

Chatterbox #87 – A Canadian childhood

Transcript

Harp: Hello everyone. This is Harp.

Maura: And Maura.

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

Maura: And don't forget to go to our website, Culips.com, that's C-U-L-I-P-S.com. And that is the website where you can become a member, and when you're a member, you have access to the transcripts for all of our episodes, more detailed explanations of the expressions we use, and quizzes to help test yourself after you've listened.

Harp: And if you're on Facebook, make sure you check us out there, because we're always posting pictures and updates and we're answering your English questions.

Maura: Yeah. I check Facebook almost every day and I love hearing from people listening.

Harp: Exactly. We wanna know all about **you guys** out there listening to us.

Maura: Yeah. It's hard to imagine you, so it's nice to know that you're really out there.

Harp: It is. So today we're doing a Chatterbox episode, and that's where chat. We talk about current events, cultural things, and from time to time we interview people.

Maura: Right. So today we're going to chat about a topic that everyone has experienced, and that is childhood.

Harp: Yes. We're gonna start with talking about things that we had to do: after-school **chores**, things like that.

Maura: And then we're gonna talk about activities that we were involved in or that you could be involved in when you're a kid.

Harp: And then we're gonna talk about what we did in our free time and what kids do in their free time here in North America.

Maura: All right. So, let's first start with things that kids have to do.

- Harp: Well for me, I had to do the **chores**. I had to vacuum once a week. I had to do the dishes every day with my sisters. What about you?
- Maura: To be honest, I didn't have very many **chores** to do. Sometimes I would have to clean the bathroom or help with the dishes, but one thing that my mom always **got on our case** about was cleaning our bedrooms.
- Harp: I feel jealous when I hear stories like yours. I had to do the **chores**. I had no choice. Every week we had to vacuum, clean the bathroom. Our rooms had to be clean every day, we did the dishes every day after dinner, all the time. I can't believe you **had it so easy** for **chores**.
- Maura: You know, when I think back though, I don't think I was very good at cleaning. I remember back when my mom would tell me to clean my room, that I would start cleaning, I would close the door, but when my mom would come up a few hours later, my room was still messy. I was just having fun looking through my things, trying on clothes. I didn't organize very well.
- Harp: Oh Maura, such a **silly goose**. I love it.
- Maura: Did you get money for your **chores**?
- Harp: That's the other thing. No, I did not get money for doing my **chores**. My parents always said to us, "What, we're gonna pay you to do the work that you're supposed to do?"
- Maura: They do have a point, but many kids do get money for helping around the house. So if they are cleaning a room or vacuuming or doing the dishes, their parents might give them a certain amount of money for that.
- Harp: You know, I have a friend and his weekly **chore** was that he was supposed to mow the lawn, like cut the grass outside, and his dad would pay him. I think it was something like he would pay him 25 dollars a week to do this. But my friend didn't want to do it, so he would pay another kid younger than him to do it for ten dollars a week.
- Maura: Oh my gosh. That's kind of sad.
- Harp: But kind of smart at the same time.
- Maura: Some kids are pretty smart.
- Harp: Yup. But I didn't get paid for my **chores**, so I had no money to pay anyone else to do it for me.
- Maura: There's also a kind of kid that we call **latchkey kids**.

- Harp: Yes. **A latchkey kid** is a kid who gets home earlier than his or her parents and they have to open the door themselves and usually make a snack for themselves and maybe start homework by themselves.
- Maura: So it's a kid who comes home to an empty house and they have to have their own key because no one is there to let them in.
- Harp: Yeah, exactly. So that's **a latchkey kid**.
- Maura: Were you **a latchkey kid**?
- Harp: No. When I was young, my grandparents lived with us, so they were always at home when we came home from school.
- Maura: Oh, that's nice. My grandparents didn't live with us, but they were often around.
- Harp: OK. Now let's move to our second topic: some activities that kids do after school.
- Maura: Well, the first activity that I remember doing when I was really, really young was soccer.
- Harp: OK. You were in, like, a little soccer league?
- Maura: Yeah. And that's a kind of sport that I think many very young children play, mostly because it's very easy. You have a ball and you know that you have to kick it to the other side and try to score a goal.
- Harp: I didn't play it when I was young but I love watching some of my younger cousins or my nieces or nephews playing, because they just look so cute playing it.
- Maura: Yeah. They don't really play like adults and spread out over the field; they all chase the ball together so there's a big group of them moving around the field. It's pretty cute.
- Harp: It's adorable.
- Maura: But you know, soccer **wasn't really my thing**. So when I got a bit older, or maybe even around the same time, I also started taking dance lessons and I took dance lessons for a really long time, something like eight years.
- Harp: I know. I'm so jealous that you got to do dance classes. I really wanted to do it, and I wish I did, because I'm a horrible dancer now.
- Maura: That's not true, Harp.

