

Catch Word #108 – Teamwork

Transcript

Harp: Hello everyone. This is Harp.

Maura: And I'm here too. It's Maura.

Harp: And we're here with your Culips English Podcast.

Maura: And don't forget to visit our website, Culips.com, that's C-U-L-I-P-S.com. And when you visit our website, you should definitely check out how to become a member, because when you become a member, you have the transcript for every episode, you have more detailed explanations of all of the expressions that we use in our episode, and even a little quiz to test yourself at the end.

Harp: Yes. So go there. And also like us on Facebook and rate us on iTunes.

Maura: Yeah. We like to have as much contact as we can with our listeners, so say hi.

Harp: And if you're shy, you can always just send us an email, too. Today we're bringing you a Catch Word podcast, and this is where we look at some expressions, we break the expressions down, and we give you lots of examples.

Maura: Yes. So if you're interested in slang and natural English idioms, this is the podcast for you.

Harp: So today we're doing a little bit of an interesting Catch Word podcast. We're looking at expressions related to **teamwork**.

Maura: Yeah. Expressions related to working in a team, because sometimes working in a team is really great and by working together you get even better results, but in some cases, working as a team can cause problems and it can be negative, too.

Harp: Yes. There are definitely positives and negatives to **teamwork**. So we have some expressions that are related to **teamwork** for you today.

Maura: Let's get started. The first expression is... what, Harp?

Harp: ***Too many cooks spoil the broth.***

Maura: Yes. Let's say it again. ***Too many cooks spoil the broth.***

- Harp: Yes, so ***too many cooks spoil the broth***. And this means that when there are too many people trying to do something, they might ruin it, they might make a mess or the end product is not gonna be good.
- Maura: So this is our expression in this episode, which is talking about **teamwork** but saying that it could be negative. Like you said, too many people working on something could ruin it.
- Harp: Yeah. And if we look at the expression ***too many cooks spoil the broth***, basically imagine a lot of chefs together trying to make soup broth, and one person saying add more salt, one person saying add more spice. In the end, it probably isn't going to be very good.
- Maura: Right. Too many people, cooks or chefs, who know what they're doing but they have different opinions, so they're trying different things and they're maybe not working together because they're all leaders and so in the end, the soup, or the broth, is ruined. Whenever I hear this expression, I always imagine a kitchen with a big, big pot of broth and then three different chefs, like the typical chef with the big white hat, standing around the pot of soup with a big wooden spoon, so three different cooks trying to create their own broth. And it doesn't work out.
- Harp: No. So this expression, ***too many cooks spoil the broth***, means that when there are too many people working on the same thing, they end up ruining it.
- Maura: All right. Is it about time we give an example for this expression?
- Harp: It is definitely time for an example.

- Maura: So, what do you think is going to happen with Sarah's **wedding shower**?
- Harp: Well, I think it might be a disaster.
- Maura: I think, honestly, that there are too many of us trying to plan it. Because everyone has different ideas. You know, Devon wanted, like, a flower theme and then Patrina wanted to do it at her mother's house and have, like, a tea party.
- Harp: Really, there are just too many people, we're not going to finish anything, we're not going to decide on a theme. I don't even know if the party's gonna **come together**.
- Maura: I think that just maybe one or two people should focus and plan it and then everyone else should just **step back**.
- Harp: Yeah, because really, right now, it's a case of **too many cooks spoiling the broth**.

Maura: Yeah, it's **going nowhere fast**.

Harp: Do you wanna send an email to everyone saying that?

Maura: OK. I'll do it.

Maura: So, there's an example when people were planning a party, that there were too many people planning it and so it was getting complicated, no progress was being made, and that was definitely an example where one could say ***too many cooks spoil the broth***.

Harp: Yeah, let's give one more example, maybe a work example, with this expression.

Maura: All right.

Maura: How's it going on the O'Neal project?

Harp: It's not going well.

Maura: Well, didn't you meet with Jim yesterday?

Harp: Yeah, Jim and I had a really good meeting. It was super constructive, we planned the project. And then the accounting team got involved.

Maura: Oh no. What happened? It didn't go well?

Harp: There were so many people all giving their opinions and trying to tell us where the project should go. It was a disaster. Now we have to start again and it's just not going well.

Maura: **Too many cooks spoil the broth.**

Harp: I know. I wish it were just Jim and I working on the project. Maybe I'll ask the accounting team to **step aside** and let us finish.

Maura: I think that's a good idea. When there are too many opinions, it's hard to get anywhere.

