

Catch Word #104 – To stick out like a sore thumb**Transcript**

Maura: Hello everyone. It's Maura!

Harp: And Harp!

Maura: And we're here with your Culips podcast, where you learn English.

Harp: Yes. Go to our website, that's Culips.com, C-U-L-I-P-S.com, because there you can find all our older episodes and you can also sign up and become a member. When you're a member, you have access to the Learning Materials, which has a complete transcript, detailed explanations, and even a quiz.

Maura: So, when you become a member, you really get so much more out of listening to our episodes. Now, today's episode is a Catch Word episode. That's where we give you different expressions or slang and we explain them all and we give you lots of examples of how you can use them.

Harp: Yes. And what are we going to be focusing on today, Maura?

Maura: Today we're going to look at expressions that talk about people who are different, so in a certain situation when someone is not normal, different from everybody else, and they can feel kind of strange about it.

Harp: Interesting. So, we look at expressions related to when you look a little bit different than everyone else and this might lead to a lot of extra attention that you don't want.

Maura: Right. So, these expressions are talking about a person who's in a situation where they're different from everybody else and this difference draws attention to them and it's not usually positive. All right, let's start with the first expression, Harp.

Harp: OK. The first expression is ***to stick out like a sore thumb***.

Maura: Yes. This is a long one, so we'll say it again a few times: ***to stick out like a sore thumb***.

Harp: ***To stick out like a sore thumb***.

Maura: So, **to stick out like a sore thumb** means that a person is different from everybody else and so they have a lot of attention on them and, like we said, it's not positive attention.

- Harp: So maybe they're wearing different clothes than everyone else or maybe someone speaks a language that not everyone else there speaks.
- Maura: Yeah. There are so many different ways that you can feel different from a group of people. It could be because everyone has a certain kind of job and you don't, or everyone knows each other but you don't know the people very well.
- Harp: Or everyone has the same style and you have a completely different style of clothing.
- Maura: Yeah. So, it could be physical, by looking at someone, but it also could be something different from the inside, maybe.
- Harp: Yes.
- Maura: So, if we look at this actual expression, it's been around for a while, from as early as the 16th century.
- Harp: Yeah. It's an older expression.
- Maura: When you look at your hand, your **thumb** is already different from your fingers. But imagine that your **thumb** was also sore or hurt or swollen. It might be red, it might appear bigger than it normally does. So in that way, it's different from your fingers and also might draw attention towards it, because it's swollen and red and doesn't look good.
- Harp: Yeah. It means that it sticks out compared to the rest of your hand.
- Maura: This expression can actually also be said as just *to stick out*. If you stick out, you're different from everybody else, but the full expression we're looking at is ***to stick out like a sore thumb***.
- Harp: Yes. ***To stick out like a sore thumb***.
- Maura: OK. So let's do a dialogue example with this expression now.

- | | |
|--------|---|
| Maura: | Sandra, guess what happened to me last night. |
| Harp: | What happened? |
| Maura: | Well, my friend Julie, you know, she invited me to this party. Did I tell you about that? |
| Harp: | Yeah, you told me you were going. |

Maura: Yeah. So, Julie invites me to this party, and I say, "Sure, no problem." I said I was gonna meet her there. I probably, you know, I knew some of the people, so I just said I would meet her there. I show up at the party.

Harp: Yeah, **and?**

Maura: Well, you know, it was Saturday, I just wore blue jeans, a T-shirt, show up and it's a formal party. Everyone is dressed in tuxedos and ball gowns.

Harp: No, stop it.

Maura: Yeah. **Did I ever stick out like a sore thumb.**

Harp: Oh, I'm sure. Did you actually go inside?

Maura: Well, I went in because I didn't realize, and then after a few minutes, I went home to change because I just stuck out way too much.

Harp: I'm sure you did.

Maura: Next time I go to a party, I'm always gonna check for the **dress code**.

Harp: Yeah, Julie should've told you though.

Maura: So, there is an example where somebody **stuck out like a sore thumb**.