- Harp: Thanks Maura, for being nice to me. But tell me again, I forget, what kind of dance classes did you take when you were young?
- Maura: Well I started off in ballet, and that's where most young people start. I also took, I think, one year of tap dancing, and then the rest of the time I took a jazz or modern dance class.
- Harp: Very exciting. I remember taking swimming lessons when I was a kid.
- Maura: Yes. That's also something that a lot of kids are involved in.
- Harp: Yeah. For my parents, it was very important that if, when we were older, we went a boat or we were near water, that we were able to swim.
- Maura: Yeah. It is important. I think I just learned to swim, I don't know, from a friend or from my parents. I don't remember.
- Harp: Another after-school activity that I did was skating.
- Maura: Well, I think most Canadians, at some point, have skated.
- Harp: That's true. I took it for maybe 12 lessons and I remember starting by pushing the chair and then eventually being able to stand. But the classes were for speed skating but really I never learned how to speed skate. How are you supposed to learn in 12 lessons?
- Maura: But I remember that too. When people are really young, little kids, and they're learning how to ice skate, we start by pushing chairs. I also took some skating lessons and all I can really remember now is that my feet were really cold and I didn't like that.
- Harp: Yeah. And now, any time I go skating, people ask me, "Oh, can you skate?" I say, "Of course. I took speed skating lessons when I was a kid." And they're really excited and they believe it until they see me on the ice.
- Maura: It does sound impressive, speed skating lessons. But those are really just some of the activities that kids can do. There are all kinds of sports, I think now more than when we were kids.
- Harp: Yeah. There are so many different types of activities you can do after school. Did you ever do **Brownies** or **Girl Guides**?
- Maura: You know, I didn't, but I was always kind of jealous of the kids who did.
- Harp: Yeah. It always seemed like fun. **I don't think I knew a single kid** who took them. I just remember reading about it in books.

- Maura: No, I definitely knew some of my friends who did it. And what that really is—**Brownies** or **Girl Guides**—is a kind of group where the young girls get together and it's a bit about helping out your community and learning skills and also being outdoors, so they might go on camping trips.
- Harp: And you would get badges if you knew how to do something well, I think. Right?
- Maura: Yes. Badges, that sounds right. Since we both weren't in it, we're not experts.
- Harp: Nope, but we'll try to include some information in the learning materials.
- Maura: That's a good idea. All right, so let's talk about one more aspect of childhood, which is free time. So after you did your **chores** and after you participated in the activities that your parents had **signed you up** for, you might also, finally, have some free time to do whatever you like.
- Harp: Yeah. I remember that time when I was a kid and you were finally free after your homework and your skating lessons or your swimming lessons and you could go outside and play.
- Maura: Yeah. I lived on a small street and I remember that after dinner or whenever I had free time, I would walk out onto the street and some of my friends would come out onto the street too, and we usually wouldn't go to each other's homes. We would just play outside on the street.
- Harp: Yeah. I remember that too, actually. It was a pretty small street and we just played outside. And I remember we played **hide-and-go-seek** and we played on the whole block. You could hide anywhere, in anyone's backyard, anyone's house, not inside of course, you were playing outside, but it's a big area to play in when you're that little.
- Maura: That is a really fun game, **hide-and-go-seek**, especially when there are a lot of places to hide. If you don't know that game, it is a very simple game where everybody, or almost everybody, hides and one person has to go and try to find where everyone is hidden.
- Harp: Yes. It was fun, but more fun when you're hiding rather than when you're doing the seeking or finding.
- Maura: Yes, that's true. Especially when the person looking for you walks by you and you're nervous and trying not to make a noise.
- Harp: I know. I remember, even now, that when someone would walk by me and I was hiding, I would always start giggling so they would find me.

