

Catch Word #115 –Yes and no sounds**Transcript**

Maura: Hello everyone. This is Maura.

Harp: And Harp.

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

Harp: Make sure you check out our website, Culips.com, that's C-U-L-I-P-S.com, because there you can become a member and then you have access to our Learning Materials, which include a complete transcript, detailed explanations, and even a quiz.

Maura: **Mmhmm.** Now, today we're going to do a Catch Word episode, and that's where we look at different slang or expressions and we give you lots of examples and explanations and tell you how you can use them.

Harp: And today we're doing something a little bit different.

Maura: **Mmhmm.**

Harp: We're gonna look at some different noises that we make.

Maura: Right. Now, not noises like animals make, but little sounds that we use when we're talking. And these little sounds mean some very simple things.

Harp: Yup. Should we get started, Maura?

Maura: Sure. The first word we're gonna look at is yes. So we're going to give you two sounds that we make that mean yes. Harp, give us an example of the first one.

Harp: **Mmhmm.**

Maura: Right. So the sound that means yes is **mmhmm.**

Harp: **Mmhmm.**

Maura: And there're all kinds of tones that you can use for this little sound. As you can hear, maybe it sounds a little bit different when I make the sound and when Harp does. That's because we're using different tones, but there are all kinds of tones you can use for this little sound.

Harp: **Mmhmm.**

Maura: **Mmhmm.** Now, there's actually another sound that we can use in English to

mean yes. There are two sounds that we can use for yes. The first one is ***mmhmm*** and the second one is ***uh-huh***.

Harp: **Uh-huh.**

Maura: **Uh-huh.**

Harp: **Uh-huh.**

Maura: **Uh-huh. We could go on.**

Harp: For hours. But we won't.

Maura: So there is another sound that also means yes. So there are two: ***mmhmm*** and ***uh-huh***.

Harp: **Mmhmm. Uh-huh.**

Maura: So, these can be used just like the word yes. They can be used to answer someone, so when you use these sounds in response to a question, it's like you're saying yes.

Harp: Or these sounds can be used to agree with someone; to show that you agree with what they've said.

Maura: Right. Just like yes. Now, here's where it's a little bit different. You can also use these sounds to show someone that you're listening to what they're saying. So, in English, when you're listening to someone talk and maybe they're talking for 30 seconds or they're telling a bit of a longer story or something with more detail, the listener has to show that they're listening.

Harp: Yes. And if you're in person you can just nod, but oftentimes you add a little bit of noise.

Maura: Right. So saying ***mmhmm*** or ***uh-huh*** when you're listening to someone is a good way to show them that you're paying attention, which is important because when you're talking, you always want someone to listen.

Harp: Yes, definitely.

Maura: And it's true that if you're talking and you don't hear any of these kinds of words that show that someone is listening to you, it might feel like they're not listening.

Harp: Yeah. It seemed to me like I was talking and someone was not listening if I didn't hear this.

Maura: Yeah. It would be a bit strange. So, let's go over that one more time. You can

use these sounds—**mmhmm** and **uh-huh**—to say yes, to agree with someone...

Harp: Or to show someone that you're listening to what they're saying.

Maura: OK. So, let's give a first example.

Harp: Yup. Maura's gonna tell us a story, so you can have a listen to how someone listening using these two word sounds.

Maura: **Guess what** I did this weekend?

Harp: **What'd you do?**

Maura: I went fishing, for the first time.

Harp: Oh yeah?

Maura: Yeah. It was really kind of funny because I was excited. I had never done it before.

Harp: **Mmhmm.**

Maura: And we got everything ready. We got all the **fishing rods**, and we got in the boat. It was my friend's boat.

Harp: **Uh-huh.**

Maura: And it took us about an hour to get to this perfect spot that my friend knew.

Harp: **Mmhmm.**

Maura: And then when we got there, he realized that he had forgotten the **bait**.

Harp: Ha ha. That's so funny.

Maura: Yeah. So we didn't **end up** going fishing because when we got back, it started to rain. So we just **called it a day**.

