

Chatterbox #92 – An interview with Harp

Transcript

Maura: Hello everyone! Happy New Year!

Harp: Happy New Year!

Maura: It's Maura.

Harp: And Harp.

Maura: And we are back with your Culips English Learning Podcast.

Harp: Check out our website, Culips.com. That's C-U-L-I-P-S.com.

Maura: And on our website, you can help support us and help yourself, by becoming a member. You become a member by signing up on our website.

Harp: And when you're a member, you have access to the Learning Materials. And the Learning Materials are awesome. For each episode you get a complete transcript so you can listen and read at the same time to make sure you understand everything, you have more detailed explanations, and even a quiz.

Maura: And remember, if you wanna talk to us, you can always send us an email or go to Facebook and write us a message there. Or you could also send us a message on Twitter.

Harp: Yes. And if you have a question about English, definitely post it on Facebook and one of us, or our lovely editor Jessie, will respond to you.

Maura: Now, today we are going to do a Chatterbox episode. And that is where Harp and I get to chat about all different kinds of topics. And sometimes we also interview people. Now, today I'm going to interview someone who is very interesting and who most of you all, or almost everyone, already knows. I'm going to interview Harp.

Harp: It's true. I'm so interesting!

- Maura: We thought that if you've been listening for a while, you might be curious about us and want to get to know us more. Or if you're a new listener, like, maybe it's your New Year's resolution to learn English, and you're just **tuning in**, you might want to know a little bit more about who we are. So, I'm going to interview Harp. And this episode, we're going to do something that we haven't done before. When I'm interviewing Harp, I want you **to keep an ear out** for an expression that means to fail or to succeed, OK? So, in this episode, Harp is going to use an expression that means to fail or to succeed in a certain situation. So listen to this episode and I'll reveal at the end what the expression is.
- Harp: Very exciting! Let's get started.
- Maura: All right. So, Harp, why don't you tell us a little bit more about your background and where you're from and where you grew up, because we're not from Montreal, where we podcast from.
- Harp: Yeah. You know, it's funny because people ask me this question all the time and I have a little bit of a hard time responding because I'm kind of from two places at the same time, I would say. Because I was born in **Fort St. John**, which is in Northern British Columbia. **And when I say northern, I mean northern**. It is 15 hours north of Vancouver. And I lived there until I was 13. And **Fort St. John** is a very small town and there isn't much to do, but it's quite pretty. It's in the northern forest so it's really pretty. But like I said, it's a bit boring, so my parents decided that they wanted to move and they thought about some different places and they decided we were moving to Edmonton, which is in Alberta. So now when people ask me, I say I'm half from Edmonton and half from BC because when I was 13 I moved to Edmonton and I kind of grew up there. I went to university in Alberta and Edmonton is home to me. People ask me where I'm from, I usually say Edmonton.
- Maura: All right. And did you like growing up **out west**? I can ask you that because I'm not from that part of Canada.
- Harp: I really did enjoy it. **Fort St. John** might have been boring, but it was a cute little town. We had a good group of family and friends there. And Edmonton, I actually really enjoyed growing up there. It's a bigger city in terms of Canadian size, but it had **a small-town feel** to it but there were things to do. It was a nice place. I really enjoyed both my college and my university.
- Maura: So, what did you study at university?
- Harp: I studied political science.
- Maura: So does that mean you wanted to become a politician?

