

Catch Word #106 –To get your feet wet**Transcript**

Maura: Hello everybody. It's Maura.

Harp: And Harp.

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

Harp: Make sure you go to our website, Culips.com, that's C-U-L-I-P-S.com, because there, you can become a member. And what do you get when you're a member, Maura?

Maura: You get transcripts for all of our episodes, more detailed explanations of the vocabulary we use, and a little quiz.

Harp: Yes. And today, we're bringing you a Catch Word podcast. This is where we take some expressions that are related and we explain them, break them down, give you some examples to show you how to use them.

Maura: Exactly. So today, that's what we're doing. And our theme for today's Catch Word episode is new experiences. So, we're looking at expressions that talk about people that don't have experience or they're gaining new experience in life, in different situations.

Harp: Yes, exactly. Let's get started with our first expression.

Maura: All right, the first expression is to call a person **green**.

Harp: To call someone **green**.

Maura: Now, **first things first**, there are a few different ways that **green** can be used in a slang way. But today, we're looking at calling someone **green** when they don't have a lot of experience in a certain area.

Harp: Yes. So when they don't have a lot of experience doing something, you can say that they're **green**.

Maura: Yes. And this **green** person might also feel shy or nervous or be acting awkward because they're inexperienced; they don't know how to act.

Harp: Yeah. It's usually when you're younger and you're awkward, and maybe you don't know how to do something, so you feel **green**.

Maura: Yeah. You could be **green** in so many different things. You could be green in different activities, in sports. In this way that **green** is used for slang, it means that someone is new to an experience or a situation and they feel kind of awkward about it.

Harp: Yeah.

Maura: A person is **green** when they don't have some experience and they feel uncomfortable in that situation. It could be a social situation, like when you're a kid and you go to your first party, maybe you don't know how to act. Or it could be an activity like water skiing. If you waterski for the first time with many people who have experience, you might seem **green**.

Harp: Yes. So it can happen later in life, but it's typically used for younger people. I remember you telling me why you think this expression **came about**. Do you wanna explain it to the listeners?

Maura: Well, when I think of **green**, I think of nature outside and trees and especially green grass growing. And if you think about grass, it's something that is growing and changing, just like a person who is **green** is still growing and learning new things, so that's the connection that I make with why we call people who are new or inexperienced **green**.

Harp: Yes. I think we should give some examples to explain this expression a little bit more.

Maura: All right, let's do our first example.

Maura: Last night, Jimmy and I were out and he had to drive home and there was a little bit of snow and ice on the road and he was so scared to drive, you know, because he just got his driver's license.

Harp: Yeah, he's a beginner. He hasn't driven for a long time.

Maura: He's so **green**.

Harp: Yeah, he really is.

Maura: He'll get used to it once he lives through a few Canadian winters.

Harp: Yeah, he'll definitely get some experience and be more comfortable.

Maura: So, there's one example where a person who's called **green** is new to a certain situation. And in that case, Jimmy was new to driving in winter conditions.

- Harp: Yeah, exactly. So we called him **green**.
- Maura: I think that's definitely something that people don't feel comfortable with, too. If you haven't driven in snow much before, it's very **nerve wracking**.
- Harp: When I was young and I had just learned to drive, my mom would call me every time it snowed. "Drive slow, Harp. Drive really slow. Be careful."
- Maura: Even as an experienced driver, every year when it snows for the first time, you're not quite sure how to handle it and you wanna go slow. Every year you kind of have to relearn how to handle the snow and the ice.
- Harp: Yeah, I think it's definitely **nerve wracking**. I'm happy I don't drive very much anymore.
- Maura: OK, let's give one more example. And this example is a true example from my childhood. I'll explain it after.
- Harp: OK, let's do it.

- Harp: Oh, what a tough evening.
- Maura: What happened?
- Harp: Well, Sally came home crying from school.
- Maura: Oh no. What happened?
- Harp: All her friends were **teasing** her. They wanted her to kiss a boy, but she didn't wanna kiss him. She's young.
- Maura: Oh, that's hard.
- Harp: I guess they were saying to her, "Oh, you're so **green**. Why don't you just kiss him?" And she felt uncomfortable and nervous and shy and she didn't. So then she ran home crying.
- Maura: Oh, I'm sure **she'll laugh about it when she grows up**.
- Harp: Yeah. She's feeling much better about it now.