Maura: So, that was another example with ***too many cooks spoil the broth***. In this case, it was a work project that wasn't going well because there were too many people trying to give their opinions.

Harp: Yes, and it was **going nowhere fast**. Now, let's move on to the next expression, because I personally think that **teamwork** is a great thing and can be very productive. So the next expression is ***two heads are better than one***.

- Maura: Yes. Here's an expression that has a positive take on working together with more than one person. This is **two heads are better than one**.
- Harp: So if we think of this expression, **two heads are better than one**, if you have just one person working on a project, they're the only person thinking of where the project can go, but if you have two or three or four people working on a project, you get a lot more different ideas and the project can move faster.
- Maura: Yeah, you're exactly right. Sometimes when you're sitting at home and you're trying to brainstorm by yourself, you can't think of anything. And then when you turn to someone and you ask them about an idea, sometimes the ideas just come so much more easily.
- Harp: I find that this works for us at Culips all the time. When it's the two of us together working on something, it goes so fast.
- Maura: Definitely. I don't even waste time by myself thinking about all the different examples that we could use in our episodes. Now I just discuss them with you right before we record, and then our examples are even better because we had two heads thinking of it.
- Harp: Yes, because **two heads are better than one**.
- Maura: Yeah, **two heads are better than one**.
- Harp: Now, just one quick note is that it doesn't have to be just two heads or two people, it could be three or four or a big group.
- Maura: Yup, you're definitely right. So, **two heads are better than one** just means it's better to work in a group than to work individually. Now, let's do some examples with this expression.

- Maura: Hey Jasmine, do you got a sec?
- Harp: Yeah, what's up?
- Maura: Well, I got this letter this morning, but you know how it's pouring out? Well the letter got wet and now I'm having trouble reading it. Some of **the ink ran**. But it's an important letter from one of our big clients. Can you help me out with this part? What does that say?
- Harp: I think it says that they said yes to the project.
- Maura: Let me see. Yeah, I think that's a y. Do you think that's a y?
- Harp: Yeah, it's definitely y-e-s.

Maura: OK. Yeah, yeah, I think so. Thanks for your help.

Harp: No problem. **Two heads are better than one.**

Maura: Yeah. I don't think I would have figured it out without you. Thanks

Maura: In that example, one person couldn't figure out what the letter said, so that person asked her friend and then they had two people trying to work together, trying to figure out what it said. And because **two heads are better than one**, they were able to figure it out.

Harp: Yes. I think we should give one more example with **two heads are better than one**.

Maura: Yes, let's do it.

Harp: Hey, did you hear about the new logo?

Maura: No.

Harp: Yeah, Bobby in marketing was working on it and apparently he was having a lot of trouble and couldn't come up with something.

Maura: So how did he come up with it?

Harp: He asked John on the technical team. Because John's technical, he's not a marketing guy, but they apparently had a really interesting brainstorming session and they came up with the new logo.

Maura: Well, **two heads are better than one**.

Harp: Definitely.

Maura: In this case, it was definitely true.

Harp: Mmhmm.

Maura: And there's an example with the expression **two heads are better than one**. And in this case, one person couldn't come up with an idea, but when that one person worked with another person, the ideas started flowing.

Harp: And Maura, did you know that this expression, **two heads are better than one**, is actually a proverb as well?

- Maura: Right. So, it's a really old expression that kind of says some truth about life in general and that in general, it's always better to work with others and that working with others can give you new ideas that you couldn't have on your own.
- Harp: Yeah. It's a really old expression. It's from 1546 and it's John Heywood who said it.
- Maura: Must be true then.
- Harp: Must be.
- Maura: OK. Let's look at one other expression that talks about **teamwork** in a **positive light**. So, we looked at the first expression, which was **too many cooks spoil the broth**, and that was saying that sometimes it can be negative. But the second expression was **two heads are better than one**, which is positive. So let's look at another expression that's also positive.
- Harp: Yes. The next expression is **many hands make light work**.
- Maura: Yes. They're quite long today, aren't they? **Many hands make light work**.
- Harp: Yes, so, **many hands make light work**. So basically, when you have more hands, more people, doing something, it goes faster, it's easier.
- Maura: Right. This one makes logical sense, because if you imagine two people trying to carry a really big table, it would be very complicated, but imagine you had ten people trying to carry the table, then it would be much easier because everyone is sharing the weight and it would be easier work and faster, probably.
- Harp: Yes, exactly. **Many hands make light work**.
- Maura: This expression is a little bit different because it's focused on physical work, so we're not talking about brainstorming ideas. It's more about some physical thing you do. For example, maybe you're doing some home renovations and if you're doing it by yourself, it will take you a long time, but if you have a couple friends come over and help you, then your renovations will go faster.
- Harp: Yeah, I remember painting my friend's house. She had asked all her friends to come and there were, I think, 12 or 13 of us and it didn't take us much time to paint at all.
- Maura: Twelve or 13 people painting, yeah, that would go fast for sure.
- Harp: Yeah, exactly. If she was doing it on her own it would have taken her forever.

