

Catch Word #110 – To go out on a limb

Transcript

Maura: Hello everyone. It's Maura.

Harp: And Harp.

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

Harp: Check out our website, Culips.com, that's C-U-L-I-P-S.com, because there you can become a member, and when you're a member you have access to the Learning Materials. What do the Learning Material include, Maura?

Maura: Well, you have a complete transcript for every episode, more detailed explanations for the expressions we use, and also a quiz.

Harp: Yes. And also check out Facebook 'cause we have quite a lot of fun stuff going on there.

Maura: And it's the best way for you to communicate with us and for us to communicate with you.

Harp: And for you all to communicate with each other.

Maura: Mmhmm. Good one, Harp. So, today's episode is a Catch Word episode and that's where we look at different expressions and idioms and we give you lots of examples of how to use them.

Harp: Exactly.

Maura: Yes. Today's episode is focused on expressions that are about taking a risk.

Harp: Yes. So they're all related to taking a risk.

Maura: Right. Taking a chance, taking a risk, doing something that could be a little bit dangerous or could get you into trouble. Our first expression today is **to go out on a limb**.

Harp: **To go out on a limb.**

Maura: Right. So there's a lot of little words, but when we talk, we say it fast and it sounds like **to go out on a limb**.

Harp: Yup. **To go out on a limb.**

Maura: Now, **to go out on a limb** means to take a risk, to do something that could be dangerous, to do something that's different from most people.

- Harp: Yeah. So when you take a risk or when you do something different, you can say this expression: **to go out on a limb**.
- Maura: So, **to go out on a limb** means to take a risk but it also means to do something different from most people. But if you think about it, they're really related, because when you do something different from other people, you are taking a risk, because maybe those people will judge you or they'll disagree with your idea. So **to go out on a limb** means that you take a risk; you could put yourself in a dangerous situation. And dangerous doesn't have to be, like, a physically dangerous situation, but just some situation where you could have negative consequences.
- Harp: Yeah, that's a good point.
- Maura: Now, this is an interesting expression, **to go out on a limb**, but there is a possible origin or a connection to trees.
- Harp: Yes, because on a tree, a limb is an open, exposed branch, so it's like one of the arms of the tree.
- Maura: Exactly. And if you're an animal who lives in trees and goes out on a limb, I mean actually goes out on a limb, it's a dangerous place to be because you're exposed and maybe a hunter or a predator or someone who wants to get you could get you because they can see you.
- Harp: Yes, definitely. Or the limb could break because it's too weak.
- Maura: Right. So that's another danger when an animal goes out on a limb: the limb could break and the animal could fall to the ground. So going out on a limb actually is dangerous.
- Harp: Yes.
- Maura: So, of course, it's not physical anymore and it's not always about trees but **to go out on a limb** still means to take some kind of risk.
- Harp: Yup, exactly.
- Maura: OK, let's give our first example with this expression.
- Harp: Let's do it.

Maura: So, we're clearly having some problems with the Johnson project. It's not going very well. I need someone here at this meeting to share any idea they have as to why we're having these problems. We really need to get them sorted out. Does anyone here have an idea?

Harp: Well, I'm gonna **go out on a limb**. I'm gonna say it's the design team.

Maura: All right. So you think this problem we're having could be the design team.

Harp: Yeah. I think it's the design team because they're not understanding what we need done for the project and it's not looking good.

Maura: All right. Well, I'll investigate that. I'll **take that into consideration**.

Harp: OK.

Maura: So, there is an example where somebody **went out on a limb**.

Harp: Yup. They said something, and maybe the design team is not gonna be happy and maybe there's gonna be some risk, but they did it.

Maura: Right. Maybe people in the meeting also didn't agree with what that person said, so they risked having a different opinion from everybody else in the room. So, there's one example where somebody **went out on a limb** and they gave their opinion and they risked.

Harp: OK, let's do one more example.

Maura: All right, let's do it.

Harp: Hey Jane. How's your brother?

Maura: Oh, yeah, he's pretty good. Actually, he's making a really big change. He's quitting his job because he doesn't like it anymore and he's really **going out on a limb**. He's starting his own restaurant like he's always wanted to do.