- Maura: All right, so in that example, a kid, a younger person, was called green because they were feeling shy to kiss someone.
- Harp: Yes.

- Maura: And, as I said before in this example, this is actually how I know this expression. When I was young, quite young, and girls and boys were kissing each other for the first time, if you felt shy to kiss someone, sometimes your friends would call you **green**. They would say that you're **green** because you're not kissing someone, because you're too shy.
- Harp: So cute.
- Maura: Yeah. But just like in the example, it is not fun because you don't wanna be **green**, you wanna be old and tough and know what you're doing, but you do feel kind of shy because you've never had that experience before.
- Harp: Yeah. It's funny, when you're young, you wanna be old. When you're old, you wanna be young.
- Maura: Exactly. OK, so those are some examples of why a person might be called **green**. And it is used a lot with younger people because they're so inexperienced and because they're learning a lot of new things.
- Harp: Yeah, definitely.
- Maura: OK, let's look at our next expression.
- Harp: OK. Our next expression is **to get your feet wet**.
- Maura: Yes, **to get your feet wet**. And this is not exactly the same as *to be green*. To be **green** is when you don't have these experiences and you feel awkward and shy and you're new, but **to get your feet wet** is when you first experience something new. So you're just trying it a little bit and getting some experience.
- Harp: So with **to get your feet wet**, it's when you're really starting to learn something new, you've just started, it's the beginning part of learning something, so let's say if you're learning how to ice skate, you're on the ice, you're probably holding something to keep your balance, you're just **getting your feet wet** in it.
- Maura: And when you **get your feet wet**, maybe you're going to move on and you're going to learn more and more about this activity, but you might also just **get your feet wet** and never return. For example, maybe you try ice skating and you really don't like it. You think it's cold and you fall all the time. Maybe you won't come back.
- Harp: Yes.

Maura: And I always think about swimming with this example, because if you're learning to swim, you might feel nervous or uncomfortable because you don't know what you're doing, but on your first swimming lesson, one thing you can definitely do is put your feet in the water and get used to that feeling, so you're **getting your feet wet**, you're just trying the very first steps to learning something.

Harp: Yeah, definitely. So let's give an example with this expression, **to get your feet wet**.

Maura: OK.

Maura: So, I went rock climbing this weekend.

Harp: Wow, that's exciting. Do you know what you're doing?

Maura: Pfft. Not really, I just started rock climbing, like, this week, so I'm still **getting my feet wet**.

Harp: It's adventurous of you.

Maura: Yeah. I hope that I'll get better and better at it.

Harp: I'm sure you will.

Maura: So, there's an example where someone was trying out something new and the example was rock climbing, so there was no water involved.

Harp: No, exactly. They were trying something new, a new sport, and they were **getting their feet wet**.

Maura: So, let's look at one more example with **to get your feet wet**.

Harp: How's teachers college going?

Maura: Oh, it's good. We're doing our second placement next week so we're going to be working in the schools and teaching students.

Harp: Oh, that's great. What a great way **to get your feet wet**.

Maura: Yeah, it really is. You slowly build up to teaching full time and then it's not too overwhelming.

Harp: I imagine it would be very overwhelming if you didn't have the placements.

Maura: Yeah, we're lucky.