- Maura: So are there any other games that you used to play?
- Harp: I remember playing **I spy** a lot with my sisters when I was young.
- Maura: You know, I remember playing that when we were in the car, because we were so bored, if we were driving somewhere farther away, so we would look around at things in the car and play **I spy**. Now, I think we might need to explain how to play **I spy**.
- Harp: OK. So basically, **I spy** is where one person picks something, an object, in the room or in the car, or wherever you are, and the other people have to guess what it is.
- Maura: Right. And you only give one hint, which is the colour. You say, "**I spy** with my little eye something that is blue" or whatever colour, and then all the other people have to look around the space trying to find what blue item you might have chosen.
- Harp: Oh. And this is an interesting thing, Culips listeners, because I didn't play the game the same way.
- Maura: Well how did you play it?
- Harp: So for us, you would have to say the first letter of the word, so, "**I spy** with my little eye something that starts with the letter *b*" and then they would have to say all the b-letter objects.
- Maura: Interesting. Your way sounds more sophisticated because you would have to know how to spell.
- Harp: I guess. Maybe we started with the colours but I remember with the letters when I was older.
- Maura: Interesting. That often happens with children's games that are just passed around orally. They get changed from one person to the next or one family to the next.
- Harp: Yeah, exactly. What were some other things you did in your free time, maybe on the weekend?
- Maura: Well, on the weekend, I know that when I was a kid, I didn't really sleep in because I didn't want to miss the morning cartoons.
- Harp: Yes. Saturday morning cartoons.
- Maura: I think they probably started pretty early and there was a few hours of cartoons in a row.

- Harp: Yup. I loved sleeping in, and I've always loved sleeping in, so I think I only got to watch about an hour of cartoons a week, but it was still fun.
- Maura: The older I got, the less cartoons I saw, but it seems a funny way, now, to start your weekend, to wake up and then watch a few hours of television.
- Harp: It's funny, because now you have all these TV channels like Teletoon, or... I don't know what they're called but they're just cartoons all day. But when we were young, you would only have cartoons on Saturday mornings or maybe just for an hour or two after school.
- Maura: That's true. Things have changed, although I'm sure on some stations, Saturday mornings, they play cartoons.
- Harp: Yeah, they must.
- Maura: They must. We don't know. We're old now.
- Harp: Yeah. We don't watch cartoons anymore.
- Maura: Childhood is just **a distant memory**.
- Harp: Yes.
- Maura: All right. So, you know, now this episode has me feeling so nostalgic for my youth. You know that expression **youth is wasted on the young**?
- Harp: I know. To have all that free time and to have all that time for activities where you could learn new things.
- Maura: And not many responsibilities. Yeah. So when you're young, you don't really appreciate how awesome it is to be young. Only when you're older can you really appreciate what it's like to be young.
- Harp: I know. When you're young you keep thinking, "Oh, I can't wait to be old and be a grown-up and do this or that."
- Maura: And then you get there and you're like, "Wait a second. This isn't so great."
- Harp: I guess **the grass is always greener on the other side**.
- Maura: That is true. So, we'll go back over what we talked about. The first thing we talked about is **chores** or other things that you had to do when you were a kid.
- Harp: Yup. And then we talked about some after-school activities we did when we were kids.

Maura: And then, with the rest of your time, you had free time to do whatever you wanted. I'm still so jealous of that.

Harp: Me too.

Maura: All right, so, don't forget to visit us on Facebook or Twitter and go to our website, Culips.com, that's C-U-L-I-P-S.com

Harp: Yes. Become a member. You get access to all the learning materials. And you also support us when you become a member.

Maura: All right, we'll talk to you soon. Bye!

Harp: Bye everyone!