Harp: **Mmhmm.**

Maura: So, in that example, I had a story, a little story about fishing and Harp was listening. And even though she wasn't talking because I was telling the story, Harp still gave me some cues that she was listening by **doing** these little sounds. Right?

Harp: Yeah. Maura could tell that I was listening because I was making the yes noise.

Maura: Exactly. So that's one important way that you can use these sounds, because, like we said, if you don't show any feedback, then the person who's talking might think you don't care or you're not listening.

Harp: So, another way that we use these sounds is when you're asking a question.

Maura: Right. So, to respond to that question, you can say yes or you can make these little sounds. So we're gonna give you an example where someone is asking a question and we respond by using these sounds.

Harp: Hey, we have a small problem.

Maura: Oh, what's that?

Harp: We're out of computer paper.

Maura: That sounds like a big problem.

Harp: Yeah. I need to print that report this afternoon.

Maura: OK.

Harp: Can you go and pick up some computer paper?

Maura: **Mmhhh**. No problem. I can do it.

Harp: OK, thanks.

Maura: So there is a very simple example where a person was asked a question, "Can you go get more computer paper?" And someone responded with the sound **mmhhh** instead of yes.

Harp: Exactly. That's how we use it.

Maura: Right. And instead of **mmhhh**, the person could have said "**Uh-huh**. I'll go get some." And there's really no difference.

Harp: Yeah. You don't always have to say yes. You can make these sounds.

Maura: Now we're going to give you one more example, because, as we said at the beginning, sometimes the meaning might change a little bit when we use these sounds, because maybe we're being happy or angry or we're being sarcastic, so we're going to give you an example where the tone changes.

Harp: Let's do it, Maura.

Maura: So Sue, are you coming out tonight?

Harp:	Mmhhh. I'll be there.
Maura:	Really? You almost never come out or you cancel at the last minute.
Harp:	No, no. I'm coming tonight. I promise.
Maura:	Uh-huh.
Harp:	I'll definitely be there. I promise.
Maura:	We'll see.

Maura: In that example, we heard both. We heard **mmhhh** and we heard **uh-huh**. Now the first **mmhhh** was straightforward. The person was just responding yes that they're going to come out tonight, but the second one, when we heard **uh-huh**, the person was saying yes but there was something special in the tone that they used.

Harp: Yeah. It was a bit sarcastic, like they didn't believe their friend.

Maura: Right. And we know from the conversation that this person usually cancels, so **uh-huh** was used like *yeah, sure you're coming out. I don't really believe you're going to come out because you always cancel.*

Harp: Exactly.

Maura: So, even though these words are very simple and they replace a very simple word like yes, the tone can become really important.

Harp: Yes, definitely.

Maura: All right. Let's move on to *no*.

Harp: No.

Maura: First we talked about sounds that we can use to mean yes and now we're gonna talk about a sound that means *no*.

Harp: Uh-uh.

Maura: Right. Uh-uh.

Harp: Uh-uh.

Maura: So this little sound means *no*.

Harp: Yeah. So this sound can be used just like *no*, to answer someone or to disagree.

Maura: Right. One thing that's important to note about this sound is that it can be rude sometimes.

Harp: Yeah. It's best to use this with close friends or family.

Maura: Right. I guess because saying *no* very directly can be rude, using this casual way to say *no* also can be rude.

Harp: Yes. This one's pretty simple. Let's go straight into an example.

Maura: Let's do it.

Harp: Hey, do you want to hang out tonight?

Maura: Yeah, sure.

Harp: Do you want to go see a movie?

Maura: Uh-uh.

Harp: Do you want go for dinner?

Maura: Uh-uh. **I'd rather** do something at home.

Harp: Do you want to play **board games**?

Maura: All right, we'll play **board games**.

Harp: OK, sounds like fun.

Maura: So there's an example between friends where one person was saying *no*, that they didn't want to do these things that were offered, but they responded by saying *uh-uh*.

Harp: Exactly. And it means the exact same thing as *no*, but it's just a sound that we make: *uh-uh*.