- Harp: I was actually thinking more of becoming a lawyer. And so it's a really common route to go from political science into law. And I love politics. Even now, I read the news a lot, I'm always following what's going on politically in Canada, the US, and even internationally.
- Maura: So, you grew up in **Fort St. John**, and then you lived in Edmonton, and then you decided to travel and move around. Where is the first place that you went?
- Harp: Well, you know, it's funny, because I had travelled quite a bit in Canada and even the US, when I was growing up, but I hadn't really left North America until I decided, **with a bang**, to move to South Korea for a year.
- Maura: Wow! So, tell us about that experience.
- Harp: It was probably one of the best experiences of my life. I had an awesome year there. I taught English in a private English school there and I lived close to the school, and so I could walk to work. I became friends with my Korean colleagues and I just really loved it. People were really warm and inviting. I got to go to people's houses for dinner. I absolutely adore Korean food. I think it's so delicious. And, just the people were so nice. I got to go to soccer games with some of my colleagues and have really, kind of, traditional experiences. And even some of the holidays I spent with my Korean colleagues and got to experience real Korean holidays with real Korean families. It was really fun.
- Maura: We really are lucky that as native English speakers with university degrees, we can go to so many different countries and have experiences like that.
- Harp: Yeah, it's true. I had never really taught English before I moved to South Korea, but it was very easy to get a job because they just want people to be able to practice speaking with. So I taught some younger kids, up to teenagers, and it was really fun. They were always really enthusiastic. Obviously you have the bad kids, but most of them were really cute and really enjoyed learning. And everyone, even on the streets, wanted to practice. So if I was looking a little bit lost, someone would come and help me and practice English. It was really an enjoyable year.
- Maura: And do you have any other exciting travel stories? You lived somewhere else, didn't you? Huh? Huh?

- Harp: I did. You're right. After I left South Korea, I travelled in Asia. And then I went home to Canada, and then I decided I wanted to live somewhere else, so I moved to France. I moved there for almost 6 months and it was a really, really cool experience because I lived with a family. I was a nanny. I took care of three kids. They were six, seven, and nine, if I remember correctly. And they **did not speak a word of English**. So I went there thinking I spoke French, but there's a big difference between the French you learn in school and being able to have a simple conversation with someone else in your class who doesn't speak French well, and three kids who **don't speak a word of English**.
- Maura: So, were you hired because the parents wanted you to teach their children English?
- Harp: A little bit. It's a common program for younger people to go either to France, or French people to go to England or Canada, to work as a nanny and kind of experience a new culture. For them, for the family, it was nice because their children got exposed to English. And also that they kind of had **a built-in babysitter**.
- Maura: Yeah. For sure. And what about your French? Did you find that it improved quickly in that situation?
- Harp: One hundred percent. It was really a **sink-or-swim** situation. I had no choice. I was either gonna speak French or I wouldn't be able to stay there. Kids have patience, for sure, but eventually they need to communicate. So I learned very quickly and, honestly, if you wanna learn a language, kids are an awesome way to learn it, because you don't feel embarrassed and they have no problem correcting you if you make a mistake. So it was a really cool experience.
- Maura: Yeah. I definitely agree that somehow working with kids when you want to learn another language is less pressure or something, so it's a good way.
- Harp: Yeah. And they don't have such a large vocabulary, so they use simpler words, simpler expressions. It's much, much, much easier to learn with kids and I strongly recommend if you're curious and excited to travel, try to be a nanny somewhere else where you want to learn the language.
- Maura: All right. Now, you travelled around a bit. How did you end up in Montreal?

- Harp: Well, after 6 months in France, my French improved considerably and I was deciding where to go and where to settle and I knew I wanted to come back to Canada but I thought, maybe I'll try somewhere where there's French and I can practice more and improve more and, also, I loved Montreal. I had come here twice before I decided to move here and I really loved it. It's a young, vibrant city. I love that it's bilingual here. I love the architecture here. So I decided to move after.
- Maura: And now that you've been living here for a while, has the novelty worn off or do you still love it?
- Harp: I love living in Montreal. The only thing I don't like is the winter, but I can survive the cold. I'm tough.
- Maura: And you're gonna have that winter with almost any place in Canada anyway, so...
- Harp: Exactly. But, no, I love living in Montreal. It's a wonderful city and if you have the chance, you should definitely come and visit.
- Maura: So what's one of your favourite places or favourite things to do in Montreal?
- Harp: You know, one of my favourite things to do in Montreal is to actually go to a park in the summer. I live close to Parc Lafontaine, which is a beautiful park in the middle of Montreal. It's got a pond where there are ducks, and a fountain, and it's just beautiful. And I love it. Because so many people in the neighbourhood around this park don't have backyards, they really go to this park and it's always lively and full of people relaxing and enjoying themselves. It's **a really cool vibe** there.
- Maura: You're right. And, Harp, you're making me think about summer now. Thanks a lot. All right. Now, so, I have another question for you. Of course, we work hard at Culips but we also have **day jobs**. And if you've been listening to Culips, you probably already know what Harp's **day job** is. But just in case, Harp, tell us what you do from 9 to 5 on most days.
- Harp: I work in HR, so human resources, and I work as a recruiter. So I work for an IT company and basically my job is to recruit people to work for my company. And most of them are very technical people so they're programmers, or QA people, or business intelligence people. It's very, very, very technical people and I have to find them. I look for resumes. I do interviews. I hire them. The whole recruitment process.
- Maura: You know, I'd say you're probably often good news for people. People who have been looking for jobs, hoping to find something, they get a call from you or an email, and they're excited.