Harp: Wow! That's a bit scary with three kids at home to feed.

Maura: I know. But it's his passion so it's worth the risk.

Harp: OK. I hope it works out for him.

Maura: And there is another example with **to go out on a limb**. In this case, it was the brother who was taking a risk. He was taking a risk because he was starting a new business and he had to invest a lot of money and you're never sure if a new business is going to work out, so it was risky.

Harp: Yeah, there's never a guaranteed paycheck like if you have a job.

Maura: Exactly. So, there are two examples for you with **to go out on a limb**.

Harp: OK. Let's go to our next expression, which is **to stick your neck out**.

Maura: Yes. Another long one: **to stick your neck out**.

Harp: Yes, **to stick your neck out**.

Maura: So, this one is very, very similar to **to go out on a limb**. **To stick your neck out** means, again, to take a risk, put yourself in a situation where people might criticize you because they have different opinions or you could find yourself in trouble or danger.

Harp: And, you know, I really like the possible origin for this one, because there is a possible connection to turtles and I love turtles. Because when turtles stick their neck out, they're in danger; someone could get them, a predator, and they're not safe like they are when they're in their shell.

Maura: Right. It's kind of a cute one when you imagine the little turtle neck coming out of the shell.

Harp: I know. I love turtles. So cute.

Maura: So that's how you can remember this expression, because when a turtle sticks their neck out, they're at risk. Someone could attack them or get them in some way.

Harp: Yes.

Maura: So, let's do some dialogue examples with this expression, **to stick your neck out**.

Harp: Sounds good. Let's do it.

Maura: All right. So, we've discussed all our ideas for the science fair and I think we all decided that we should do the experiment where we test phosphates in laundry detergent. I think that will be a good idea, right?

Harp: Well, that's what we all agreed on, but I'm gonna **stick my neck out** and say that it's not a very exciting project, and I think we should change it.

Maura: OK, let's keep discussing and see if we can find something better.

Harp: Yeah, let's go **back to the drawing board**.

Maura: There's an example where someone **stuck their neck out** because they wanted to give their opinion, which might not be very popular or might be disagreed with.

Harp: Yeah. If you imagine the friends had spent hours deciding on this project and then one person decided to say, "No, it's not a very good idea." You could see the friends getting angry.

Maura: Right. So, you really do take a risk when you **stick your neck out**. All right, let's do one more example with this expression.

Harp: With this example, it's gonna be a little bit different because you can also **stick your neck out for someone**; you can take a risk to help another person.

Maura: Right. So this is just like an extension of the original expression. So you can say **to stick your neck out** but you can also say **to stick your neck out for someone** and that's what we're gonna use in this example.

Harp: Yes, so **listen up**.

Maura: Thanks so much for co-signing on that loan, Jane. I wouldn't have been able to buy my car without you. It really means so much to me.

Harp: Oh, no problem. You're welcome.

Maura: No, you really **stuck your neck out for** me this time and I just can't tell you how much I appreciate it.

Harp: You're welcome. I'm sure there's gonna be no problem.

Maura: I'll get you back one day.

Harp: OK.

Maura: There is an example where one friend **stuck their neck out for** another friend.

Harp: Yeah. They co-signed for a loan so that's a bit of a scary thing and this is a true friendship, I would say.

Maura: Yeah, that's a big risk for a friend to take, a financial risk. Do you wanna look at the last expression now, Harp?

Harp: Ah, no... I'm just joking. Yes! Let's do it.

Maura: OK! So, the third expression in today's episode is **to put yourself in jeopardy**.

Harp: **To put yourself in jeopardy**.