Maura: You know, when I was doing that example with you, Harp, I really felt a little bit like a child, because it's really children that often use this. When you say "OK, do you wanna go for a walk now?" And a little kid will say "Uh-uh!"

Harp: Yeah, I agree. I use the *yes* sounds much more than the *no* sound.

Maura: Yeah. Because, I think, like we said, the *no* sound, *uh-uh*, can be a little bit rude. So it's nice to stay from it.

Harp: Yes.

Maura: OK. Now, let's give you an example.

Harp: Let's do it.

Maura: You know, I think that soon enough people are going to stop buying TVs, because so many people watch TV shows online or they play movies on their computer. You really don't even need a TV anymore.

Harp: Uh-uh. I love channel surfing on my big-screen TV. On a computer screen they're so small. You can't even see anything.

Maura: Well, not all computer screens. I don't mind **anyways**. I like the convenience of my computer.

Harp: Uh-uh. I love my big-screen TV.

Maura: Well, I guess we'll agree to disagree.

Harp: OK.

Maura: So there's an example where *uh-uh* was used to disagree. And this is where you might use this if you're having a discussion and you use this sound just to show that you don't agree with what someone has just said.

Harp: Yeah. And it's friends talking, so it's a casual conversation. You can definitely use this.

Maura: Exactly.

Harp: OK. So today we looked at sounds that we use when we're saying yes.

Maura: Right. And those two sounds were **mmhmm** and **uh-huh**.

Harp: And then we looked at a sound that we use to say *no*.

Maura: And that was *uh-uh*.

Harp: And remember that *uh-uh* can be rude and so use it with your friends or family. That's kind of the best advice.

Maura: Right. So, it's important to know that these sounds are for speaking. They're never written, except maybe in a casual text message between friends.

Harp: Yeah. But even in a text message, I would write *yes* or *no*, because it's more clear.

Maura: You know what I find, is that a lot of people don't even know how to spell these little sounds **anyways**.

- Harp: Exactly why I wouldn't spell them.
- Maura: Yeah. It is kind of hard. If you think about trying to spell **uh-huh**. It's difficult.
- Harp: Exactly. So use them in conversation only.
- Maura: Right. And you know, when I was creating this episode, I was thinking about when I was first in Japan. And these little sounds that we use to communicate with each other are different in different languages. And I remember these different sounds when I was in Japan because they sounded so strange because, of course, I'm used to the English ones.
- Harp: Yeah, it's interesting. Even when my parents are speaking Punjabi, I notice that it's a different sound that they use to say *yes* or *no*.
- Maura: Oh really? Wow that's so interesting. These little sounds that we have in almost every language.
- Harp: Yes.
- Maura: Now, don't forget to visit our website, Culips.com, that's C-U-L-I-P-S.com. And if you're not a member already, what are you waiting for?
- Harp: Yes. Become a member and also join us on Facebook.
- Maura: Right. We will see you there. Bye everyone.
- Harp: Bye everyone.

Detailed Explanation

Mmhmm

This is a simple little sound that can mean a lot! **Mmhmm** is used just like yes. It can mean that you are responding yes to someone's question, that you agree with someone, or that you are simply listening to someone else's story.

Mmhmm is a little word that you may see written in stories or other creative writing, but it is rarely used in regular writing, like email or traditional mail. It is a casual way to say yes, but it is acceptable in most professional environments as well. Native speakers use **mmhmm** very naturally.

We could go on

This expression can be used when someone could continue talking about the subject, but is going to stop. This person is likely stopping because they have already spoken about the topic enough. This expression can be used with any pronoun. Most often, people use it to talk about themselves with *we* or *I*.

In this episode, Harp and Maura say *uh-huh* a bunch of times in a row. Then Maura says, "**We could go on**" as a little joke. Of course they could continue to say *uh-huh*, but they have said it enough times already!

Here are a couple of examples with **we could go on**:

Sarah: I love cupcakes so much. I just tried two new flavours this past weekend and they were so good. They're becoming more and more popular. I see more cupcake shops every month around the city. People really do love them. **I could go on.**

Frank: Now I want to try some cupcakes!