Detailed Explanation

You guys

You guys is a very common English expression used to directly refer to a group of people in a casual way. Traditionally, the word **guys** only referred to men. And sometimes it still does. But if you are speaking to a group of people, you can say **you guys** whether they are men or women.

It can be difficult to tell when it's okay to use the word **guys** to refer to a group of people of any gender, and when you should only use it to mean males. For example, it would be okay to say, "Those **guys** look bored" when talking about a mixed group, but if you said, "That group of **guys** looks bored," a native English speaker would probably assume you were talking about a group of men. This is one of those things that you just have to get used to by listening to and reading a lot of English!

Maura often says **you guys** or **hey guys** in Culips episodes. This is a casual and friendly way for Maura to talk to you as a group, even though you are a group of both men and women.

You guys was also explained in another Culips episode, titled *Interview with a Brit living in Canada*. If you haven't checked it out already, you should!

A chore

A chore is a task or job that your parents give you to do around the house. Common **chores** are mowing the lawn, vacuuming, washing the dishes, taking out the garbage, and cleaning your room. Sometimes, parents offer their children money to do these jobs because it teaches kids how to be responsible with money. It also teaches kids that hard work has its rewards.

In this episode, Maura and Harp discuss their very different experiences with **chores**. Maura had very few **chores**, but Harp had a lot of **chores**. Harp didn't get any money for her **chores**.

Chores are always decided by the parents, and the tasks can be very different or difficult. There may be money given, or no money given. Sometimes **chores** are done in exchange for other things, like watching television or playing on the computer.

Here is an example of the word **chores** used in conversation:

Suzie: Are you coming out to play tonight?

Tim: I can't. I have way too many **chores**.

Suzie: That's too bad. Do you get money for doing them?

Tim: No, but if I do the hardest **chores**, like mowing the lawn or doing the laundry, I get to spend more time on the computer.

To get on someone's case

To get on someone's case usually means to give them a hard time about something, or to bother them or pressure them about something.

In this episode, Maura tells us that her mom used **to get on her case** about cleaning her bedroom. What Maura means is that her mom used to pressure her or urge her to clean her room.

Usually, you would only use the expression **to get on someone's case** if you were urging someone in a way that they didn't like. When someone is being bothered by someone else who is urging them to do something, they can tell them to **get off their case**. This is not really a good expression to use to a parent, a teacher, or anyone else that you have to respect.

Here is an example with this expression:

Scott: Have you raked the leaves in the front yard yet? Dad said that you have to do it before it gets dark outside.

Cindy: No, not yet. I'll do it after this television show.

Scott: It'll be dark outside by then! You have to do it now, Cindy. Sorry **to get on your case** about this, but Dad's going to be really angry.

Cindy: **Get off my case**, Scott! I'll do it in a minute.

To have it easy

To have it easy means to have a simple time at doing something that may be difficult for others. For example, in this episode, Maura talks about **having it easy** when it came to chores. This is because she only had to clean her room, whereas Harp had to do a lot of chores. When it came to chores, Maura **had it easy**.

People can **have it easy** when it comes to getting good grades in school, or they can **have it easy** when it comes to gym class because they are naturally good at sports.

Here is an example with the expression **to have it easy**:

Paul: How is your math class going this year?

Dan: Same as last year. I'm not doing very well.

Paul: That's too bad. I seem **to have it easy** when it comes to math. I always get good grades. Maybe I can help you with your homework this year.

A silly goose

A **silly goose** is a name you can call someone that does something goofy or foolish that makes you laugh. This is a friendly and affectionate phrase, and it is usually used when the person you are referring to does something or says something that you find amusing or funny. It comes from the idea that geese are silly or goofy because they are often amusing to watch.

In this episode, Harp calls Maura a **silly goose** when Maura tells her that whenever she was supposed to clean her room, she would end up just slowly going through all the mess, trying on clothes and looking at all her stuff. Harp calls Maura a **silly goose** because Harp thinks that Maura enjoying the mess instead of cleaning it up is funny and goofy.

Most often, this expression is used around children and it is sort of a childish way of saying that someone is being silly. It is a very old expression and not used very often anymore.