Harp: Yeah. If everyone's wearing tuxedos and formal dresses and you come in in blue jeans and a T-shirt, you would definitely **stick out like a sore thumb**.

Maura: Definitely. And that's something that you should always check on if you're going to a party, because you never know when it might be a theme or a dress-up or something.

Harp: Yeah, that's true.

Maura: OK. Now, let's look at a second example with **to stick out like a sore thumb**.

Harp: Let's do it.

Harp: Did I tell you about my grandpa?

Maura: No. What?

Harp: He's decided to go back to school.

Maura: Oh, wow. That's great.

Harp: He enrolled in the university close to his house, so he started last week.

Maura: That's so cute!

Harp: It's really cute. I hope he does well. I'm sure he **sticks out like sore thumb** because he's older than everyone, but he's really smart!

Maura: I bet! Most of the time, university students, you know, are like in their 20s, so I'm sure they notice an old grandpa in the seats.

Harp: Yes. Hopefully he'll share his knowledge.

Maura: Yes, his wisdom.

Maura: And there's another example where someone was **sticking out like a sore thumb**. The reason this time was because of age. So, the grandpa was so much older than the students, so he would be different and probably draw some attention.

Harp: Yes, definitely. You would notice when there was a much older person in a class full of people the same age.

Maura: When I think back to my **undergrad** degree, I can even remember some of the older people in my classes, and they weren't even grandpas or grandmas, but just a bit older. And yeah, they do stick out a bit.

Harp: Yeah, definitely.

Maura: OK. Let's look at our next expression, which also talks about when you are different from everybody else.

Harp: OK. The next expression is **to be out of place**.

Maura: Yes, **to be out of place**. And there's no expression **to be in place**, but if you imagine that your place is a place that fits you, a place that you feel comfortable, then if you are **out of place**, you're somewhere where you're not comfortable, you don't fit in, you're a bit different.

Harp: Yes and you would **stand out**.

Maura: Exactly. You don't really belong in this kind of place. And if you're **out of place**, people might notice and that might draw attention to you.

Harp: Yeah. Usually I find I feel a bit awkward if I really **stand out** and I feel **out of place**.

Maura: And that's one small difference between this expression and the first one, **to stick out like a sore thumb**. Because when you **stick out like a sore thumb**, everybody knows it and the attention is definitely drawn to you, but if you're **out of place**, the attention might not be on you. It might not be known to everybody that you don't fit in and you're different from everybody.

Harp: Yeah.

Maura: So let's look at a first example, and in this example of **to be out of place**, it's not going to be something that necessarily everyone knows about this person. This person feels **out of place** but everyone else around them might not know about it.

Harp: OK.

Harp: Hey, how's your web design course going?

Maura: Well, to be honest, I feel a bit **out of place**.

Harp: Why?

Maura: Well, it's supposed to be a level one class, but everyone has experience in web design, so they're moving really fast and I don't have experience, so **I'm lost**.

Harp: Oh no, that's not good. I'm sure there are other people who feel the same way though, if it's a level one course.

Maura: Maybe, but the people around me seem to have no problem.

Harp: Try to make some friends.

Maura: Yeah, we'll see. Maybe I'll learn fast.

Maura: So, there's an example where a person was feeling out of place because they were in a class and everyone seemed like they had more experience in the subject. In this case, maybe the person was **out of place**, and they were behind in the class or maybe that was just their feeling and impression. It's hard to say sometimes.

Harp: Yeah, it is. It's hard to say whether it's a feeling or whether it's real.

Maura: And you know, Harp, this example is kind of a true story.

Harp: Oh, really?

Maura: Well, I did take a web design class a few years ago.

- Harp: Oh, I do remember that.
- Maura: And I did have no experience and a lot of people had some experience and they were working a lot more easily than I was.
- Harp: That's not good. I think that schools should be very clear on the criteria that people need before they get into a class.
- Maura: Yeah, but I did learn one thing in that course.
- Harp: What did you learn?
- Maura: That I don't want to learn anymore about web design. It's hard!
- Harp: Yeah, I'm sure it is.
- Maura: OK. Let's look at another example with **to be out of place**, but this time it's gonna be obvious and everyone's gonna know and attention is gonna be drawn to that person.
- Harp: OK.