- Maura: And there's an example with someone else **getting their feet wet**, a teacher. Someone who's learning to be a teacher and they don't just go in and start teaching everything, they slowly try to teach little by a little. They just **get their feet wet**.
- Harp: Yup. All right, let's go to our third expression. And this third expression is **to get something under your belt**.
- Maura: Right, **to get something under your belt**. And this expression is not like the first two, **to be green** meant that you were new to a situation, **to get your feet wet** means you're trying out a new experience, and then **to get something under your belt** means that you have just experienced something or achieved something and now it may be useful to you in the future.
- Harp: Yes. So once you've experienced something, you can say that you've **got something under your belt**.
- Maura: Right. This one could be an experience that you have, but it could also be something more concrete, something like a skill that you have now acquired, so you've actually learned something and you can maybe use that skill in the future.
- Harp: Yes. So, let's imagine that there is a child who doesn't know how to swim. After one year of swimming lessons, they know how to swim. You could say they **have swimming under their belt**.
- Maura: Right. **To get something under your belt** means that now you have a new experience or you've achieved something.
- Harp: Are there any possible origins for this expression?
- Maura: There is one that I think might help you to remember this expression, and it's connected to food. So, if you imagine that you eat something, when you eat it, it goes into your stomach. And where's your stomach? Under your belt. If you're wearing a belt, your food goes in your stomach under your belt and this food stays with you, just like a new experience. You have a new experience, it becomes a part of you, it stays with you and then in the future you might be able to build on that experience.
- Harp: OK, that's interesting.
- Maura: Yeah.

Harp: I think we should give an example with **to get something under your belt**.

Maura: All right, let's do it.

Maura: How's your dance class going?

Harp: I love it.

Maura: Oh great. What have you learned so far?

Harp: Well, we were practicing the waltz for a long time. I think I **got that under my belt**. Now though, we're starting the tango. It's much more difficult for me.

Maura: Oh wow. Sounds fun though. You're just building on your skills as you go.

Harp: Yup, I love it. It's so much fun.

Maura: Good.

Maura: So, there's an example where we used the expression **to get something under your belt**. And in this case, someone was taking dancing lessons and they learned some dances, some steps, so they had some dancing skill now and they had those skills **under their belt**.

Harp: OK, let's give one more example with **to get something under your belt**.

Maura: So, what do you think we should do with our new employee next week? I mean, we've done a lot of stuff with him already.

Harp: Yeah, well I spent a lot of time with him this week on teaching him how to email clients and what kind of language to use.

Maura: OK, so maybe now that he's **got that under his belt**, we should get him to start phoning the clients and talking to them directly.

Harp: Yeah, that's a good idea. Let's train him on that next week.

Maura: All right.

Maura: And there's another example where someone used the expression **to get something under your belt**. And in this case, it was skills at a new job, you knew how to do something so you have acquired these skills and you can say that you **have it under your belt**.

Harp: Yes, exactly.

- Maura: When someone says they **have something under their belt**, it means that they know it, they've learned it, and they're finished. They've, in a way, maybe **mastered** what they're doing. For example, someone might say, "I **have level one of piano under my belt**," because they've completed that level, but it would be rare to hear someone say, "I **have piano under my belt**," because that would mean they've done everything that you could do on a piano and they're masters.
- Harp: Yes, exactly. It's more when you learn something very well and you're really a master at it.
- Maura: So, let's go over our expression about experience one more time.
- Harp: Well, we started with when someone is **green**.
- Maura: Right. And that means that someone is new to a situation and maybe feels awkward or shy about it.
- Harp: Yes. And then we went to **to get your feet wet**.
- Maura: And when someone **gets their feet wet**, it means they're just starting to learn something new or have a new experience. They're just in the first stages of it.
- Harp: Yup. And then the last expression was **to get something under your belt**.
- Maura: And this is when a person has experienced or achieved something and they can use this skill in the future, possibly.
- Harp: Yes. And remember, check out our website, Culips.com, that's C-U-L-I-P-S.com.
- Maura: And there, you can become a member. And when you're a member, you have access to our transcript, a more detailed explanation, and even a quiz.
- Harp: Yup. And check us out on Facebook and you can also rate us on iTunes.
- Maura: Yeah. If you wanna contact us with any comments or you have any ideas for episodes, Facebook is definitely the place to see us.
- Harp: Definitely. And we often add fun pictures there, too.
- Maura: Yeah, so check it out. And we'll see you soon.
- Harp: Bye everyone!
- Maura: Bye!

Detailed Explanation

To be green

A person may be called **green** because they do not have experience in a certain area or situation. A person who is **green** often acts shy or awkward because they're not sure what to do.

Like we say in this episode, this slang meaning for **green** is often used with children and teenagers because they don't have a lot of experience in many things. Younger people are also more likely to mention if someone feels awkward or shy in a new situation.

