

Catch Word #124 – What a klutz!

Transcript

Maura: Hello everyone. It's Maura.

Harp: And Harp.

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

Harp: Remember to go to the 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 get access to the Learning Materials and in the Learning Materials, for each episode, you get a complete transcript, detailed explanations, and even a quiz.

Maura: And when you become a member, you also support us at Culips, which enables us to keep making great episodes for you.

Harp: Exactly. So today we're doing a Catch Word podcast, and that's where we look at some expressions, we explain them to you, we give you examples. We have some fun with them.

Maura: That's right. Now today, we're going to look at expressions that have to do with people who are **clumsy**. And a person who is **clumsy** might knock things over and break things or they might fall and trip often. They're just not very physically coordinated. Physically, they're awkward.

Harp: Exactly. So you know that **clumsy** person who's dropping things all the time, or maybe they're always hitting the door when they're leaving a room? That kind of a person is a **clumsy** person.

Maura: So the first expression we're gonna look at is **a klutz**. So the person can be called **a klutz**.

Harp: **A klutz.**

Maura: Right. Now, a person who is **a klutz** is a **clumsy** person, is the kind of person that we just described, who might often break things or walks into things or falls down.

Harp: Exactly. When someone does something like this, you can call them **a klutz**, or when someone's doing it all the time, they're **a klutz**.

Maura: Right. So you might be starting to think of someone that you know who is **a klutz**, because we all know people who are really **clumsy**.

- Harp: Yup. I'm thinking about someone at my work. He is always running into things and dropping things. I would never give them a nice glass. I'm sure he would break it. He's such **a klutz**.
- Maura: Yeah. Sometimes there are just people who often have accidents and break things. Sometimes it's funny, but sometimes if they break something or hurt themselves, it's not so funny.
- Harp: Definitely.
- Maura: **On the other hand**, we all have days where we might feel like **a klutz**.
- Harp: Yeah, definitely. Those days when you have poor coordination and you just seem to be dropping everything that day.
- Maura: Right. It might be because you're tired or some other reason that on a specific day you're **a klutz**. So we could use this expression to talk about someone who is **clumsy** all the time or just in specific moments when someone is **clumsy**.
- Harp: Yeah. Sometimes I'm **clumsy** if I'm really nervous. Then I become a complete **klutz**.
- Maura: That's true. That's another time when someone could become **a klutz**, but normally isn't.
- Harp: Yes. Let's give an example with this expression.
- Maura: All right. Let's do it.

- Harp: Thank you so much for inviting me for dinner.
- Maura: Yeah, no problem.
- Harp: It was really wonderful. Here, let me help you with the dishes.
- Maura: All right, sure. Let's do them together. You know, it's always a bit more fun to do dishes when someone's visiting you, you know? It's not quite such **a pain in the butt**.
- Harp: I know, I know. I agree. It's much easier when there are two people doing it.
- Maura: Oh no.
- Harp: I'm really sorry. I can't believe I just broke **the teacup**.
- Maura: That's OK. It's not really a big deal.

Harp: I'm such **a klutz**. I'm sorry.

Maura: Really, don't worry about it. It wasn't even a really nice looking **mug** anyway.

Maura: So in that example, we had two friends who were doing the dishes together and one friend was **a klutz** because she broke a dish.

Harp: Exactly. And we don't know if she's always **a klutz**, but at that moment, she was **a klutz**.

Maura: You know what, Harp? I actually broke a dish while washing the dishes just a couple of days ago.

Harp: Oh, really?

Maura: Yeah. It was a wine glass, so it was much more fragile, but I think it was also because I was tired. Like you said, when people are tired, they can become **a klutz**.

Harp: I blame the wine glass. I'm always breaking wine glasses. That's why I don't buy expensive ones.

Maura: That's true. That's good advice. OK, let's give an example of somebody who is **a klutz** all the time.

Harp: Let's do it.

Maura: Oh my gosh. Can I tell you a funny story?

Harp: Yeah. What happened?

