

Catch Word #113 –To toot your own horn

Transcript

Maura: Hello everyone out there, it's Maura.

Harp: And Harp.

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

Harp: Yes. Check out our website, Culips.com, that's C-U-L-I-P-S.com, because there you can become a member. When you're a member, you have access to the Learning Materials. In the Learning Materials, each episode, there's a complete transcript, a detailed explanation, and even a quiz.

Maura: That's right. So check it out and don't forget to go to Facebook too, because we like to communicate with our listeners there.

Harp: Yeah there's so much activity going on on Facebook right now.

Maura: So, let's get to it. Today we're doing a Catch Word episode and that's where we look at different expressions or slang and we give you lots of examples and related expressions.

Harp: Today our expressions are used to talk about your own successes and to congratulate yourself on something well done.

Maura: Right. Sometimes it's important to remind people of some great work that you've done and other times people might think that you're being conceited or that it's not a very positive thing to talk about yourself.

Harp: Yeah. So we give expressions where you talk about yourself, and they can be seen as either negative or positive.

Maura: Right. So let's get to our first expression.

Harp: Our first expression is **to toot your own horn**.

Maura: Right. **To toot your own horn**. But of course we don't say it like that, we say it fast. We say **to toot your own horn**.

Harp: Yeah. **To toot your own horn**.

Maura: So, **to toot your own horn** means that you are talking about your own successes or accomplishments, so you're talking about great things that you've done yourself.

- Harp: Exactly. So if you've done something really well, maybe you did a fantastic project at work, or you aced a test, you can **toot your own horn**.
- Maura: Right, and that means that you talk about that experience. So if you did really well on a project at work, you **toot your own horn** when you tell other people about what a great job you did. Or if you did really well on a test, you **toot your own horn** when you tell other people about how well you did.
- Harp: Exactly. And if we think about this, **to toot your own horn**, if someone blows a horn, it's a celebration. It makes a noise and it gets people's attention. If you talk about your own accomplishments, you're celebrating your own success.
- Maura: Right. You're **drawing attention** to yourself. And if you toot a horn, you definitely **draw attention** to yourself.
- Harp: Definitely.
- Maura: Now, one possible origin for this expression is a connection to royalty. Now when royalty, like a king or a queen, arrives somewhere, traditionally a horn is blown. So that, again, **draws attention** to the royalty that's arriving and it announces their arrival. So when you **toot your own horn**, you **draw attention** to yourself and it's kind of like saying you're so important, almost as important as royalty.
- Harp: I think I am as important as royalty... Just joking.
- Maura: The origin is pretty extreme. Most of the time when people **toot their own horns**, they're just mentioning something they're proud of. They probably don't think they deserve to be king.
- Harp: Exactly.
- Maura: OK, now let's give an example with **to toot your own horn**.
- Harp: Sounds good.

- Maura: So, how's **the job hunt** going?
- Harp: It's going really well.
- Maura: Wow, that's awesome.
- Harp: Yeah, I have five job offers right now.
- Maura: Wow, good for you.
- Harp: Yeah. I don't mean **to toot my own horn**, but I'm really excited and I'm

trying to choose which one to take.

Maura: Yeah, that's great. Well, good luck. **Lemme** know which one you decide to go with.

Harp: I will, for sure.

Maura: So there's an example with the expression **to toot your own horn**. And in this case, someone had gotten a lot of job offers, which is a really great thing and shows that obviously they're very talented or good at making resumes.

Harp: Yeah, exactly. And if you notice the way that we use this expression, **to toot your own horn**, in this example, I said, "I don't mean **to toot my own horn**," which means I'm trying to say it in a nicer way. I'm not trying to be conceited or I'm not trying to brag about it. I'm just saying something.

Maura: Exactly. So this expression, **to toot your own horn**, is often used in that way. People might say something like "I don't mean **to toot my own horn**," or "I don't want **to toot my own horn**, but..." And then they get to say the good thing that they've done anyway.