- Harp: Exactly. That's the thing I love about my job. Because finding a new job is exciting, so people are really happy. Because oftentimes in HR, you're dealing with the unhappy people when they have a problem. But recruitment is when people are happy. They're so excited to start a new job and oftentimes they've been looking for a while, so I like my job.
- Maura: Great. Now, Harp, a question that I'm sure all our listeners are dying to know, and me too: What is your favourite thing about working at Culips? Other than, of course, the chance that you get to see me so often.
- Harp: That's funny that you made a joke about it, but really, I love working with you. My absolute favourite thing about Culips, though, is hearing people who love it and that it's been so useful for them. I really think that it's such an exciting and interesting way to learn a language. I love hearing from people on Facebook or getting an email from someone who loves Culips. It's really fulfilling.
- Maura: I have to say, I totally agree. Just hearing from people all over the world that have been listening to us is amazing, like, it's really hard to explain how cool it is.
- Harp: I know! All over the world! We get emails or comments on Facebook from people all over the place. It's amazing.
- Maura: Now, one more important question. Of course at Culips we're always working with language and expressions, so, Harp, what is one of your favourite expressions?
- Harp: Hmm. I have so many favourites, but I would say ***shooting the breeze***.
- Maura: I'm going to guess that's because you like **to shoot the breeze**.
- Harp: Exactly. I love to talk and chat so I like **to shoot the breeze**.
- Maura: And if you want to know more about that expression, ***to shoot the breeze***, you can check us out, because we already have an episode about **shooting the breeze**. So if you wanna know more about that expression, you can go to our website and find it. Or on iTunes.
- Harp: Yes.
- Maura: Now, did you hear the expression that means to fail or to succeed in a situation? Did you notice when Harp used this expression?
- Harp: I hope you did.
- Maura: The expression was—drum roll please—***to sink or swim***.

- Harp: Yup. I used this expression, ***to sink or swim***, when I was talking about my time in France.
- Maura: Right. And if you think about it, if you swim then you are successful. If someone puts you in water and you swim, that's good. But if you sink, that means that you did not swim and you went right to the bottom, so that would be a fail.
- Harp: Yup. Exactly.
- Maura: All right. Now, we have to remind you one more time to go to our website, Culips.com, that's C-U-L-I-P-S.com, and become a member. Because when you're a member, these podcasts are even better. You can follow along with transcripts, you have more detailed explanations, and you also have a quiz.
- Harp: And you support us. So do it. Become a member.
- Maura: All right. We will talk to you again soon. Bye everyone!
- Harp: Goodbye!

Detailed Explanation

To tune in

To tune in is an expression that was traditionally used on radio and television. It means to listen or view a broadcast of something. When radio and TV first came out, there were actual dials that you had to turn in order to find the station where the broadcast was coming from. This was called **tuning in** to listen or view a broadcast.

You can still hear this expression used today on radio and TV, and of course, you can also hear it on podcasts, even though there is no longer an actual dial used **to tune in** to the broadcasts.

At the beginning of this episode, Maura says, "If you're a new listener, like, maybe it's your New Year's resolution to learn English, and you're just **tuning in**..." In this case, saying **to tune in** is like saying to listen.