Maura: Well, Peter was coming in to talk to me this morning about... I think it was something serious, but on his way in, he tripped over his own feet and fell to the ground.

Harp: Oh no. No!

Maura: I know. I felt so bad, but it was so funny I had to try so hard not to laugh.

Harp: Poor guy, he's such **a klutz**. He's always falling and dropping things.

Maura: I know. That's what made it even funnier, because it was so typical.

- Maura: In that example, we were talking about someone who was **a klutz**, named Peter, all the time. So as we said, you could use **klutz** to talk about someone who's **clumsy** at a specific moment, but you can also use it to talk about someone who is **clumsy** all the time. And in this case, this guy who tripped is known to be a **clumsy** person.
- Harp: Yup. That person, Peter, he's **a klutz**.
- Maura: What **a klutz**!
- Harp: All right. Let's move on to our next expression.
- Maura: The next expression is **to be all thumbs**.
- Harp: **To be all thumbs**.
- Maura: I'll say that one more time: **to be all thumbs**. So can you imagine having no fingers on your hand but only thumbs?
- Harp: That would be really awkward, and it would be very difficult to do anything.
- Maura: It would be very difficult to hold things in your hand or write or do anything with your hands.
- Harp: Yeah. If you were literally all thumbs, and you had no fingers, it would very difficult to do anything.
- Maura: That's right. So this expression, **to be all thumbs**, is describing a person who is **clumsy**, specifically with their hands.
- Harp: Yes. So when someone is not good with their hands, they're not good at building things, they're not good at doing the small things that you need your hands to do, then you can say they're **all thumbs**.
- Maura: Right. So if you know someone who often drops things or holds something that's delicate and accidentally breaks it, that is someone who is **all thumbs**. They're not good at what we call **fine motor skills**, so doing very small, detailed work with your hands.
- Harp: Yeah, exactly. So when someone's not good with their hands, you say **they're all thumbs**.
- Maura: When I think of this expression, I think about men, just because they often have big hands, and when they try to handle something that's very, very small, sometimes it can be difficult for them.
- Harp: Yes, definitely.

- Maura: That's not to say that this expression can't be used for woman. This expression can be used for women as well, but it just made me think about someone who had trouble holding on to small objects.
- Harp: Yeah, but my mom used to use this expression with me when I was young, because when she was teaching me how to sew, she kept saying, "You're **all thumbs**," because it was so difficult for me.
- Maura: That's true. And it is difficult to put a thin piece of thread through the needle. It's not easy.
- Harp: No, exactly.
- Maura: All right, so let's give you a couple of examples with **to be all thumbs**.

- Harp: Hey, Jen. How are you liking your guitar lessons?
- Maura: Well, I'm having fun, but I'm **all thumbs** and so I'm not very good.
- Harp: Well, **you know what they say**: practice makes perfect, so keep on trying.
- Maura: Yeah. I hope I **get the hang of it** soon.
- Harp: Me too.

- Maura: In that example, we heard about Jen and her guitar lessons. Because, she said, that she's **all thumbs**, she found learning how to play the guitar difficult.
- Harp: Exactly. She wasn't very coordinated. She found it difficult to learn.
- Maura: That's right.
- Harp: Let's do one more example.
- Maura: All right.

- Harp: Oh, those are beautiful flowers.
- Maura: Thanks. I'm actually just gonna put them in **a vase**. Do you mind passing me that one over there?
- Harp: No problem, just give me a second. Oh. I'm so sorry, I'm **all thumbs**.
- Maura: Yeah, well, maybe we'll be able to glue it back together.
- Harp: I'll try, but I don't think so. It broke into a lot of pieces.

Maura: Well, what can you do? What's done is done.

Harp: I'm sorry.

Maura: That's OK. I'll just put my flowers in something else.

Maura: So in that example, one person was just simply passing one **vase** to another person and it happened to fall from their hands.

Harp: Yup. So this person was **clumsy** and **the vase** fell, so they were **all thumbs**.