Harp: Yeah. It makes someone sound less conceited if they say it this way.

Maura: Exactly. So let's give one more example with **to toot your own horn**.

Harp: Let's do it.

Maura: Did you see your **report card** yet?

Harp: Yeah. I got it yesterday. It's pretty good.

Maura: That's good. I'm pretty happy with how I did, but did you hear how Amanda did?

Harp: **Who didn't?** She can't stop **tooting her own horn**.

Maura: I know. She got **straight A's** again.

Harp: Big surprise.

Maura: She just doesn't stop talking about it.

Harp: Mmhmm.

Maura: Oh well. Maybe I'll get **straight A's** next term.

- Maura: In that example, we talked about someone who likes **to toot their own horn**.
- Harp: Yeah. So Amanda, in the example, bragged a lot. She talked about how good she was in school and how she got **straight A's**, so she definitely **tooted her own horn**.
- Maura: Right. And in this way, it was negative. People didn't like to hear someone say how great and smart they were all the time.
- Harp: Yeah. Especially when they're **rubbing it in someone's face** who didn't do as well as they did.
- Maura: That's true. But in the first example, especially when someone says I didn't mean to or I don't want to, it makes saying something good about yourself not so annoying.
- Harp: Yeah, definitely.
- Maura: OK. Let's look at the next expression.
- Harp: OK. The next expression is **to pat yourself on the back**.
- Maura: Right. **To pat yourself on the back**.
- Harp: So this expression means the same thing. When you do something good, or when you have some success, if you talk about it, you're **patting yourself on the back**.
- Maura: Sometimes, when one person wants to congratulate another person on a job well done, they actually, physically, **pat that person on the back** and that means that you've done a good job. So if you're **patting yourself on the back**, it's like you're congratulating yourself. And in the same way, you're talking about it and you're **drawing attention** to yourself.
- Harp: Yes, definitely. This expression is used, **to pat yourself on the back**; it means that you're congratulating yourself on a job well done, that you've done something successfully.
- Maura: Right. If you're **patting yourself on the back**, you think that you've done something really well, so you're proud of yourself. So, let's look at an example with **to pat yourself on the back**.
- Harp: Let's do it.

Harp: How's your car? Did you get your brakes changed?

Maura: Actually, you know, I know a little bit about cars. I learned growing up, so I thought maybe I could just change my brake pads myself and this weekend that's what I did.

Harp: Wow, that's fantastic! You changed your brake pads **on your own**?

Maura: Yeah. I'm pretty happy. I think it's working well.

Harp: You should **pat yourself on the back** for that.

Maura: Yeah. Well, I'll let you know if my brakes work.

Harp: I hope so.

Maura: So there's an example, again, where someone's done something that they should be proud of and in this case, their friend tells them that they should **pat themselves on the back**.

Harp: Yes. If you could actually do this Maura, I would be very, very proud of you.

Maura: If I could actually do it, I would be very proud of myself. OK. So let's look at one more example with **to pat yourself on the back**.

Harp: OK.

Maura: How did your driving test go?

Harp: It went really well.

Maura: Oh, you got your license then?

Harp: I did.

Maura: Congratulations.

Harp: Thanks! Yeah, I was nervous. I was scared about **parallel parking**. But you know, I studied really hard and I practiced really hard. I'm gonna **pat myself on the back**. It was a job well done.

Maura: Yeah, for sure. You gotta study if you want to pass.

Harp: Definitely. And now I can drive around town.

- Maura: So, there is another example using **to pat yourself on the back**. And in this case, again, the person used it in a positive way to talk about something that they were proud of.
- Harp: Yep. Let's go on to our next expression, which is *to sing your own praises*.
- Maura: *To sing your own praises*. So, this expression means the same as the first two, but it's less common, at least in Canada, where Harp and I live.
- Harp: Exactly. So *to sing your own praises*.
- Maura: And this really is just like the other two expressions. To praise something is to give a compliment to or to say how great something is. And you usually praise others, but if you sing your own praises, you're complimenting yourself, talking about what a great job you did. And if you notice, all these expressions focus on *you*, right? In the first expression it was **to toot your own horn**, and in the second expression it was **to pat yourself on the back**, and now in this expression it is, again, *to sing your own praises*. So it really emphasizes that people are talking about themselves.
- Harp: Yes. Let's give some examples with *to sing your own praises*.
- Maura: OK. Let's do the first one.