Here's one more example with **to tune in** used to talk about TV:

Television announcer: Don't forget **to tune in** next week, to see the conclusion of this riveting documentary.

To keep an ear out for something

To keep an ear out for something means to listen for or to wait to hear something. For example, a person could **keep an ear out** for a specific word or a general topic in conversation. In the woods, a hiker might want **to keep an ear out** for interesting bird calls.

A good image to help remember this expression is someone leaning over to stick their ear out closer to something in order to listen carefully. Of course, someone who is actually **keeping an ear out** doesn't normally actually do this action.

In this episode, the expression **to keep an ear out for something** is used as part of a challenge for you, the listeners. Maura asks you **to keep an ear out** for an expression that means to succeed or to fail in a situation. This means that while you listen to this episode, you should listen extra carefully for an expression with this meaning.

Here are a couple more examples with **to keep an ear out for something**:

Yuki: **Keep an ear out** for the baby crying. I'm just going to run to the grocery store.

Helena: No problem!

Sasha: I'm expecting a client to call, but I have to go talk to the boss. Can you answer my phone if it rings?

Liliane: Sure. I'll **keep an ear out**.

A related expression is *to keep an eye out for something*. This one is just like **to keep an ear out for something**, but instead of listening for something, you're looking for or waiting to see something.

When I say..., I mean...

In a recent episode, called *We all mess up sometimes*, we looked at the expression *and I mean...* The expression *and I mean...* is used to emphasize some previous description.

This similar expression, **when I say..., I mean...**, is used in the same way.

In this episode, Harp says that she was born and grew up in Northern British Columbia. She then wants to emphasize just how northern this is. So she says, "**And when I say northern, I mean northern.**" And she goes on to clarify that her hometown is 15 hours north of Vancouver. That is seriously north!

So in order to use the expression **when I say..., I mean...**, you must first provide some kind of a description. You can then repeat one of the same words twice, like Harp did, or build on the original description, for example, by saying something like, "**When I say big, I mean humungous.**"

Here are a couple more examples with **when I say...; I mean...**:

Vincenzo: The party last night was really fun. **And when I say fun, I mean a crazy, wild time!**

Pamela: I'm sorry I missed it then.

Travis: How did you find your big exam yesterday?

Emma: It was tough. **And when I say tough, I mean tough.** It took me 4 hours to complete.

Fort St. John

As Harp says in this episode, **Fort St. John** is in Northern British Columbia. The current population of the city is about 19,000 people, or 60,000 including the surrounding areas. These numbers have surely increased a lot since Harp lived there. The reason for this is that there has recently been a lot of development due to the oil and gas industry. Many people from all over Canada move to this area because of the job availability in these industries and this has caused the area to see massive growth.

Out west

Maura asks Harp what it was like growing up **out west**. **Out west** is an expression that Canadians commonly use to refer to the western side of the country. **Out west** can include the provinces of British Columbia, Alberta, Saskatchewan, and sometimes even Manitoba. Similarly, people might also say **out east** to talk about eastern provinces, like New Brunswick, Nova Scotia, Prince Edward Island, and Newfoundland and Labrador. Strangely enough, this only leaves out the two provinces of Ontario and Quebec, which are in between the eastern and western provinces!

Less commonly used in Canada are the expressions **up north** and **down south**. These don't refer to any specific provinces.

Here's an example of how Canadians use **out west**:

Sol: What did you do this summer?

Michael: I went **out west** and worked in the Rockies. I had a great time.

These expressions are also used by Americans to talk about states on their east and west coasts, as well as ones in the north or in the south.

A small-town feel

Saying that a place has **a small-town feel** means that it feels like a small town. A big city might still feel like a small town because of many things, like locally owned businesses or not having much traffic downtown. Harp uses this description to talk about her hometown of Fort St. John.

This way of describing the feeling of a place or thing can be used with a bunch of different words. There isn't really a limit to the words you can use, but there are some expressions that are more common than others.

Here are a couple of examples with some of the more common types of this expression:

Bonnie: I love what you've done with your living room. The new furniture looks great.