Maura: Right. So, **to be all thumbs** is like someone who's **a klutz**, but specifically with their hands.

Harp: Yup, exactly.

Maura: Now, we have one more expression for you today and that is **to have two left feet**.

Harp: **To have two left feet.**

Maura: Mmhmm. Just like the expression **to be all thumbs**, you can imagine that it wouldn't be easy, but we know it's impossible. **To have two left feet** is really the same thing. It's not really possible to have two left feet, but you can imagine if you did, it would be difficult to stand and to walk.

Harp: Yeah. It would be very difficult to get around if you had two left feet.

Maura: Right. So this expression, **to have two left feet**, means that a person is awkward, especially with their feet and moving around.

Harp: Yeah. This expression, **to have two left feet**, is often used with dancing.

Maura: Right. That's how I hear it most often. If someone is described as having **two left feet**, it means that they're not a very good dancer and they're not physically coordinated, so they look very awkward and they can't learn the steps to a certain kind of dance.

Harp: Why are you looking at me like that? Are you trying to say I **have two left feet**, Maura? I think I'm a good dancer.

Maura: I didn't say anything, Harp. But it's true that some people have a bit more rhythm than others. Isn't it?

Harp: You're being mean to me right now. I'm just joking.

Maura: OK, so let's give you an example with **to have two left feet**.

Harp: Let's do it.

Maura: Guess who's taking dance lessons?

Harp: Who?

Maura: Me.

Harp: Oh really? That's fun.

Maura: Yeah. I'm pretty excited. Well, to be honest, I'm doing it because I have to get ready for my wedding. I'm not a very good dancer.

Harp: Yeah. It's a bit scary when everyone's watching you dance. It's a good idea to take some dance lessons.

Maura: Yeah. I've **got two left feet**, so I need a lot of practice.

Harp: Well, best of luck with that.

Maura: Thanks.

Maura: There is an example where the expression **to have two left feet** is used to describe someone who is **clumsy** on their feet and not a good dancer.

Harp: Yeah. I'm sure you're thinking of someone in your head right now, who you've seen at a party, who just can't dance. They don't have good rhythm. They're just kind of flailing around. They **have two left feet**.

Maura: Right. So, there are all kinds of ways to be **clumsy**. You can be **a klutz** and be generally someone who knocks things over, breaks things, or walks into walls.

Harp: Or you can be **all thumbs**, which means you're just **clumsy** with your hands, and you're always dropping things, or you're not good at doing **fine motor** things.

Maura: Or maybe you're a **clumsy** dancer and awkward on your feet. Or maybe you're none of them and you're very lucky.

Harp: Maybe you're that lucky person.

Maura: So, don't forget to visit our website, Culips.com, that's C-U-L-I-P-S.com, and become a member and help support us.

Harp: And help improve your English.

Maura: Also, if you're on Facebook, come on over and say hi because Harp and I

are often online and we like to post interesting things that we hope you'll also find interesting.

Harp: Yup. And if you have an English question, Jessie is always willing to help you answer your questions.

Maura: That's right. So, we hope you enjoyed this episode. Harp, did you just break that?

Harp: No, it was your cat.

Maura: What **a klutz**.

Harp: Bye everyone!

Maura: Bye!

Detailed Explanation

Clumsy

A **clumsy** person is awkward physically, which means they might fall over, walk into things, or break things. You can use this word to describe a person or you can use it to describe certain actions. For example, if Jim accidentally drops his phone, we can say that Jim is **clumsy** or that dropping the phone was **clumsy**.

Here are two more examples with **clumsy**, one describing an action and one describing a person:

Josh: Ouch! I just walked into the corner of the wall over there. What a **clumsy** thing to do.

Kevin: Ha! Yeah, you've got a bump on your forehead now.

Justine: I'm so **clumsy**. Man, it hurts when I stub my toe.

Addison: Yeah, I hate when I do that.

A klutz

A **klutz** is a person who is clumsy. A person can be called a **klutz** because of something specific that happens or because they are often clumsy. **Klutz** also has an adjective: **klutzy**. This can be used just like *clumsy*.