- Maura: Did you talk to the boss about that first big report you completed and what he thought about it?
- Harp: Yeah, I did.
- Maura: OK. So what did he say?
- Harp: He said it's pretty good.
- Maura: Really? He liked it, yeah?
- Harp: Yeah, he liked it.
- Maura: That's good. Did he like it a lot?
- Harp: I think so.
- Maura: Hey, it's important to sing your own praises sometimes. If the boss liked it, that's awesome.
- Harp: Yeah, I know, I just... I feel nervous about bragging about how much he liked it.
- Maura: Well, that's great.

Maura: So, there's an example, again, using this expression, *to sing your own praises*, and there it's important to notice that some people don't feel comfortable talking about themselves in a positive way. And as we said, some people could be annoyed to listen to other people talk about themselves in a positive way. So it's a good idea to, you know, be careful how positive you are about the work that you've done and your accomplishments.

Harp: Yeah. It's important to be humble, but to also celebrate your success.

Maura: That's true. Like this person said, it is important to sing your own praises sometimes.

Harp: Yes. Just not all the time.

Maura: OK. Let's do one more example with *to sing your own praises*.

Harp: OK.

Harp: I hear your students did really well at the provincial **spelling bee**.

Maura: They did amazing. But I have to say, we spent a lot of time in class on it, and I really, really helped them study and prepare.

Harp: Well, I know they practised a lot **on their own**, so before you sing your praises you should give credit to the students. They worked really hard to prepare for this **spelling bee**.

Maura: Yeah. You're right. They did a good job.

Maura: So, there is an example where the teacher was taking all the credit for how well her students did at the **spelling bee**.

Harp: Yeah, exactly. Well in this case, the students deserved a lot of praise as well.

Maura: That is true. But you know, some people are very humble and modest, and other people really do like to talk about themselves and brag about themselves, and then it's not such a positive thing.

Harp: Definitely.

Maura: OK. Let's repeat our expressions today one more time.

Harp: All right. Well, we started with ***to toot your own horn***.

Maura: And the next expression was ***to pat yourself on the back***.

Harp: And we finished with *to sing your own praises*.

- Maura: And, of course, if you listen to our podcasts often, you know what I'm going to say. Don't forget to check out our website, Culips.com, that's C-U-L-I-P-S.com, and see what we have to offer there.
- Harp: Exactly. And I don't mean **to toot my own horn**, but people seem to like us on Facebook, so you should check us out there.
- Maura: Nice one, Harp. So maybe we'll see you on Facebook then. Bye for now.
- Harp: Bye everyone.

Detailed Explanation

To toot your own horn

To toot your own horn means to speak positively about yourself. A person who is **tooting their own horn** could be sharing something positive about the way they look or something they have done.

Remember that **tooting your own horn** can be seen as annoying by other people. A conceited person is someone who thinks too well of themselves and might also talk about it, and being conceited is generally an unattractive quality.

In our examples, and in everyday conversation, people often use phrases before this expression like, "I don't mean to..." or "I don't want to..." They do this because they understand that to be conceited is not an attractive quality and using these phrases makes what they are about to say more socially acceptable.

Here's one more example with **to toot your own horn**:

Matt: Did you see that amazing artwork at the front of the school? Wow.

Carl: I don't mean **to toot my own horn**, but I painted that last year.

To draw attention

When **attention is drawn** to a person or thing, it means that something has made people notice this person or thing. It could be something that was said, but it could also be something like bright colours or loud noises. This could be done on purpose or accidentally. After their **attention has been drawn** to a person or thing, people are looking at or thinking about it. If a person toots their own horn, they are **drawing attention** to themselves by speaking about themselves positively.