- Maura: Hey Tori, how was the game last night?
- Harp: It was a lot of fun, but...
- Maura: But what?
- Harp: I felt a little bit **out of place**.
- Maura: Why?
- Harp: Well, you know I'm from Edmonton, so I was wearing my Oilers shirt.
- Maura: **Uh oh.**
- Harp: Yeah, we were sitting in the Montreal Canadiens super fans section, so everyone was wearing a red shirt and I was wearing a blue shirt. It was pretty bad.
- Maura: Well, I know the Montreal Canadiens fans are crazy, so wearing another hockey jersey to the game is pretty risky.
- Harp: Pretty risky, but people like the Edmonton Oilers so they were pretty happy.
- Maura: They just thought you were cute or something.

Harp: Yeah, exactly. It wasn't like a team that's a big rival for Montreal, so it was OK.

Maura: Great. So, there's another example where someone was **out of place**, and in this case, it was physical, so everybody knew it, especially Montreal Canadiens fans.

Harp: Yup. And you know, Maura, this is a true story for me.

Maura: You went to a Montreal Canadiens game and you wore an Edmonton Oilers shirt, Harp?

Harp: I did. But really, people were really nice to me. There's no big rivalry, so...

Maura: OK. Not like between the Boston Bruins and Montreal Canadiens.

Harp: Exactly. I would never wear a Boston Bruins shirt to a Canadiens game. An Edmonton Oilers shirt's OK.

Maura: Good. But we should say that, even though we have these rivalries in our Canadian sports, it never really gets violent or crazy like some sporting events can get in other countries. It's still pretty friendly and calm, anyways.

Harp: Yeah, a little bit of yelling maybe.

Maura: OK. We looked at **to stick out like a sore thumb** and **to be out of place**, so let's look at the last expression for this episode.

Harp: OK. What is the last expression?

Maura: The last expression is **to be the odd one out**.

Harp: Yes. **To be the odd one out**.

Maura: And this means that someone is not normal, different from what's expected and different from everyone else. So really, the word *odd* by itself means different, or extra, so it really fits this expression because if you're **the odd one out**, you don't belong.

Harp: Yeah, you stick out. You're not the same as everyone else.

Maura: Yeah. So, let's give a couple examples with **to be the odd one out**.

Maura: Last night was fun, eh?

Harp: Yeah, it was a lot of fun.

Maura: Yeah. Just the old girls from high school sittin' around, talkin' about life.

Harp: Yeah. I don't think Jen's boyfriend had a lot of fun, though.

Maura: He definitely was **the odd one out**. He couldn't really participate in all the old high school gossip or...

Harp: And he was the only boy there, too.

Maura: Yeah. So he did look a bit uncomfortable sometimes.

Harp: Well, he was **the odd one out**.

Maura: Well, maybe when he gets to know us a little bit more, then he'll feel more comfortable and know about our crazy talks.

Harp: Yeah, I hope so.

Maura: And there's an example where someone was feeling strange and different from the group and he was **the odd one out**.

Harp: Yeah. He was **the odd one out** because he didn't know everyone very well and it was a group of old friends who had known each other since high school.

Maura: Yup. So he was different from the rest.

Harp: Yes. They all had stories that they knew and he didn't know any of the stories.

Maura: So, let's give one more example where someone can be **the odd person out**.

Harp: Hey, Sara wants to know, do you want pizza or Chinese for lunch?

Maura: I'm kind of in the mood for Chinese.

Harp: Oh. Everyone else picked pizza.

Maura: Well, I guess I'm **the odd one out**. OK, pizza's fine.

Harp: OK, good. I'll tell her.

Maura: And there's another example where someone is different from the group. And in this case, someone wanted to have Chinese food, but everyone else wanted pizza. That was an easy problem to solve because that person can just have pizza too.