Here are a couple more examples with **klutz** and **klutzy**:

Ted: I feel like a **klutz** today. I knocked over my coffee this morning and now I just slammed my elbow into the wall.

James: We all have days when we do **klutzy** things.

Saul: Pamela is such a **klutzy** person. She hurts herself by accident at least once a week.

Emily: At least she just laughs it off.

On the other hand

On the other hand is used to talk about a different point on a topic that is already being discussed. For example, in this episode, Maura says that some people are klutzes because they are often physically awkward. She then mentions another point that is different, when she says, "**On the other hand**, we all have days when we might feel like a klutz."

Another example could be when a person says that plans must be cancelled because they do not have a car to get there. Another person could then say, "**On the other hand**, we could just take the bus."

Here are a couple more examples:

Mona: I don't think the current government is very popular with the people.

Stan: **On the other hand**, they have done a lot to build up the economy.

Erica: I think John Smith is responsible for the crime. **On the other hand**, there's no evidence to convict him.

Common words and expressions with the same meaning and use include *but*, *however*, *then again*, and *although*.

A pain in the butt

A person or thing can be **a pain in the butt**. The term **a pain in the butt** is generally negative, just as *pain* is always negative. It is used to describe a person or thing that is very annoying or bothers you.

In this episode, Maura uses this expression to talk about doing the dishes. Most people don't like doing the dishes, so we can say that doing the dishes is **a pain in the butt**. Maura says that when you do dishes with others visiting, it's not such **a pain in the butt**. This means that it is less annoying to do the dishes when you have visitors who help you.

Here's another example with the expression **a pain in the butt**.

Anne: I have to work with Steve on this next project. He always wants to organize everything and doesn't listen to what other people say.

Mandy: I know. He's **a pain in the butt**, isn't he?

There are a couple of variations of this expression with the same meaning: *a pain in the neck* and *a pain in the ass*. (This last one might sometime be considered a little rude.)

A teacup/mug

In one of the dialogue examples given in this episode, a cup gets broken. Harp calls it a **teacup** and Maura calls it **a mug**. These words are often used interchangeably, but there is a difference. You can drink whatever you want out of either one.

A **teacup** is smaller and thinner than **a mug**, and it has a thin handle to hold while you drink. **Teacups** usually have some flowers or other feminine design on them and they have a small base, which rests on a saucer, a little plate made especially for the cup. **Teacups** are traditionally used for drinking tea.

A mug is round and thicker than a **teacup**. **Mugs** are bigger and usually have more room for liquid inside of them than **teacups** do. **Mugs** are made for coffee or hot chocolate. Nowadays, people often drink coffee or tea from **mugs**.

To be all thumbs

If someone is said **to be all thumbs**, this means that the person is awkward or clumsy with their hands. A person who's **all thumbs** probably knocks things over or drops things, and sometimes ends up breaking things, too. A person can be called **all thumbs** because they are clumsy with their hands in general, or just in a certain moment.

As we say in this episode, if you imagine having no fingers and all thumbs, you could understand how difficult it would be to hold onto things.

Here's another example with the expression **to be all thumbs**:

Jacek: I'm **all thumbs** today. I just knocked my pencils all over the floor.

Olivia: At least you didn't knock over anything breakable!

Fine motor skills

Fine motor skills are used when a person is doing something with their hands that requires small and precise muscle movements. Some people have very good **fine motor skills** and others don't. A person who doesn't have very good **fine motor skills** can be said to be all thumbs.

There are also gross motor skills, which refer to the large movements that people do. These skills are usually acquired as a child, when learning to walk and move around.

You know what they say

This is an expression that's used to introduce something that's generally known, like a proverb. But who are the *they* in **you know what they say**? *They* just means people in general, or most people. It's not referring to anyone specific.

In this episode, Maura says, "**You know what they say**: practice makes perfect." *Practice makes perfect* is something that most people have heard before and it is also a proverb.

