn't seem like I'm very good at it, and I don't think I like it very much either. I may have **to throw in the towel** and take a different class instead.

Ballet

Ballet is a very popular type of performance dancing, usually performed in a theatre. The dancers wear special shoes and dance on their toes. **Ballet** is a very graceful and artistic type of dancing, and **ballet** dancers train for years and years to dance the way they do.

Ballet is an English word that comes from a French word. There are a lot of English words that come from other languages. Because the word **ballet** is French in origin, the way it is pronounced is also very French. Since **ballet** has the letters *et* at the end, you might assume that the second syllable of the word would rhyme with words like *set* or *let*, but because it is French, it is actually pronounced *bah-lay*, and the second syllable rhymes with *day* and *say*.

There are many English words that come from French words and are pronounced in a French way. Here are some more examples:

Bouquet: an arrangement of flowers, pronounced *boo-kay*

Chic: stylish, pronounced *sheek*

Faux: fake or false, pronounced *foh*

To have two left feet.

To have two left feet is a common English expression that means to be clumsy or awkward, especially when trying to do something coordinated like dancing. This expression comes from the fact that if someone really did **have two left feet** instead of a right foot and a left foot, they'd be really uncoordinated and clumsy.

In this episode, Harp tells Maura that she **has two left feet**, so she wasn't very good at ballroom dancing with her friend.

There is an upcoming Culips episode where we'll talk about the expression **to have two left feet** a little more. It will be about the word *klutz*. You should check it out!

Quiz

1. What does it mean to go through a phase?

- a) to go through a temporary stage in life
- b) to continue with a hobby
- c) to stop doing a hobby
- d) to redo something that you made a mistake on

2. If you stick with something, what are you doing?

- a) talking about it
- b) thinking about it
- c) continuing to do it
- d) stopping it

3. If you take something up, what are you doing?

- a) researching something
- b) listening to music
- c) working or going to school
- d) starting something new

4. What does it mean to throw in the towel?

- a) to quit something
- b) to start a new hobby
- c) to not have any hobbies
- d) to have no spare time

5. If you have two left feet, what does that mean you are?

- a) happy
- b) clumsy
- c) frustrated
- d) bored

6. What is a hobby?

- a) a type of book
- b) a type of work or chore
- c) a part of life you go through
- d) an activity you do in your spare time

7. What is another word for *metro*?

- a) subway
- b) hobby
- c) phase
- d) knitting

Answers:

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