Harp: Yes. It was easy to solve this time. Imagine if that person **threw a tantrum** and they said they wanted Chinese only.

Maura: Yes. It was easy to solve, but sometimes you might feel like **the odd person out** and you can't fix it. You're just gonna feel different and you're in a situation where you just feel different. All right. Let's go over these expressions one more time.

Harp: OK. So we started with **to stick out like a sore thumb**.

Maura: Yes. And then we looked at **to be out of place**. And the one difference is that **to stick out like a sore thumb** is something that everybody notices, so we notice that this person is different than the group, and **to be out of place** could be something that everybody notices but it also could just be something someone is feeling.

Harp: Yes. And then the last expression was **to be the odd one out**.

Maura: So, someone is, again, different from the rest. Now, if you want to learn more about these expressions or any of the other expressions that we naturally used during this episode, you need to become a member, because when you're a member, you have access to all of our Learning Materials. And in our Learning Materials, we explain all of these expressions, plus any additional expressions that we mentioned in this episode. We also give you a transcript so you can follow along, and even a quiz.

Harp: Yeah, don't be **the odd one out**, join Culips.

Maura: Oh, good one, Harp.

Harp: Make sure you like us on Facebook as well. There's lots of activity going on on our Facebook page.

Maura: So come say hi. That's it for us this week and we'll be back with another episode soon.

Harp: Bye everyone!

Maura: Bye!

Detailed Explanation

To stick out like a sore thumb

This first expression, **to stick out like a sore thumb**, means that a person or thing is different from a group of others, and people notice this difference. When someone **sticks out like a sore thumb**, it is not a positive experience, because the person did not want to be different from everyone else!

In this episode, we talk about people sticking out like sore thumbs. A thing could also **stick out like a sore thumb**. Here's an example with a thing instead of a person:

Jack: How was the viewing of your class' artwork?

Kimberly: It was good. I feel like my work **stuck out like a sore thumb** though. I'm not as good as everyone else.

Some sources also define **to stick out like a sore thumb** as to be very obvious and noticeable, but not always for being different. Here's an example with this slightly different use:

Becky: I hate this mole on my face. It **sticks out like a sore thumb**.

Eileen: No way. I can barely even notice it. You're too hard on yourself.

You might also hear simply *to stick out*, which has basically the same meaning as the longer version, **to stick out like a sore thumb**. *To stick out* can be used to talk about someone or something different, which could be either positive or negative.

Pronunciation of *thumb*

Here's a quick reminder on the pronunciation of the end of the word **thumb** and all words that end in *mb* in English. We do not pronounce the final *b* when a word ends in *mb*. We pronounce the end as an *m*.

Here's a short list of words that end in *mb* and are pronounced with an *m* sound at the end:

dumb	bomb	climb
numb	comb	limb
plumb (plumber)	tomb	

And?

As we do in this episode, one person might ask another person to continue what they are talking about by simply asking **and?** In an example dialogue, Maura is telling a story about going to a formal dress party and not being dressed properly. Maura pauses partway through her story and Harp knows that there is more to tell. She encourages Maura to continue with the story by asking **and?**

Here's another example using **and?** in the same way:

Paulina: So I went out on my date last night and it was really great. We went out for dinner and then I drove him home.

Lina: **And?**

Paulina: And then he kissed me goodnight!

Did I ever...

We have a whole bunch of expressions in English that we say in the form of a question that aren't really questions with answers. **Did I ever...** is one of those expressions. When someone says **did I ever**, it means *I really*.

In a dialogue example in this episode, Maura says **Did I ever** *stick out like a sore thumb*. She could also have said *I really stuck out like a sore thumb* with the same meaning. In this case, Maura speaks in the past tense because she's talking about something that happened to her the night before, but this expression can be used with any verb tense, with any pronoun.

Here are some examples with other forms of this expression:

Nathan: I got Peter exactly what he wanted.

Sarah: Oh wow, **is he ever** going to love it!

Ken: We went camping last weekend.

Daniel: Oh, really?

Ken: Yeah, and **did we ever** have a great time.