Here are a couple more examples with **to draw attention**:

Boss: I'd like **to draw your attention** to the poster at the front of the room. What do you think of this new design?

Shayne: I think it looks great.

Brian: Look at Carmen over there. What's he doing now? Dancing?

Justina: He's always **drawing attention** to himself, isn't he?

The job hunt

Sooner or later, most people have to look for a job. Some people even spend months sending out resumes and contacting possible employers. This is **the job hunt**. The verb *to hunt* means to search and look for a certain person or thing, and in this case it's a job! A hunt is the search itself. The noun **the job hunt** can also be used as a verb: **to job hunt**.

Here's an example with both the noun and the verb:

Dave: How's **the job hunt** going?

Kayla: It's going all right. I feel like I've been **job hunting** forever though!

Lemme

Here's another example of when what you hear people say sounds very different from how it is spelled, and should be pronounced properly. **Lemme** is a slang way to pronounce and spell *let me*. When native English speakers say *let me*, it often sounds like **lemme**. It is said in two syllables, just like *let me*. The only difference in pronunciation is the removal of the *t* sound. This can be heard anywhere, but should only be written in very casual situations.

In the dialogue example about the job hunt, Maura says, "**Lemme** know which one you decide to go with." Instead of *let me*, she says **lemme**. Any time a person says *let me*, it can be replaced with **lemme**.

Here's one more example:

Greg: Can you please **lemme** know when you hear back about our shipment?

Nick: Of course. I'll let you know right away.

A report card

In English, there are all different kinds of reports, but there is only one meaning for **report card**. **Report cards** contain the summary of marks for each student in each subject they are studying. The term **report card** is generally used for students in elementary, middle, and high school. Schools send **report cards** home to parents a few times every year, depending on the school.

Some universities and colleges might also use the term **report cards**, but it is more common to talk more generally about *marks* or *grades* at this time.

Who didn't?

In this episode, when **who didn't** is used, it is not a true question. **Who didn't** is used in response to the question, "Did you hear how Amanda did?" Saying **who didn't** in this case means that everyone heard how Amanda did.

Here's another example: If Jim asks Sarah whether she's going to the party on Friday night and she responds by saying **who isn't**. This means that everyone is going, including her.

This kind of response can be used with most verb tenses. Here are a couple more examples:

Victoria: Do you think Peter's going to be in class next week for the review?

Lucy: **Who isn't going to be?** We all need help for the test!

Nathan: Have you ever been to the farmer's market downtown?

Grace: **Who hasn't?** The food there is delicious!

Straight A's

All across Canada and countries all over the world, there are different ways to evaluate student learning. Traditionally in Canada and the US, and other countries, the grading system was letters, *A* being the highest and *F* being the lowest, usually meaning that a student did not pass the course. The letters also correspond to percentages.

A: 80%–100%

B: 70%–79%

C: 60%–69%

D: 50%–59%

F: less than 50%

For some reason, there is no *E* grade. Maybe because the *F* stands for *fail*.

When a person has **straight A's**, it means that the person has an A mark in every subject they are taking, which means that the person is doing very well.

To rub it in someone's face

To rub something in someone's face is never a nice thing to do. When a person **rubs something in another person's face**, it means they remind or talk about something that will upset or bother that person. If you imagine someone actually rubbing something in somebody else's face, it would obviously be an unpleasant experience, as it may be difficult to breathe or messy.

In this episode, this expression is used in the example when talking about a person named Amanda who did very well on her report card. We could say that she **rubbed it in other people's faces**, as they didn't do as well as she had and maybe they felt bad about that.

Here are a couple more examples with ***to rub it in someone's face***:

Simon: I can't believe Terry was **rubbing it in my face** like that. I'm so disappointed that I didn't get the job and he did.

Jenn: He probably didn't realize what he was doing. He's just so happy to be working again after being unemployed for so long.

Helen: Jack is always talking about his vacation plans and he knows that I can't go this year.