Peter: My cell phone company overcharged me again. I can't wait until my contract is up so that I can cancel it. **I could go on.**

Hannah: Yeah. I hate how cell phone companies can take advantage of people.

Uh-huh

Here's the second little sound that can also be used to mean yes. It's used exactly like **mmhmm**. As we mention in this episode, a lot of people have no idea how to spell this word, because it's generally only spoken and not written.

A fishing rod and bait

Do you like fishing? Just because we gave you a little fishing example, we thought we would also give you a quick definition of what some of the items used for fishing are called.

A fishing rod is what a person uses to catch a fish. It's a long pole, or rod, that a person

holds onto. Attached to **the fishing rod**, there's a special thin string, called fishing line, that has a hook on the end of it, which is placed in the water. **A fishing rod** can also be called a **fishing pole**.

Bait is put on the end of the hook to attract fish. Bait can be something alive, like a worm or a small fish, or it can be human made, like a small fish made of plastic. **Bait** is not just for fishing, either. It can be used in all sorts of situations to attract an animal, or even a person. For example, when police are trying to catch a car thief, sometimes they will put out a special car as **bait**, called a **bait car**. When the thief breaks into the car, the police officers come out and arrest him.

Guess what

Here's a classic way for someone to introduce some exciting news to another person. Maura uses it in the first dialogue example when she says "**Guess what** I did this weekend?" An appropriate response is to show interest by saying *what?* Or in this specific case, *what did you do this weekend?* In some cases, the person using this expression may not even wait for a response and just tell you the news right away.

Here are a couple of examples with **guess what**:

Georgina: **Guess what** I heard?

Dan: What did you hear?

Georgina: I heard that Ricky is interested in you.

Michelle: **Guess what?**

Paul: What? Did you get your driver's licence?

Michelle: Yep! I got it.

Tom: **Guess what?** I got an A on my test!

Linda: That's great! Congratulations.

Remember also that some people might actually try to get you to guess. This is usually very difficult, unless you already have some idea of what exciting news they may have.

What'd you do?

Here's another case where natural, everyday spoken English is used. In the first dialogue example, Harp asks, "**What'd you do?**" This is short for *what did you do*. The word *did* can often become 'd when it is used as an auxiliary verb in a question.

Here are a couple more examples:

Fiona: **Why'd** Jim quit his job?

Ben: He really didn't get along with his colleagues.

Luke: Guess what? I ran into Lindsay downtown.

Jacob: Really? **When'd** that happen?

To end up

To end up means to eventually happen. For example, you could say that although you had planned to go outside, it started to rain, so you **ended up** staying inside instead.

Similarly, we can use the negative form of this expression to say that even though something was planned or supposed to happen, it does not actually happen as planned. In this episode, Maura says in the first dialogue example that they didn't **end up** going fishing. They had planned to go fishing, but that is not actually what happened because they forgot the fishing rods and bait.

Here are a couple more examples with **to end up**:

Shayne: What did you do this weekend?

Jasmine: There were so many different things we wanted to do, but we **ended up** going to the beach because the weather was so beautiful.

Dina: We didn't **end up** going to the party on Saturday night.

Justin: Oh, why not? Were you sick?

Dina: Yeah. So John and I **ended up** just watching a movie at home instead.

Chris: How was your weekend?

Kyle: Well, I didn't **end up** going to the beach with all the rain we had. I just relaxed at home.

A related expression is **in the end**, which can be used in almost the same way. It can also be used in a negative or positive sense, which is indicated by the verb. For example: "**In the end** we went to dinner." Or "**In the end** we didn't go to dinner."

To call it a day

We have a whole episode on the expression **to call it a day** and some other related expressions. Check it out if you want to know more.

To call it a day means to decide that something is finished and stop, most often some kind of work. Imagine people working hard all day. At the end of all this work, someone can say, "Let's **call it a day**." This means that the day of work is done and everyone can leave.