To call someone **green** is usually not nice, because it just makes the person feel more awkward. As you'll notice in the dialogue examples in this episode, the people are calling someone **green** who is not there. To tell someone directly that they are **green** should only be done with friends as a little joke.

Here's an example when someone is called **green** and it's not serious or mean:

Joan: I can't wait to see you on the raft this weekend. Our white-water rafting trip is gonna be awesome!

Brian: I'm excited, but I'm so nervous.

Joan: Oh, cute! You're so **green**! Don't worry. I'll be there to help you.

Green is also used to talk about someone or something that is good for the planet, environmentally friendly.

First things first

Here's a little expression that we use at the beginning of this episode. We say **first things first** when we want to talk about the most important thing and get back on topic. A person might use this expression to start an important meeting. Someone might also use this expression to refocus an important discussion when people have started to talk about other things that should be left until later.

This expression could also be used, for example, with someone who is planning on building a boat and is talking about where they're going to keep the boat once it's finished. They're thinking too far into the future with their plans, and they need to bring their plans back to the beginning. Someone could respond, "**First things first**, you need to build the boat!"

In this episode, Maura says **first things first** because she wanted to start off with an important item. Harp and Maura say that the first expression is *to be green*, but Maura also wants to say that there are other possible meanings for green. She does this by using the expression **first things first**, which means that what she says is going to be important.

Here are a couple more examples with ***first things first***.

Fred: So, when do you want to go to the party this weekend?

Oscar: **First things first**, we need to finish this project for work before we can even think about the party.

Brett: I'm really looking forward to our vacation in two weeks. I'm going to be lying on the beach. Yeah!

Cindy: **First things first**, we need to buy our tickets!

To come about

There are so many of these little two-word verbs that come up in our episodes! ***To come about*** is another one. ***To come about*** means to happen, often in a slow, casual, or unexpected way. *To happen* can be used in place of ***to come about***.

Here's another example with ***to come about***:

Sylvie: How did the business discussion **come about**?

Johnson: We were just chatting about the weather and then Daniel started talking about the business deal.

Winter driving

Do you live in a country where there's lots of snow and driving in the winter can be difficult? Winter driving can be difficult for many reasons. There may be lots of snow on the road, or the snow can be packed down, which can also become slippery. The worst road condition in winter is ice, especially black ice. Black ice is ice on the road that you cannot see. On ice, your car can begin to spin out of control or you can slide when you want to stop your car, like at a stop sign or traffic light.

If you don't have to drive in these conditions, you're lucky. If you ever have to, drive with caution!

Nerve wracking

If something is described as **nerve wracking**, it means that it is stressful and irritates you. *To wrack* is to destroy and cause suffering, so saying that something is **nerve wracking** is like saying that it is destroying your nerves because it's so bothersome. A person cannot be described as **nerve wracking**.

In this episode, Harp and Maura say that new experiences that make you feel uncomfortable can be **nerve wracking**. Often, new experiences are stressful because you don't know what you're doing!

Here's one more example for you:

Harry: I've got to study for my exam. I need to pass or I have to repeat the year.

Matthew: That sounds totally **nerve wracking**! Good luck!

Nerve wracking can also be written as **nerve racking**.

To tease

To tease has more than one meaning. In this episode, Harp uses it to mean to bother or to provoke continually. When someone is **teasing** another person, they say things they know will bother the person, many times. **To tease** is used to talk about Sally, whose friends wanted her to kiss a boy. Her friends **teased** her about kissing the boy by saying things like, "Come on, kiss him," "Are you afraid to kiss him?" and "Why are you so green?"

The verb **to tease** is a bit complicated because sometimes **teasing** is mean and not nice, and other times it is just for fun. Sometimes the difference is clear and other time it is not. This means that in some situations one person is **teasing** another for fun, but the person who is being **teased** feels it is not a joke and is hurt by the **teasing**.

Here's an example where the **teasing** is meant as a joke, but hurts the person being **teased**:

Bruce: My friends were **teasing** me about not finishing high school.

Irene: I'm sure they just meant it as a joke.

Bruce: Probably, but it still bugged me.