Maura: Mmhmm.

Harp: OK, so let's do an example with ***many hands make light work***.

Maura: Let's do it.

Harp: Hey, how was the big move this weekend?

Maura: Oh, you know. It went pretty well. I asked around for a bunch of help and luckily a lot of my friends came out, so it went pretty fast and no one hurt themselves.

Harp: Oh, that's great. Well, **you know what they say: many hands make light work**.

Maura: Yeah. In this case it was really true. I can't imagine how long it would have taken if I hadn't had more help.

Harp: For sure. Well, are you all unpacked in the new house?

Maura: We're not all unpacked, but at least it's all in the house.

Harp: That's good.

Maura: In that example, it definitely was physical. Someone was moving into a new home and they had a bunch of friends help them so all of that physical work, the heavy physical work, wasn't quite as heavy. It was light because there were so many people there to help.

Harp: Exactly. You know, this expression is also a proverb?

Maura: Mmhmm.

Harp: And it's actually even older than the last one.

Maura: How old is it?

Harp: It was first used in the early 1300s.

Maura: You know, I believe that it's a very old expression. You wanna know why?

Harp: Why?

Maura: Because of the wording, ***many hands make light work***. It sounds a little bit like old English. More modern English would probably say *many hands make work light*. So, if it sounds a little bit strange to you, that might be why, because it's an older kind of English grammar that is used in this expression.

Harp: OK. Well let's do one more example with this expression.

Maura: Let's do it.

Harp: So I'm entering a competition this weekend.

Maura: Oh yeah? What is it?

Harp: Well, you know how I've always wanted to make a movie?

Maura: Yeah.

Harp: There's this competition for amateurs and I'm entering this weekend.

Maura: Oh, that's great.

Harp: The only problem is, I need a little bit of help.

Maura: Yeah, for sure. When you're making a movie there's so much stuff, right? There's the person who has to be in charge of, like, costume and props and then the person who holds the mic.

Harp: Yeah, exactly. So I sent out some emails and I think that a lot of my friends are gonna come help.

Maura: Good, because **many hands make light work**.

Harp: Definitely. I'm really excited about this competition and I hope everyone can help me.

Maura: Yeah. Good luck!

Harp: Thanks.

Maura: So there's another example where many people are going to help and it's going to make the work easier.

Harp: Yes. It's gonna make making the movie less difficult.

Maura: In this case it's not really about being heavy or light, but it's just about more people being there to physically to help.

Harp: OK, so let's recap all our expressions today. We started with **too many cooks spoil the broth**.

Maura: Right. Which is the expression that says sometimes too many people working together is not good.

- Harp: Which I don't agree with.
- Maura: Me neither.
- Harp: And then we moved on to ***two heads are better than one***.
- Maura: Right. And the last expression was ***many hands make light work***.
- Harp: All right. And remember everyone, check out our website, Culips.com, that's C-U-L-I-P-S.com, because there you'll find lots of cool stuff.
- Maura: You can become a member. You can also click on over to Facebook and introduce yourself there.
- Harp: Yes. We love hearing from you all.
- Maura: So, we'll see you in cyberspace. Bye!
- Harp: Bye everyone!

Detailed Explanation

Teamwork

Teamwork is any work that is done with a group of people working together. **Teamwork** could refer to work being done in a group at work or at school. If four people successfully move a heavy couch, afterwards they could say, "Nice **teamwork!**"

This episode is all about expressions about **teamwork**. Sometimes **teamwork** works really well, so we have expressions for that. Other times working in a group is not so good, and we have expressions for that too.

Too many cooks spoil the broth

In this expression, **too many cooks spoil the broth**, working in a group is not a good thing. This expression means that if there are too many people working on something, with different ideas and styles, it could mean that what they're working on will not turn out well. In an example when you could use this expression, the people involved want to lead and take charge of the situation, and this is exactly why it does not work.

If you imagine more than one cook trying to make soup together, they'll likely have different ideas on how to make it well. With so many different ideas on how to make the soup, it might have too many different flavours and taste strange.