Here are a couple more examples with the expression **you know what they say**:

Irene: So I was at a dinner on my trip and when the dessert was served, everyone started eating the cake with their hands! So I did too.

Paula: **You know what they say**: when in Rome.

Brian: I don't know how to dive. I've tried, but I just can't get it.

Kyle: It's hard at the beginning. But **you know what they say**: you've just gotta keep trying.

To get the hang of something

To get the hang of something means to practice something enough times that you begin to feel comfortable doing it, like you have learned a new skill.

In this episode, in a dialogue example about learning to play the guitar, Maura says that she hopes her friend will **get the hang of it** soon. This means that she hopes her friend will learn to feel comfortable on the guitar soon.

Here are a couple more examples with the expression **to get the hang of something**:

Ted: I think I'm finally starting **to get the hang of** staying at home with the kids full time. I'm still busy, but I get to make my own schedule.

Jamie: Yep. It's still busy with so many household chores to take care of.

Manuel: How's Josh doing with quadratic equations?

Lucy: He seems to be **getting the hang of it**, after quite a few tutoring sessions.

The two pronunciations of vase

A vase is a kind of container that's usually tall and deep. **Vases** are used for flowers or other types of decorations. **Vases** are traditionally made from glass or porcelain, or other kinds of fine material, but now they can be found made of just about anything.

The word **vase** has two different pronunciations. It can be pronounced as *vayze*, with a long *a* sound, rhyming with the words *maze* and *days*. And this is how it is pronounced in this episode.

But the word **vase** can also be pronounced as *vause*, rhyming with the words *pause* and *gauze*.

Both of these pronunciations are perfectly fine and correct. Depending on where you are in the world, one pronunciation might be more common than the other, but both should be understood.

Here's a short list of some other words with two pronunciations:

- mature
- harassment
- schedule
- vitamin

To have two left feet

When we say that a person **has two left feet**, it means that they are clumsy with their feet. If you imagine actually having two left feet, you can understand why it might be difficult to even walk! As we say in this episode, this expression is most often used to talk about someone who is not good at dancing.

Here are two examples with the expression ***to have two left feet***.

Brad: Man, I just tripped on nothing walking over to your office. Sometimes I think I've **got two left feet!**

Sharon: Ha! I think everybody feels that way sometimes.

Simon: Ryan really looks funny over there on the dance floor.

Fiona: Yeah, the poor guy's **got two left feet**.

Quiz

1. Which of the following is NOT a word used to describe someone who is physically awkward?
 - a) clumsy
 - b) a clumse
 - c) a klutz
 - d) klutzy

2. Greg: I think Canada is a great country, _____ we've got our problems, too.

Fill in the blank.
 - a) in the other hand
 - b) on hand
 - c) handy
 - d) on the other hand

3. Which of the following terms is NOT used to describe a person who is annoying?
 - a) a pain in the butt
 - b) a pain in the ass
 - c) a pain in the neck
 - d) a pain in the back

4. If someone is described as being all thumbs, what does this mean?
 - a) The person has good fine motor skills.
 - b) The person is clumsy with their feet.
 - c) The person is clumsy with their hands.
 - d) The person is not clumsy.

5. Which of the following does NOT require good fine motor skills?
 - a) threading a needle
 - b) origami
 - c) walking
 - d) holding a pencil

6. What is the expression *you know what they say* often used to introduce?

- a) a person
- b) a song
- c) a proverb
- d) a presentation

7. Sam is starting to get the hang of using a computer.

What does the above sentence mean?

- a) Sam still doesn't know how to use a computer.
- b) Sam is beginning to get comfortable using a computer.
- c) Sam is an expert at using a computer.
- d) none of the above

8. Which of the following words does NOT have two pronunciations?

- a) vase
- b) mature
- c) schedule
- d) medicine

9. Which of the following expressions is often used to talk about dancing?

- a) to have two left feet
- b) to be all thumbs
- c) to have good fine motor skills
- d) to be a pain in the butt

Answers:

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