- Maura: Now the first thing I wanna explain with this expression is the word **jeopardy**, because it might be a new word for ya.
- Harp: Yes. So what does **jeopardy** mean, Maura?
- Maura: Well, **jeopardy** means that you expose yourself to risk; that you have a risk. So this word, **jeopardy**, fits in with the other expressions.
- Harp: So to put yourself in danger, **to put yourself in jeopardy**.
- Maura: Exactly. So, really, this expression is **to put yourself in jeopardy** but the most important thing to get out of this expression is this word **jeopardy** and the meaning of the word **jeopardy**, which is risk. Now I have to say the word **jeopardy** automatically makes me think of the game show. Right. There is a game show called *Jeopardy* and it's an American game show and **it's been around forever**.
- Harp: **Forever!** It started in 1964.
- Maura: Which is crazy, to think of a game show going on so long.
- Harp: It's 'cause it's so good.
- Maura: Yeah. This game show is a very intellectual game show and it's all about knowledge; knowledge about all kinds of different things. It could be pop culture, could be history, could be Latin.
- Harp: And it's interesting 'cause in the game show, they give you the answer and you have to come up with the question.
- Maura: Yeah. It is kind of strange, isn't it? So, this game show is called *Jeopardy* because often you have to risk the money that you've won to try to win more money, so there is an element of risk in this show because you have to risk your money.
- Harp: Yeah. You could lose the money if you guess wrong.
- Maura: And there's one more thing that I have to mention, Harp.
- Harp: What?
- Maura: The host of this show, even though it's an American show, is Canadian.
- Harp: Yup. **Good old** Alex Trebek.
- Maura: Alex Trebek. I think everybody knows that guy's name in Canada.
- Harp: Definitely, 100%, because he's been on the show since 1984.

- Maura: Yup, it's pretty crazy.
- Harp: It's almost 30 years. That's crazy.
- Maura: I remember when he shaved off his moustache, because he had a moustache for the longest time and it was, like, a scandal when he shaved his moustache off.
- Harp: I'm sure.
- Maura: OK. So that's *Jeopardy*.
- Harp: Yeah, let's go back to the expression.
- Maura: OK. So, remember **jeopardy** means to risk something, to put yourself in danger. Now, let's give some examples with **to put yourself in jeopardy**.
- Harp: Sounds good. Let's do it.

- Maura: Hey, how was your drive home in that crazy snowstorm yesterday?
- Harp: It was not good.
- Maura: Yeah. Did you make home all right?
- Harp: I **made it** home OK, but, yeah, I really **put myself in jeopardy**. I didn't have my winter tires on yet.
- Maura: Oh, yeah. You gotta be careful because once it snows, then it gets dangerous.
- Harp: Yeah. I'm gonna go change them **asap**.
- Maura: Yeah, that's a good idea.

- Maura: So, there is an example where someone **put themselves in jeopardy**, in physical danger, because they were driving in a snowstorm without their winter tires.
- Harp: And that gives you an idea of how much snow we get in Canada – that we have to change our tires in the winter.
- Maura: It's true. And it's illegal to drive without them in the winter.
- Harp: Yup, in Quebec, it's true. It's illegal to drive without changing your winter tires.
- Maura: OK. So, let's do one more example with **to put yourself in jeopardy**.

Harp: OK.

Harp: **What's wrong?**

Maura: Well, we're supposed to be meeting with the client in, like, 10 minutes and Jane forgot our whole PowerPoint presentation at home.

Harp: Is she gonna have time to go home and get it?

Maura: I don't think so. She's really **put us all in jeopardy** because this was a really important meeting.

Harp: Really important. Maybe let's see if anyone has **a backup**.

Maura: I hope so.

Maura: So, there is an example where, again, **someone was put in jeopardy**. This time, it was the risk of not being able to do a good presentation at work.

Harp: Yeah. It's not physical danger but there's definitely risk.

Maura: Right. And maybe getting in trouble from your boss, too.

Harp: Yup.

Maura: All right. So let's go over the expressions from this episode one more time.

Harp: OK. Well, we started with **to go out on a limb**.

Maura: And the next expression is **to stick your neck out**.

Harp: And then we finished with **to put yourself in jeopardy**.

Maura: Good. So, don't forget to go to our website, Culips.com, that's C-U-L-I-P-S.com. And while you're there, become a member, because then you have access to our transcript, a more detailed explanation, and even a quiz for this episode.

Harp: Yeah. And come say hi to us also on Facebook.

Maura: We'll see you there. Bye.

Harp: Bye everyone.

Detailed Explanation

To go out on a limb

To go out a limb is an expression we use when we are talking about taking a risk. If we **go out on a limb**, we might be risking being different than or disliked by other people, or we might be risking our health or wellbeing.