Here's one more example:

Dean: Look at the kids trying to boss each other around. They're trying to build a play fort.
Brian: Ha! It just fell down. **Too many cooks spoil the broth.**

There are some variations of this expression that you might also hear. Instead of *broth*, some might say *sauce*, *soup*, or *meat*.

A wedding shower

A shower is water sprinkling down on you, at home to clean yourself or as rain falls from the sky. *To shower* can also mean to give a person a lot of something at the same time, like gifts or compliments. In the case of **a wedding shower**, this is what it means.

At **a wedding shower**, the bride receives a lot of gifts from friends and family. A woman might also have a baby shower, where guests bring gifts to the pregnant woman. **A shower** is a kind of party, usually given during the day, where people eat finger foods and snacks. Traditionally only women attend, but more modern versions invite males too. **At showers**, there might also be funny games, where the guests can win little prizes. Friends or family plan **the shower** for the woman, as we mention in the example in this episode.

To step back

To step back can literally mean to take one or two steps backwards. When a person does this, they move away from where they were. **To step back** can also mean to move away from something. When a person **steps back** figuratively, they create a distance (not physically) between themselves and something that was previously important.

An example to help remember this is to think of a person making a painting. They are close to the picture during the making of the painting. They need to actually **take a step back** to look at it from a different perspective.

A person might **step back** from a project they were working on. This person **takes a step back** just to take a break from the project and to look at it as if they are not part of it. Someone could also **take a step back** to permanently remove themselves from the situation or position they previously were in.

In the dialogue example where this expression is used, Maura and Harp talk about planning a wedding shower. In this case, they talk about people **stepping back** from the planning. This means that some of the people should remove themselves from trying to plan the wedding shower. These people could still help, but they should no longer be in control.

Here are two more examples::

Chad: Is there anything else we need to do for our class assignment tomorrow?

Devon: Let's **take a step back** and see if we're missing anything.

Quinn: I'm getting so frustrated trying to work with Fred on building a doghouse.

Melissa: Maybe you should just **take a step back**. It's his dog anyway!

The opposite, *to step forward* or *to step up*, can have the opposite meaning of **to step back**. *To step up* is to take on more responsibility for something and become more involved.

To step aside

To step aside has a very similar meaning as *to step back*. **To step aside** literally is to move to the side of where you originally were. But this expression also means to move away from what you were doing and let someone else take your position.

In the example in this episode, Harp says, "I'll ask the accounting team **to step aside** and let us finish." It's the accounting team who will stop doing the work, and Harp and Maura who will complete the work instead.

To come together

When a person is organizing something, there are often many parts to think about, organize, or plan for, and they might have to coordinate and connect all these parts. After all the organizing is finished and the parts work well together, then we can also say that it **came together**.

For example, if you are planning a trip, you need to decide when to go, then buy a ticket, book your accommodations, plan what you will do while on your trip, and make sure you have everything you need to travel. When all of those parts are organized, we can say that the trip has **come together**.

In this episode, **to come together** is used to talk about planning a wedding shower. Harp says she doesn't know if the party will **come together** because of all the problems. She doesn't know if the party will be well organized because too many people are trying to make decisions.

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

Walt: We've been working on this art exhibition for six months! Wow!

Talia: I know. It's nice to see things finally **coming together**.

People can also **come together**, which means that they gather and reunite, or generally are working well together.

To go nowhere fast

Here is an expression that you hope no one ever says about you! **To go nowhere fast** means to not make any progress. Work is being done and decisions are being made, but they do not change anything. Nothing changes when things **go nowhere fast**.

The plans for the wedding shower were not progressing because too many people had different ideas. There were discussions about what to do, but the plans were **going nowhere fast** because the planners couldn't make any real progress in plans for the shower.

Here's an example:

Zack: We're **going nowhere fast** with all this research.

Melanie: You're right. Maybe we need to choose a different topic for our project.

This expression might also be used to talk about a person who is not on a good life path, and they are making bad decisions that will quickly take their life nowhere, or even in a negative direction.

Here's an example with this meaning:

Margaret: How's Chuck doing? I know he's been having trouble in school lately.
Georgia: Yeah. He's **going nowhere fast**. He really has to work harder if he wants to graduate this year.

Two heads are better than one

Now here's a positive expression about teamwork! This expression means that if two or more people are thinking or working on something together, there's a greater chance of having a better result. This makes sense in so many cases. What's better, one or two people working on trying to fix a computer problem? Would you rather have just one doctor's opinion on your health or more than one? In many cases, it is better to have more than one person helping out.