Maura uses this expression in the first dialogue example. She says it after she and her friend forgot the equipment for fishing. This means that they did not continue trying to fish after all the effort they put in. They went home and did something else instead.

Here's another example with this expression:

Shelly: That's enough studying for me! I think I'm going **to call it a day**.

Yvonne: You're right. Let's go home.

To make a sound/noise

Sometimes people learning English have a hard time telling whether they should use "do" or "make" in expressions like this. For example, we say **to make a sound** and **to make a noise**, not *to do a sound or noise*.

But sometimes native English speakers make mistakes too!

In this episode, Harp and Maura talk a lot about **making noises** or **sounds** that mean *yes* or *no*. Even though we should use the verb **to make** with *noise* and *sound*, Maura makes a mistake once in this episode by using *to do*. Can you hear it?

At the last minute

When something happens **at the last minute**, it means that it happens at the last chance. For example, if someone arrives **at the last minute** for an appointment at 7 o'clock, this means the person arrives right before 7 o'clock. If someone buys tickets for a concert **at the last minute**, this means that they buy the tickets just before the show starts.

In this episode, **at the last minute** is used in the dialogue about the friend who always cancels plans. This friend is known to cancel plans **at the last minute**, which means she cancels right before the plans are about to start.

Here's another example with **at the last minute**:

Nora: Did John study for his test last night?

Andrew: He's studying now, **at the last minute**, as always.

Uh-uh

This is the sound that means no. Uh-uh is a way of responding to a question with no or to disagree with someone. Remember it can be rude because it is very direct and short, so use this with friends.

Would rather

This is just a little reminder of how to use *rather* when you are stating your preference for something. You can say **would rather** or **'d rather**, but you can't use *rather* all by itself. When **'d rather** is used, the *'d* is so short and quick, and almost silent, that some might think it's not even there.

In the last dialogue example, Maura says that she **would rather** stay in and play board

games. Can you hear the almost-silent 'd there?

A board game

A board game is a type of game you can play, most often at home with family or friends. These games are almost always bought at a store and contain a board where the game is played, game pieces, and often dice.

If you're interested in learning more about **board games**, stay tuned for our upcoming episode all about **board games**. We talk about what's popular in Canada and share some **board game** memories.

Anyway and anyways

In English, we have **anyway** and we have **anyways**. Only one is technically correct, but English speakers tend to say and write them both. **Anyway** is the correct form, often used to continue a part of a conversation that was stopped. **Anyways** is not correct, but it's often used just like **anyway**.

Quiz

1. Janet: My new boyfriend is so sweet. He always buys me things. I've never been so happy. I could go on.

What does Janet mean?

- a) She wants to continue talking about something else.
- b) It is possible for her to continue talking about her boyfriend.
- c) She wants to continue to date him.
- d) She could break up with him.

2. What does Un-huh mean?

- a) yes
- b) no
- c) maybe
- d) I'm not sure

3. What is a common response to the expression *guess what*?

- a) I think I know.
- b) What?
- c) You guess.
- d) I'm going to guess.

4. Austin: I think we should call it a day. It's 7 o'clock and we've been working hard all day.

What does Austin mean?

- a) He thinks they deserve to go get some dinner.
- b) He thinks everyone should stop working and go home.
- c) He thinks they should meet tomorrow and continue working.
- d) He thinks that they have finished their work.

**5. Nina was supposed to come over last night, but that _____
_____ happening.**

Please fill in the blank.

- a) didn't end up
- b) ended up
- c) ended in

d) didn't end

6. Which of the following is NOT correct?

- a) To make noise
- b) To hear noise
- c) To do noise
- d) To listen to noise

7. Sarah finished her assignment _____, just before it was due.

Please fill in the blank.

- a) in the last minute
- b) at the last minute
- c) in the final hour
- d) on the last seconds

8. When speaking about preference which word often comes before *rather*?

- a) had
- b) would
- c) should
- d) could

9. Which of the following is technically NOT correct, although many native English speakers use it?

- a) any way
- b) anyway
- c) anyways

Answers:

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