She'll laugh about it when she grows up

Harp says that **Sally will laugh about her friends calling her green when she grows up**. This is a kind of expression that people say to mean that when a younger person gets older, they will look back and find something funny that they thought was very serious at the time. In Sally's case, she is upset that her friends called her green for not kissing a boy. When Sally gets older, she might find what happened funny, because she sees it from a different perspective.

This is not a fixed expression. In this episode, Harp says, "**She'll laugh about it when she grows up**." A person might also say, "**She'll laugh about it one day**," or "**He'll find it funny later in life**." The general meaning is always the same: when the person gets older, they will find an experience that they had when they were young funny.

To get your feet wet

When a person **gets their feet wet**, it means that they try something new for the first time. The person is just beginning or just getting started with this new experience.

The possible origin for this expression is connected to swimming. When you start to swim for the first time, you might only **get your feet wet** by putting your feet in the water. Of course, now this expression can be used for any new experiences, with water or without.

Here's another example with this expression:

Jack: I'm just **getting my feet wet** in web design, but I already love it.

Molly: Great! I never got much further than one course.

You could also say that someone dives right in, which means that they completely experience something. This is also connected to swimming; when you dive in the water, you're completely underwater right away.

To get something under your belt

When a person has a new experience, we can say that they **have it under their belt**. This expression can also be used when someone has acquired new skills. If someone **has some new experience or skill under their belt**, it also means that this may be useful in the future. For example, experience in marketing might be useful when you apply for another job where they're looking for someone with knowledge about marketing.

The possible origin of this expression is related to food. When you eat something, it becomes a part of you and goes into your stomach, which is under your belt. This is just like a new experience you have, which also becomes a part of you.

Here's one more example with **to get something under your belt**:

Emma: How's your cooking class going?

Chris: I've **got the basics under my belt** now. We're moving on to more complicated—and more delicious—recipes next week!

Remember that **to get something under your belt** means that you also have a very good understanding of the skill or experience. As someone learning English, to say something like, "I **have the English language under my belt**," is probably too much, because the subject is too large. You might instead say something like, "I **have the present perfect tense under my belt**."

This can also be said as **to have something under your belt** or **to have got something under your belt**.

To master something

To master a skill or some area of knowledge, you must have a good amount of experience and a lot of knowledge, so that you are an expert. When someone has something under their belt, there is a certain level of knowledge or mastery acquired.

For example, if someone went skiing for the first time, had no control over how they went down the hill, and fell many times, we would not say they have skiing under their belt. You need **to master** the skill or experience before you can say that you have it under your belt.

Quiz

1. If someone is described as *green*, what does this mean?

- a) They have a lot of experience.
- b) They have a lot of experience in one area.
- c) They have some experience.
- d) They have no experience in one area.

2. Adam: _____, we're going to start our meeting today by talking about our customer service.

Please fill in the blank with the most appropriate expression:

- a) First things second
- b) First things first
- c) First things to start
- d) To start first things

3. What is something that people do NOT generally find nerve wracking?

- a) a new job
- b) moving apartments
- c) having a baby
- d) playing with children

4. Which of the phrases below is an example of teasing?

- a) You look like a scared turtle.
- b) Come on, you know you're really smart. Right?
- c) He is a very smart person.
- d) You must admit that it's cold today.

5. Betty: My son is so embarrassed that a girl at school knows that he likes her. But I know he'll laugh about it one day.

What does Betty mean by the statement above?

- a) One day, he will be happy about this situation.
- b) In the future, he will find this situation funny.
- c) In the future, he will find this situation very serious.
- d) One day, he will be a comedian.

6. Which of the following means that someone is trying a new experience or just beginning to learn a new skill?

- a) to have cold feet
- b) to get your feet wet
- c) to dive in
- d) to have sweaty palms

7. Stephen: I just finished my first course in sewing. Now I've got the basic skills

_____.

Please fill in the blank.

- a) under my belt
- b) above my belt
- c) around my belt
- d) in my pants

8. Which of the following expressions mean the same thing?

- a) to be green and to get your feet wet
- b) to get your feet wet and to get something under your belt
- c) to get something under your belt and to be green
- d) none of the above

9. Which expression can also mean that you are environmentally friendly?

- a) to be green
- b) to get your feet wet
- c) to dive in
- d) to come about

Answers:

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