Jenna: Thanks. I was going for kind of **a Thai feel**.

Miranda: How did you like the restaurant last night?

Luke: It was really nice! It kinda had **a down-home feel** to it. I liked that.

In this type of expression, with **a feel**, you can use any nationality (for example, **a Thai feel**) to express that the feeling is related to that nationality or country's culture. Down-home in the second example above refers to a simple lifestyle that is especially associated with the Southern United States.

With a bang

When something happens **with a bang**, it happens with excitement and attention. As you can imagine, the sound of a loud bang draws attention and might also be exciting. There are lots of ways to use this, such as **to go out with a bang** or **to start off with a bang**.

In this episode, Harp uses the expression **with a bang** to talk about her departure for South Korea. When Harp decided to teach English abroad, she got a lot of attention from her family and friends and there was a lot of excitement around the idea of Harp's big trip.

Here are a couple more examples with the expression **with a bang**:

Oliver: The concert ended **with a bang** last night. It was great.

Christina: Cool. What happened?

Oliver: There was a crazy light show and the band saved their loudest, most popular song. For last

Heidi: Did you notice that Nathan is back from his trip abroad?

Ivan: How could I not have noticed? He's definitely back **with a bang**. Everyone is talking about it.

To not speak a word of English

To not speak a word of a language means to not know how to speak that language at all. This is an expression used to emphasize how little you know. Even if we don't know how to speak a language fluently, we still might know a couple of words, but this expression, **to not speak a word of a language**, expresses that you really know nothing about that language.

In this episode, Harp uses this expression to talk about the kids who she took care of in France. It's not actually important to know whether the kids really knew any words in English. Harp just uses this expression to emphasize that the children knew very little English and to show that Harp was not able to communicate with them in English at all.

Here's an example with this expression and another language:

Sam: How was your trip to China this past summer?

Oscar: It was great. I **didn't speak a word of Mandarin** when I first got there, but by the end of the trip I had learned the basics.

A built-in babysitter

In this episode, Harp says that as a nanny in France, she was a **built-in babysitter**. This means that she was like a part of the family and was always available for the family's convenience. She was an important part of the family at the time she was there. When something is said to be **built-in**, this means that it is a part of something larger and it's often convenient and useful. Often, something that is **built-in** would also be considered an extra in other cases.

This expression comes from parts that are actually physically built into something larger. For example, a house could have a **built-in** dishwasher. This means that it is part of the house, the larger unit, and a dishwasher is definitely convenient! There are so many **built-in** items that a house can have. Similarly, a smart phone could have **built-in** apps. These apps are part of the phone, they are convenient for you, and they would be considered extras in other phones.

Here's one more example with **built-in**:

Rudy: This new educational software I picked up is like having a **built-in** teacher.

Cassandra: That sounds great. I'd love to have a look at it.

To sink or swim

This is the expression that listeners were told to keep an ear out for in this episode. **To sink or swim** means to succeed or fail in a certain situation. The expression is based on the idea of someone learning to swim. If you put a person in deep water, they will either succeed by swimming or fail by sinking to the bottom. **To sink or swim** can be used in any situation where someone has to learn in the moment and risks failing.

In this episode, Harp uses this expression to talk about her experience in France. She either had to learn to speak French (swim) or fail to speak French and have to leave (sink). Harp calls it a **sink-or-swim** situation. She uses the expression **to sink or swim** as an adjective.

Here are a couple more examples with **to sink or swim**:

Justin: When I was learning how to be a teacher, the teacher I was working with put me in front of the class to teach a lesson with no preparation!

Paul: Wow. It sounds like that was really **sink-or-swim** time!

Darlene: I'm not sure whether I believe in the **sink-or-swim** philosophy. I think people should be able to learn before they are put into a situation.

Ben: I somewhat agree, although I've also seen people thrive when they have **to sink or swim**.

A cool vibe

Sometimes people talk about feeling **a vibe**. The term **a vibe** describes the energy that a person feels about a place, person, or object. There can be all kinds of **vibes**, good and bad. *Feeling* is a close synonym for **vibe**. The word **vibe** comes from the word *vibration*.