A latchkey kid

A **latchkey kid** is a child who gets home before their parents and lets themselves into the house. This is an old phrase that dates back to WWII, when kids would usually be the first ones home because their mothers were working while their fathers were at war.

Nowadays, this phrase is becoming more popular again because we live in a very busy time when a lot of families have parents that work full time. *Latchkey* is an old term for a house key or a front door key, and it dates back to the time when all locks were latches instead of the bolt locks that are so popular today.

In this episode, Maura asks Harp whether she was a **latchkey kid**, and Harp explains that she wasn't because her grandparents lived with her. What Harp means is that even though her parents may not have been home, she didn't come home to an empty house, so there was no reason for her to have a key.

To not be your thing

In this episode, Maura tells Harp that she was in a soccer league when she was a kid, but that she didn't continue it because **it's not really her thing**. When something is **not your thing**, it means that you're not really into it or don't enjoy it, even though you understand why other people do. When something is **not your thing**, it means that you know a lot of people like it but you just don't happen to like it yourself.

Here is an example with the expression **to not be your thing**:

Kevin: Do you want to come see the latest Julia Roberts movie with me tonight?

Sabina: I don't think so. What kind of movie is it?

Kevin: A romantic comedy.

Sabina: No thanks. Romantic comedies **are not my thing**.

Brownies and Girl Guides

Girl Guides, sometimes called **Girl Scouts**, is an organization that first appeared around 1910. In 1910, a man named Lord Baden-Powell created a training camp for boys called the Boy Scouts to learn wilderness and guidance skills. Girls showed interest in joining the Boy Scouts, so Lord Baden-Powell asked his sister to create a similar organization for girls called the **Girl Scouts**.

Basically, **Girl Guides** is an organization that teaches young girls survival skills such as camping and first aid, as well as leadership and communication skills such as volunteering and charity work. It also focuses on adult life skills like career preparation.

There are different branches or groups of the **Girl Guides**, depending on the girls' ages. There is the Sparks group for girls aged 5–6, the Brownies group for girls aged 7–8, the Guides group for girls aged 9–11, the Pathfinders group for girls aged 12–14, and the Rangers group for girls aged 15–17.

Not a single kid

In this episode, Harp and Maura talk about the Girl Guides, and Harp says that she **doesn't think she knew a single kid** in the Girl Guides. When someone says **not a single something**, they are emphasizing that there isn't even one of something. This expression is only used when you really want to emphasize the fact that there is none of something. For example, if someone asked you how many times you saw The Lion King movie and you had never seen it, you probably wouldn't say **not a single time**, because there is no reason to emphasize the number of times you've seen it.

Here is an example with the expression **not a single something**:

David: Are you going on the class ski trip with us this year?

Sue: Maybe, but I've never skied before so I'm not sure I'd have fun.

David: Really? You've never skied?

Sue: Nope. **Not a single time**.

To sign up for something

To sign up means to enroll in a course or activity. This expression comes from the actual act of signing your name on a list to register for something. Even if you don't actually sign your name on a list, the expression **to sign up for something** can still be used when you join something.

In this episode, Maura uses this expression to talk about after-school activities that parents enroll their children in.

Here is an example with the expression **to sign up for something**:

Sam: Are you going to try out for the swim team again this summer?

Tami: Probably not. I may not have much free time.

Sam: Why not?

Tami: My parents are going **to sign me up** for dance lessons.

Hide-and-go-seek

Hide-and-go-seek, sometimes just called **hide-and-seek**, is a game in which a number of players hide or cover themselves in a designated area while one person looks for them.

The person looking for the other players is usually called "it." The game begins with the person chosen to be "it" counting down from a certain number. While the person who's "it" is counting, the other players go and look for places to hide. When the person who is "it" is done counting, they go and try to find the other players. If the player who's "it" finds another player, they try to touch them or tag them. If they tag them, that person is now "it" and does the searching during the next round.

In this episode, Harp and Maura talk about playing this game when they were young. It is a popular game for children because it is played outdoors and it doesn't require any equipment to play.