We can also use this expression to agree with something that someone else has said, and finish the expression after *ever*. Here's an example:

Harriet: I love the hotel that Don and Jean are going to for their honeymoon. They're going to have such a great time.

Olivia: Are they ever.

Dress code

A **dress code** is the instructions or rules for how to dress at certain places or events. An event, like the one described in this episode, may have a formal **dress code** where people are expected to wear formal clothes, like suits, tuxedos, or dresses. A school or workplace might also have a **dress code**, like no jeans or running shoes.

If a place or event has a **dress code**, it almost always means that it is fancy and formal. If it does not have a **dress code**, this means it is casual and people can dress whatever way they like. A **dress code** does not usually tell people to wear jeans, it asks them to dress up! Here's an example of that:

Ryan: Is there a **dress code** for Cindy's party tomorrow night?

Ben: Nope. We can wear whatever we like.

Undergrad

There are lots of words and slang terms for people who are going to university to get a Bachelor's Degree or Undergraduate Degree. Depending where you are in the English-speaking world, there will be different terms used. In most parts of Canada, one of those terms is **undergrad**, which is short for *undergraduate student*. This person can also be called simply a university student.

In Canada, during an undergraduate student's first year, they can be called a frosh. In the United States, they have slang terms for a students at every year of university. From first to fourth year, the terms are Freshman, Sophomore, Junior, and Senior. The same terms are used in high school.

Everywhere in North America, we also have graduate school. This is when university education is continued with a Master's Degree or a PhD. A person studying in their master's or PhD is called a grad student or a graduate student.

To be out of place

Here's the next expression in our episode that means someone is different from everyone else and does not belong. This expression can also be used to talk about things that are different, often in a negative way, from the other things around them. There are some variations on this expression: We can say **to be out of place** or **to look out of place** or **to feel out of place**. We use **to feel out of place** when we talk about people and their feelings.

Here's an example with the expression **to be out of place** used to talk about a thing:

Jocelyn: I went to a car show this weekend to show off my new car, but it ended up being a car show for cars made in the '60s! My car was totally **out of place**.

Clive: Oh well. I'm sure people still enjoyed seeing it.

Here's an example with **to feel out of place**:

Greg: I really **felt out of place** when everyone was kissing each other on the cheek to say hello. We don't do that in my culture back home.

Lila: Don't worry. I'm sure no one noticed, or even they did, they know you're not French, so I'm sure they'd understand.

There's also a literal meaning to this expression, for example, if someone sets the table for dinner and puts the plate too far to the left, we can say that the plate is **out of place**. It's not in the correct place and so it looks strange.

Here's an example with the literal meaning of **to be out of place**:

Alison: Hmm... that's strange. My three picture frames on my shelf look weird. One of them has been moved forward.

Brian: You're so organized! You always notice when something is even a tiny bit **out of place**.

To stand out

To stand out isn't an expression we focus on this episode, but it can be used in a similar way to the other three expressions. If something or someone **stands out**, it means that they are noticeable and different from the rest. **To stand out** can be negative or positive. You can **stand out** for something great!

Here's an example with **to stand out** for something positive:

Bill: Your hard work really **stood out** in the last report.

Sherry: Thanks. I did a lot of research for it.

To be lost

When someone is **lost**, they don't know where they are or how to get to where they want to go. But we can also say that someone is **lost** when it has nothing to do with directions.

When someone is confused about an idea or cannot follow an explanation, they can say they are **lost**. That's what happens in this episode. Maura says that her web design class moved quickly and she didn't have much experience in web design, and so she was **lost**. She could not follow the explanations or keep up with the class work.

Here's an example with **to be lost** meaning to be confused:

Ted: This speech on quantum physics is hard to follow.

Dwayne: I know what you mean. I'm totally **lost**!

Uh oh

Here are a couple of little sounds with a meaning. **Uh oh** is an interjection said before something bad is expected to happen. A child might say this after spilling juice all over the floor. Saying **uh oh** means there is a problem.