In this episode, Maura uses an example of someone suggesting that the problem with the Johnson project is the design team. That person is putting themselves at risk of offending other people or being disagreed with. So they are **going out on a limb**.

In the second example in this episode, Jane's brother is **going out on a limb** by opening his own restaurant. This is risky because he is taking a big chance that something could go wrong.

Another way to use the expression **to go out on a limb** is when you are guessing at something that you don't know the answer to. When you make a guess, you risk looking stupid if you don't guess the right answer.

Here's one more example with **to go out on a limb**:

Bob: Do you know what the capital of Quebec is?

Jane: Well, since I don't live in Canada, I'm not sure. But I'll **go out on a limb** and guess that the capital of Quebec is Montreal.

Bob: Nope, it's Quebec City!

To take something into consideration

To take something into consideration means to think about something before you make a decision. This expression is mainly used in business or professional environments, because there are lots of decisions made, and lots of factors that can influence decisions, such as money and time. Those factors are **taken into consideration** when people make decisions.

Here's an example with **to take something into consideration**:

Phil: I've called this meeting to discuss an opportunity that's come up recently. If we acquire this new company, we could increase our sales enormously. Does anyone have any concerns or ideas?

Maggie: Well, we'd have to decide what to do with all the employees working at the other company. We can't afford to pay for all of them.

Phil: Hmm. Good point, Maggie. I'll **take that into consideration**.

To stick your neck out

Sticking your neck out is very similar to *going out on a limb*. When you go out on a limb or **stick your neck out**, you are risking something, either for yourself or for someone else.

For example, if a person believes that they have a really great idea for a new business, they might **stick their neck out** and take out a big loan from the bank to start that business. They're taking a risk, because if the business doesn't work out, they'll owe the bank a lot of money and have no way to pay it back.

And here's an example with **to stick your neck out for someone else**:

Susan: Did you hear about the fight at school?

Joan: Yeah, I heard that Billy broke it up.

Susan: Wow. He wasn't the one fighting?

Joan: No. He was just being a nice guy. He really **stuck his neck out for** that kid. Billy could've gotten hurt by stepping into the middle of it.

Back to the drawing board

Back to the drawing board is an expression used when a plan has failed and a new plan is needed. The phrase comes from the idea of an architect's design failing, so they have **to go back to the drawing board** to draw another blueprint. But the new design or blueprint would have to be different; otherwise the plan would simply fail again. So the expression **to go back to the drawing board** means to make a new and different plan.

A drawing board is a slanted flat surface that designers, architects, and engineers use to draw big plans and designs. So when one of their designs does not work, they have to go back to their drawing board to create another one. Of course, this expression is not only for engineers and architects. You can use this phrase whenever something you've planned or created doesn't work and you have to make a new, different plan.

Here's an example with **back to the drawing board**:

Bobby: Kirk, another one of our science experiments blew up! We need to fix it to win the science fair!

Kirk: Maybe it's time we thought up a new plan. This one is obviously not going to work.

Bobby: All right, well, I guess it's **back to the drawing board**.

We have a whole episode called *Back to the Drawing Board* that's all about this and similar expressions. If you're interested in learning more about this expression, check it out!

Listen up

Listen up is an expression you can use when you want a person or group to pay attention to what you're saying. Basically, it means the same as just *listen*. You could use this phrase when people are being loud and you want them to quiet down, stop talking, and listen. It could also be used when you want people to listen very, very carefully. A presenter may say to a noisy crowd "**Listen up!**" or a football coach may say to his team "OK, we need to be careful about this next half of the game. I have a new plan, so **listen up.**"

When this expression is used to silence a noisy crowd, it can be seen as rude. It is more polite to say "excuse me" or "pardon me" to get people to listen. When you want someone to listen carefully to a plan, you can say **listen up**, but only in casual conversation. Saying **listen up** is not usually acceptable in formal situations.

To put yourself in jeopardy

To put yourself in jeopardy means to risk something of great importance, usually your health or wellbeing. You can **put yourself in jeopardy**, or you can **put another person in jeopardy**. You can also **put something in jeopardy**.