In this episode, when Harp talks about Parc Lafontaine in Montreal, she says that there is **a cool vibe** there. This means that the atmosphere feels cool; the people are relaxed and she feels a good energy there.

Here are a couple more examples with **a vibe**:

Dave: Do you see those people on the other side of the restaurant? They look sketchy to me.

Kyla: Yeah, I'm getting **a bad vibe** from them too.

Angela: I can't wait for Marika's party next weekend. There's always such **a good vibe** at her place.

Susan: Yeah. She always puts on great parties. I'm looking forward to it too.

A day job

A day job is a job you do during the day, usually a full-time job. When a person calls a job their **day job**, this means that they also have a second job they are more passionate about or an interest that they would like to turn into a job. Calling a job **a day job** implies that it is just a job, and not the most important thing in your life.

If you only work one job and you're not more passionate about some other kind of work, then you would likely not use the term **day job**. In this case, you would just call it your job. Harp has a second job with Culips and this is why Maura calls Harp's full-time job **a day job**.

Here's an example with **a day job**:

Andreas: I'm taking a course in carpentry and I'll hopefully be able to find some work in that field when I'm done.

Matthew: That's great. So what's your **day job** for now?

To shoot the breeze

As we mention in this episode, we've got another episode all about this expression and other similar ones called, *We're just shooting the breeze*. **To shoot the breeze** is to chat or talk about nothing important. If you want to know about the origin, check out that episode!

Here's an example with **to shoot the breeze**:

Lena: Are Jackie and Bill talking about anything important over there?

Pete: No, it sounds like they're just **shooting the breeze**.

That's because you like to shoot the breeze

Here's an explanation of something you might want to listen to again. In this episode, Harp says that she likes the expression **to shoot the breeze**. Maura then says that Harp likes this expression because she likes to shoot the breeze. Maura emphasizes the word *like* with her voice to express that Harp likes chatting. Listen again at the end of the episode to hear how Maura's voice rises to emphasize the word *like*.

Quiz

1. **Ned: Jen, keep an ear out for a knock at the door. I'm expecting someone.**

What is Ned telling Jen to do?

- a) Look to see if anyone has arrived.
- b) Listen for someone knocking on the door.
- c) Keep the door open.
- d) Fix the doorbell.

2. **Heather: My new apartment is really small. And when I say _____, I mean _____.**

Please fill in the blanks.

- a) small; huge
- b) tiny; small
- c) small; tiny
- d) tiny; miniscule

3. **When people in Canada use the expression *out west*, where are they talking about?**

- a) the western part of the country
- b) the wild west
- c) the country
- d) the eastern part of the country

4. **Shaun: I love how you decorated your bathroom. It's got an ocean feel to it.**

What does Shaun mean?

- a) There is an ocean nearby.
- b) There is a large bathtub.
- c) The bathroom makes you feel like you're near the ocean.
- d) The water that comes in is saltwater.

5. Kathy left the party _____.

Please fill in the blank with the expression that means that Kathy left the party in an exciting way that drew attention to her.

- a) with a whimper
- b) with a bang
- c) with a jump
- d) with a beast

6. Jasper: I'm going to get a dog. It's like a having a _____ alarm system.

Please fill in the blank with an expression that describes something that is convenient and some might consider an extra.

- a) maximum
- b) good-vibe
- c) sink-or-swim
- d) built-in

7. What is the meaning of the expression *to sink or swim*?

- a) to succeed or fail in a certain situation
- b) to learn to swim
- c) to have two options in a certain situation
- d) to learn to speak another language

8. When should the expression *a day job* be used?

- a) when you also have a second job that you're passionate about
- b) when you only have one job that you work at full time
- c) when you have an interest that you would like to turn into a job
- d) A and C

9. What does the expression *to shoot the breeze* mean?

- a) to talk about nothing important
- b) to talk about really important things
- c) to whistle into the wind
- d) to speak loudly into the wind

Answers:

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