Maura says **uh oh** to Harp when she says that she went to a Montreal Canadiens hockey game wearing an Edmonton Oilers shirt. Maura thinks there will be a problem because Harp wore a shirt supporting another Canadian hockey team. Maura probably thought that Montreal Canadian fans might be upset or angry at Harp for wearing that T-shirt. Luckily, though, Maura was wrong and everything was OK.

Here are a couple more examples with **uh oh**:

Christina: Yesterday I ran into my ex-boyfriend downtown.

Kevin: **Uh oh**. What happened?

Christina: He saw me and then turned around and walked the other way!

Oscar: **Uh oh**, I think my computer just crashed.

Selena: Really? Let me have a look.

Of course, as with any interjection, **uh oh** is usually only spoken and not written, except in a novel or other creative writing piece.

To be the odd one out

To be the odd one out is the third expression that means someone or something is different from the others, often in a negative way. *To be odd* is to be different. An odd number is 1, 3, 5, 7, and so on.

This expression can be connected to choosing teams when playing a sport. A captain of each team is chosen and then they take turns choosing people to be on their team. Sometimes at the end of all the choosing, there is only one person left, and this person is **the odd one out**. This person is extra and different from the rest because they don't have a team.

Here's one more example with **to be the odd one out**.

Gertie: Which one is **the odd one out**? Bird, dog, rock, fish, rabbit?

Adam: Obviously, the rock because it's not alive!

This expression can also be said as **to be the odd woman/man/person out**.

To throw a tantrum

A tantrum is a show of anger or frustration that is very physical. Children are most commonly known to have **tantrums**. A child might have a **tantrum** because they cannot have a cookie or they cannot play with a toy that they want. When children **throw tantrums**, they might cry, scream, lie down on the floor, or wave their arms and legs around wildly. Adults can have **tantrums** too, but they are usually quieter and less physical than children's. **Tantrums** are considered immature behaviour.

In this episode, Harp says, "Imagine if that person **threw a tantrum** and they said they wanted Chinese only." In this case, she is talking about an adult, who might be mad or frustrated because she wants to eat Chinese food. We can say *to throw a tantrum* or ***to have a tantrum***, and the meaning is the same.

Here's an example with ***to throw a tantrum***:

Heather: Did you see Dylan **throw a tantrum** yesterday? It was so embarrassing.
Joel: Yeah, but he'll grow out of it. He's only three so it's understandable.

Quiz

1. Which of the following is a shorter way to say *to stick out like a sore thumb*?

- a) to be like a sore thumb
- b) to stick
- c) to stick out
- d) There is no shorter way.

2. What is important to remember about words that end in *mb*?

- a) to pronounce the end with a hard *b* sound
- b) to pronounce the end with an *m* sound only
- c) not to pronounce the *b* at the end
- d) b) and c)

3. Nancy: Kirk was such a crazy dancer last night!

Andrea: _____.

Please fill in the blank with an expression that means Andrea agrees.

- a) He isn't
- b) Was he ever
- c) Will he ever
- d) Am I ever

4. If a party has a dress code, what does this usually mean?

- a) You must wear jeans.
- b) You must wear formal clothes.
- c) You can wear whatever you like.
- d) You must wear a uniform.

5. What is an undergrad?

- a) a professor at a university
- b) a person doing their Master's Degree
- c) a person doing their Bachelor's Degree
- d) someone who works at a university

6. Yvonne: Your performance in the play was so amazing. You really _____.

Please fill in the blank.

- a) stuck out like a sore thumb
- b) stood out
- c) were the odd one out
- d) were out of place

7. Jerry is lost in class.

What does this mean?

- a) He doesn't know where his classroom is.
- b) He is not taking a class.
- c) He can't find his desk.
- d) He is confused about what they're learning.

8. What does the interjection *uh oh* mean?

- a) There's a problem.
- b) Something fun is happening.
- c) Someone doesn't feel good.
- d) A funny joke was just made.

9. Which of the following behaviours is not usually part of a tantrum?

- a) crying
- b) moving body around
- c) singing
- d) screaming

Answers:

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