For example, if you speed when you're driving, you are **putting yourself in jeopardy** because you might get into an accident and get hurt. You're also **putting others in jeopardy** because you could get into an accident with another car carrying other people. You're also **putting something in jeopardy**—your car. If you get in an accident, your car could be damaged too. In the American game show *Jeopardy*, the players must put money at risk in order to make more money.

Jeopardy is a noun, and the verb is *to jeopardize*. **To put something in jeopardy** is the same as to **jeopardize** it. Here's an example with both the noun and the verb:

Patty: John, you have to pay more attention in class or you're going to fail. You're **putting your grades in jeopardy**.

John: Don't worry Patty. I would never **jeopardize** my grades. I just didn't get much sleep last night. I'll be more attentive tomorrow.

It's been around forever

It's been around forever is an expression you can use when you want to say that something has been around for a very long time. It's an exaggeration. An exaggeration is when someone represents something as being larger or greater than it actually is. For example, if someone is very old, someone might say that they are a million years old, although they obviously don't mean this literally.

It's been around forever is a casual phrase used to exaggerate how old something is or how long it's existed for.

Here's an example with **to have been around forever**:

John: Patty, have you heard of Bruce Springsteen, the singer?

Patty: Of course! He's **been around forever**! He's made a lot of albums.

Good old

Good old is a casual phrase we insert into the beginning of a description of something to mean that it is reliable or well known. You can use **good old** before a noun to imply that the thing you are talking about is reliable and dependable and has been around for a while.

You can't call a new car "your **good old** car" because even if it is reliable and dependable, it has not been around for very long to prove that it is dependable over time. All you know about the car is that it is dependable now. However, if your great grandmother gave you her old sewing machine and it still works very well, you could call the sewing machine a **good old** sewing machine or a **good ol'** sewing machine. Here's another example:

Kristen: George, can you type up this transcript and email it to me?

George: Sorry, I don't have a computer.

Kristen: What? How have you been typing up the transcripts then?

George: I just use my **good ol'** typewriter. It works fine and it's never let me down.

Often in casual writing, we see this written as **good ol'** or **good ole**. These both mean the same thing as **good old**; they're just more casual ways to write it.

To make it

Usually, to make something means to create something. However, **to make it** can also be used when we are talking about surviving or overcoming obstacles or difficulties. In this episode, when speaking about the word *jeopardy*, Maura and Harp use the example of Harp driving home in bad weather, and say that it put Harp's safety in jeopardy. Maura asks Harp, "Did you **make it** home okay?" Maura is asking Harp if she overcame an obstacle or got through a difficult situation, in this case the difficulty was the snowstorm.

To make it means to endure or survive something that is dangerous or challenging and to get through it OK. It can be used for small victories or big victories, but these victories have to be somehow difficult or risky in order to say you **make it**. For example, we can **make it** home through a big snowstorm, or we can also **make it** through a difficult exam. But we wouldn't say we **make it** through painting our nails, because we didn't risk anything to paint our nails and it didn't have the potential to hurt our wellbeing.

Make it can also be used as a replacement for *succeed* if the success was very difficult to achieve. For example, if your friend wins the basketball championships and goes on to the finals, you can say he **made it** to the finals. Or if you cross the finish line in a marathon, you can say you **made it**.

Here's another example with this expression:

Billy: That driver's test was brutal. It was so stressful, and I almost went through a red light!

Harriet: Well, did you **make it**?

Billy: Yep, I **made it**. I now have my license. Hey, let's go for a drive!

Harriet: All right, but drive slowly. I want to **make it** home in one piece.

Asap

Asap is actually an acronym, where each letter stands for an entire word. **ASAP** stands for **as soon as possible**. It means that the matter is urgent and important and the action needs to be done immediately. You may often see this written in emails or text messages.

It's sort of funny that it means that something needs to be done quickly, because **ASAP** is somewhat quicker to say than the entire phrase. Sometimes, instead of people saying **A-S-A-P**, you will hear them say the acronym as a word, **asap**. This is funny too, because **asap** is even quicker to say than **A-S-A-P**! It's as though something needs to be done so quickly that there isn't even enough time to say the whole phrase, so you use the shortest possible way to convey that it needs to be done immediately.