I spy

I spy is a popular children's game. It is often played on car rides or in waiting rooms because it doesn't require any game pieces to play. It is a guessing game. It can be played with as few as two people.

The first person chooses an object they see around them, and they say to the other players: **I spy with my little eye, something that is...** and then they mention a describing feature of the object, like its colour or shape or what letter in the alphabet it begins with. The other players try to guess what the person is looking at.

In this episode, Harp tells Maura that she played this game with her sisters when they were kids. Maura says that she used to play it too, and Maura and Harp discuss how they played it differently. Harp used to play it by using the letter the object started with, and

Maura used to play it by using its colour. For example, if Maura and Harp were both playing **I spy**, and the object they chose was an apple, Harp would say, “**I spy** with my little eye something that begins with the letter A,” while Maura would say, “**I spy** with my little eye something that is red.”

A distant memory

A distant memory is an expression that means what it says—a memory that seems very far away because it happened so long ago.

In this episode, Maura says that childhood is just **a distant memory** because it was many years ago. Sometimes people use this phrase when they refer to a memory that may have actually happened more recently, but one that they just don’t remember very well.

Here is an example with the expression **a distant memory**:

Tina: How was your trip to Florida?

Anthony: Amazing. It was so much fun. It’s hard to be back at school already. So much has happened since school started that Florida seems like **a distant memory** now.

Youth is wasted on the young

Youth is wasted on the young is a common English expression that means that when people are young, they don’t appreciate being young. Many young people are anxious to get older, and then when they get older, they look back on their youth and wish that they had appreciated being young.

Basically, **youth is wasted on the young** means that when we are children, we take our youth for granted, and that if we could experience youth as adults, we would not waste it or take it for granted.

In this episode, Maura uses the expression **youth is wasted on the young** because she and Harp discuss their childhood so much throughout the episode that it makes them realize how much free time they had as children and that they didn’t appreciate how wonderful it was to be young.

The grass is always greener on the other side

The grass is always greener on the other side is a very old expression that is a metaphor. A metaphor is a symbolic representation of something else. The metaphor **the grass is always greener on the other side** means that no matter what we may have in life, what someone else has always looks better.

This is a metaphor believed to be taken from the image of cows in a pasture. Cows will often stick their heads under or through a fence to eat the grass on the other side, even though the grass is the exact same on that side. In fact, the longer form of the expression is ***the grass is always greener on the other side of the fence***.

This expression implies that we should appreciate what we have in life, because even though **the grass looks greener on the other side of the fence**, it is just an illusion and what we have is just as good.

In this episode, Maura and Harp use this expression to talk about how they took their childhood for granted. They say that when they were kids, being older seemed so great. But now that they are adults, being a child seems better.

Quiz

1. Which of the following is NOT an example of a common chore for kids?
 - a) raking the leaves
 - b) vacuuming
 - c) doing the dishes
 - d) paying the bills

2. What is a latchkey kid?
 - a) a kid who does all the chores
 - b) a kid who gets home before their parents
 - c) a kid who plays a lot of games outside
 - d) a kid who doesn't have to do any chores

3. If you call someone a silly goose, what are you calling them?
 - a) amusing or funny
 - b) boring
 - c) mean
 - d) annoying

4. Which of the following skills would Girl Guides probably NOT teach young girls?
 - a) how to build a campsite
 - b) how to find and apply for volunteer positions
 - c) how to take care of the environment
 - d) how to drive a car

5. In the game hide-and-go-seek, what do most of the players do?
 - a) look for different kinds of birds
 - b) find places to hide so that they can't be found
 - c) knock on their neighbour's doors and then run away
 - d) try to guess what other players are thinking about

6. What does the expression *youth is wasted on the young* mean?
 - a) Chores ruin people's childhoods.
 - b) We don't appreciate our childhood until we become adults.
 - c) Time goes by faster when we are young.
 - d) Children shouldn't play so many games.

7. What does the expression *the grass is always greener on the other side* mean?

- a) What other people have always seems better than what we have.
- b) Children always make bad decisions or choices.
- c) Adults have more fun than children.
- d) Children's games should only be played outside.

Answers:

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