Here's another example with this expression:

Rob: Do you want to study for our science test together? **Two heads are better than one**.
Naomi: Sure! Sounds like fun.

In certain situations, you could also hear variations where the number of heads is more specific. If four people begin to work together, someone might say, "**four heads are better than one**." But when used generally, it should always be *two heads*.

To put your heads together is a variation of the expression **two heads are better than one** and has the same meaning.

The ink ran

To run is a simple verb that most everyone who speaks English knows. But it also has tons of other meanings and uses! In this episode, in the case of saying, "**the ink ran**," **to run** has a different meaning than going for a jog. When a liquid, like ink, **runs**, it means that it flows and moves along.

You can let the water **run** in your house by turning on your tap. Eye makeup can **run** when you cry. Ink can also **run** when it gets wet, just like what happens in this episode.

Here's another example with **to run** used in this way:

Gregoire: Do you have a tissue? My nose is **running**.
Linda: Here you go. Do you have a cold?

In a positive light

This expression is used to describe viewing something more positively. As we explain in this episode, the expression *too many cooks spoil the broth* sees group work in a **negative light**. *Two heads are better than one* sees it in a more **positive light**.

Here are a couple of examples with these expressions:

Pete: Do you think the media portrays teenagers in a **negative light**?

Anthony: Sometimes I think they do, but other times they show them in a **positive light**.

Helen: I just lost my job! I don't know how I'm going to support myself and pay for school.

Marc: Let's look at it in a **positive light**: you'll have more time to work on your schoolwork.

Many hands make light work

Here's one more expression that demonstrates how teamwork can be positive. If one person has to do some work, it could be really tiring or difficult, but if more than one person helps to do the same amount of work, it could go more quickly and easily.

Imagine one person trying to move a large couch and how heavy that would be. Now imagine six people trying to move it and how much less heavy it would be. That is what this expression is trying to express. Remember that this expression is different in that it is focused on physical work.

Here's one more example:

Billy: Do you want me to help wash the dishes? **Many hands make light work**.

Nancy: All right. Thanks!

You know what they say

Here's an expression that is often used before another expression or proverb. People often say **you know what they say** before they repeat some piece of advice about life that is generally known. In this episode, that's exactly what happens: Harp says, "**You know what they say**: many hands make light work."

Here are a couple more expressions being introduced by **you know what they say**:

Janine: I want to eat better, but I don't know how to start.

Michelle: **You know what they say**: an apple a day keeps the doctor away. Why don't you start by adding more fruit to your diet?

Nathan: I'm so depressed about being fired. I don't know what to do.

Sam: **You know what they say**: when life gives you lemons, you gotta make lemonade. It's too bad that you got fired, but now you have a great opportunity to find another job that you'll really love.

Quiz

1. Which of the following is NOT a variation of *too many cooks spoil the broth*?

- a) Too many cooks spoil the breakfast.
- b) Too many cooks spoil the sauce.
- c) Too many cooks spoil the soup.
- d) Too many cooks spoil the meat.

2. Which of the following does NOT traditionally happen at a wedding shower?

- a) giving gifts
- b) playing games
- c) dancing to live music
- d) eating finger foods

3. Which of the following means to take a break and look at something you're working on from a different point of view?

- a) to step back
- b) to step aside
- c) to step up
- d) to step forward

4. Jamie's plans for the summer came together.

What does this mean?

- a) His plans for the summer are not working out well.
- b) He doesn't know what he's doing for the summer.
- c) His plans for the summer are organized and work well together.
- d) Some parts of his summer are planned.

5. Tim: I don't think we're making much progress right now.

Sheila: You're right. This discussion is _____.

Please fill in the blank with the correct expression.

- a) going somewhere fast
- b) going nowhere fast
- c) going fast nowhere
- d) going nowhere rapidly

6. When is it acceptable to say *three heads are better than one*?
- a) never
 - b) when speaking generally about teamwork
 - c) when speaking about a specific group of three people
 - d) always
7. If the water is running in the kitchen, what does that mean?
- a) The kitchen tap is turned off and the water is stopped.
 - b) The kitchen tap is turned on and the water is flowing.
 - c) The water is stopped because the tap is broken.
 - d) The kitchen sink is full of water.
8. What is the expression meaning that more people make hard work easier?
- a) Many hands make light work.
 - b) Look on the bright side.
 - c) There's a light at the end of the tunnel.
 - d) The more the merrier.
9. Which expression is often used to introduce other expressions or proverbs?
- a) You know what he says.
 - b) You know what they say.
 - c) You don't know what they say.
 - d) They say a lot.

Answers:

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