Here's one more example with **asap**:

Tina: Have you finished with my textbook? I really need it for tomorrow's test.

Jane: I'll be done in about an hour. I'll get it back to you **asap**. I'm reading as fast as I can.

What's wrong?

What's wrong? is a common question used when someone looks sad, unhappy, or troubled by something. It's easy to remember if you think of someone's regular, happy face as their *right* or *correct* face. When that *right* face frowns or looks troubled or angry, then it's like it is the *wrong* face for that person.

In a dialogue example in this episode, Harp asks Maura **what's wrong**. This means that Harp thinks that Maura is upset or bothered. Asking someone **what's wrong** is like asking "What is bothering you?" or "Are you OK?" Maura answers by explaining that Jane forgot an important PowerPoint presentation for a meeting that is scheduled to happen soon.

Here's another example with **What's wrong?**:

Katie: Hi Sally!

Sally: Oh, hello Katie.

Katie: You look angry! **What's wrong?**

Sally: I just do not like my tutor. I don't understand him at all. It really frustrates me.

A backup

A backup is another plan or idea that you can use if the one you are using fails. If you are creating something that may fail or may not work, **a backup** plan would be a safe substitute plan. **A backup** plan must be one that has already been made or thought up and can replace the original plan right away.

Earlier, we learned about the phrase *back to the drawing board*. That usually means that there was no **backup** plan ready, so they have to go back to the original and redo it. If they had had an alternative plan, they wouldn't have had to go back to the drawing board; they could just have used their **backup** plan, because it would have been already planned and ready.

You can also call a computer file **a backup**. Computers are not always reliable and sometimes we can lose important files. If a person makes an extra copy of a file, this can be called **a backup**. In case the original file does not work, you can use **the backup**.

Here's an example with **a backup**:

Bobby: Kirk, another one of our science experiments blew up! We need to fix it to win the science fair!

Kirk: Maybe it's time we thought up a new plan. This one is obviously not going to work.

Bobby: All right, well, I guess it's back to the drawing board.

Kirk: Not necessary! I made **a backup** plan in case the first experiment didn't work. I have another experiment ready!

Quiz

1. Which of the following is NOT a common English expression that means to take a risk?
 - a) to go out on a limb
 - b) to walk on the wrong side of the street
 - c) to stick your neck out
 - d) to put yourself in jeopardy

2. What is a person doing if they are taking something into consideration?
 - a) thinking it over
 - b) denying its existence
 - c) punishing it
 - d) avoiding it

3. Johnny had to go back to the drawing board for his assignment. What did Johnny do?
 - a) He gave up on his entire assignment.
 - b) He asked an engineer what to do about his assignment.
 - c) He decided to quit his course and become an architect.
 - d) He started over with a new plan.

4. Marsha called her hairdresser her good ol' stylist. What does she mean?
 - a) that her hairdresser is a senior citizen
 - b) that her hairdresser is not very good and Marsha should find another one
 - c) that her hairdresser has been her stylist for a long time and is very reliable
 - d) that her hairdresser does not know Marsha's name

5. In question 3, Johnny had to go back to the drawing board for his assignment. What if Johnny didn't have to start over because he already had another idea waiting in case the first idea didn't work? What would we call this second idea?
 - a) a differently life
 - b) a backup plan
 - c) a reliable imagination
 - d) an idea-on-waiting

6. What is a quick way of saying *immediately* or *right away*?
- a) ASAP
 - b) QRTS
 - c) STDY
 - d) NOWG
7. What does the expression *to make it* mean?
- a) to survive or succeed in a difficult situation
 - b) to bake treats like cakes and pies
 - c) to run instead of walk
 - d) to listen carefully instead of talking
8. When you ask someone what's wrong, what are you asking them?
- a) Where are you going?
 - b) How did your test go?
 - c) Do you have plans for the evening?
 - d) Why are you upset?
9. When you ask a crowd to listen up, what are you asking them to do?
- a) read something
 - b) listen carefully
 - c) listen to music
 - d) look up in the sky

Answers:

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