Jack: He shouldn't **rub it in your face** like that.

To pat yourself on the back

This is another expression that means to speak well about yourself. **To pat someone on the back** is a way to congratulate that person, so using this expression is like congratulating yourself on a job well done.

Here's one more example with ***to pat yourself on the back***:

Shannon: You should **pat yourself on the back** for all the work you did. The project looks great.

Julian: I am proud of myself. It was a lot of work.

A pat on the back

Just like the expression above, *to pat yourself on the back*, one person can also **pat another person on the back** to congratulate them on something they have done well. We can also use this as an expression. This is usually used in a phrase like, "You deserve **a pat on the back**" or "Someone should **pat him on the back**."

Here are a couple of examples with ***a pat on the back***:

Ryan: Paul really deserves **a pat on the back** for all this hard work this term.

Leo: I know. He worked hard to improve his marks and he did it!

Hannah: It's always a good idea to give your employees **a pat on the back** when they have done outstanding work.

Becky: Definitely. That's good managerial advice.

On your own

To do something **on your own** is to do it without anyone else. There are a few ways that you can describe this. You could also say you did something by yourself, or that you did it alone.

In the dialogue example, Maura says that she changed the break pads on her car. She says that she did it **on her own** to emphasize that she did it without any help from others.

Here are a couple of examples with **on your own**:

Melanie: My daughters just did the dishes **on their own**!

Chris: That's great! It's good to have kids who can help out around the house a little.

Ben: Have you ever gone on a bike trip **on your own**?

Georgia: Yeah. Once I went on a weekend trip by myself.

Parallel parking

This is a special way to park your car that often causes stress to people who are going to take a driver's test, as in the example in this episode. It is required on most driving tests.

Parallel parking is when a car is parked parallel to the side of the road. This kind of parking is also usually done in between other cars that are already parked on the side of the road, which makes this type of parking more complicated. The driver must reverse into the parking space. This type of parking is most common in larger cities.

A spelling bee

A spelling bee is a competition for children where they are required to spell words. If a student spells a word incorrectly then they are out of the competition. The winner at the end is the person who did not misspell a word. In some parts of the world, **spelling bees** are very big events. They may even be broadcast on television. In 2002, there was a documentary made about **spelling bees** in the United States called *Spellbound*.

Quiz

1. Marc: _____ to toot my own horn, but I think I deserve to win first prize because I worked so hard on my design.

Please fill in the blank with the phrase that is often used before the expression *to toot my own horn*.

- a) I don't
 - b) I will never
 - c) I don't want
 - d) I cannot
2. *Lemme* is a slang way to say which words?
- a) lost me
 - b) let me
 - c) let my
 - d) lot me
3. What are report cards?
- a) reports employees receive at work
 - b) summaries of students' evaluations
 - c) cards that you send with a report
 - d) cards that reports are printed on
4. Pamela: Have you seen the movie *Dirty Dancing*?
Fiona: _____?
- Please fill in the blank with the expression that means everyone has seen it.
- a) A lot of people have.
 - b) Who hasn't?
 - c) Who isn't?
 - d) I haven't.
5. If someone has straights A's, how are they doing in school?
- a) failing every subject
 - b) barely passing every subject
 - c) getting very high grades in every subject
 - d) This person isn't in school.

6. Sarah continues to remind Jason that he didn't get a promotion at work, and Jason feels bad about this.

Which of the following is true?

- a) Jason is rubbing Sarah's face in it.
 - b) Sarah is rubbing Jason's face in it.
 - c) They are both rubbing their faces in it.
 - d) None of the above.
7. What can a pat on the back be?
- a) a way to scold someone for not doing a good job
 - b) a way to congratulate someone for doing a good job
 - c) a way to tell someone they are being conceited
 - d) a way to tell someone that they have to do something on their own
8. What do many people stress about on their driving test?
- a) parallel parking
 - b) doing up their seatbelts
 - c) driving the speed limit
 - d) driving on their own

Answers:

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