

Catch Word #127 – You'll never guess what I got wind of!**Transcript**

Maura: Hello everyone. This is Maura.

Harp: And Harp.

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

Harp: Make sure you go to our website, that's Culips.com, C-U-L-I-P-S.com, because there you can sign up to become a member. And when you're a member, you have access to the Learning Materials. For each episode, there's a complete transcript, a detailed explanation, and even a quiz.

Maura: That's right. And if you're on Facebook or Twitter, you can **come on over** and say hi to us there. Today's episode is a Catch Word episode. That is where we look at different expressions that are related to each other, we explain them, and give you examples of how to naturally use them.

Harp: Yes. So let's get started. Today we're looking at expressions...

Maura: Expressions that have to do with hearing some new information. So the first expression today is **to get wind of something**.

Harp: Yeah. **To get wind of something**.

Maura: Right. So **to get wind of something** means that you learned something new or heard something new and this new thing that you learned is often supposed to be a secret.

Harp: Yes. And often, the person or the source of the information is unknown or kept a secret as well.

Maura: Right. Instead of saying who you heard this information from, you just say that you **got wind of it**. So you don't actually have to say where you heard this new, possibly secret, information.

Harp: Yeah. It's like the wind told you this secret.

Maura: Right. It's like you were just **minding your own business** and the wind passed by you and you just happened to hear some new information.

Harp: Yup. Exactly like that.

- Maura: So people might even use this expression to mean that they didn't intentionally learn this new information or they didn't even maybe want to hear about this secret, but it just happened naturally.
- Harp: Yeah.
- Maura: It was the wind.
- Harp: Yeah.
- Maura: People like to be innocent when it comes to rumours and gossip. They never think that they're the person that's helping to spread it around.
- Harp: Yeah.
- Maura: So, that's a good image to remember to help you remember this expression, ***to get wind of something***.
- Harp: Should we start with some examples now?
- Maura: Yeah. Let's do one.

- Maura: **Have I got some news for you!**
- Harp: What? I'm intrigued.
- Maura: **I got wind of something** that you'll find very interesting.
- Harp: Oh, tell me.
- Maura: Well, you know John, right?
- Harp: Mhmm. I do.
- Maura: He got a promotion.
- Harp: No way!
- Maura: Yup. I know it's surprising. It doesn't really seem like he works very hard. But I just heard that he got a promotion this morning.
- Harp: Wow. That's interesting.

Maura: So, in that example, a person said that they **got wind of some news** and in this case, the news was that a work colleague got a promotion.

Harp: Yup. And the source of information, or where this information came from, is not clear. We don't know who told her this but she found out.

Maura: Right. So this expression can be used when you want to keep the source a secret and the information could also be a secret. In this case, someone getting a promotion might have been a secret, but soon it's not gonna be a secret because of course everyone's going to know when John starts working a new job.

Harp: Yeah, exactly. Let's give one more example.

Maura: So I ran into your neighbour Jane the other day.

Harp: Oh yeah?

Maura: Yeah. I said hi, but she seemed really unfriendly or sad. I don't know.

Harp: Yeah. She's been quite grumpy lately but I **got wind of why**.

Maura: Oh, really? What's going on?

Harp: She's getting a divorce.

Maura: Oh. Well that's understandable then.

Harp: Yeah. I think she's really upset.

Maura: Well, hopefully she works through it and is able to move on, because I know that's tough.

Maura: In that example, one person **got wind of the reason** why another person was not feeling very good, and that was a divorce.

Harp: Yeah, exactly. So they heard some news that their neighbour was going through a divorce.

Maura: Right. So in this case, again, the source is unknown. You might also use this expression when you don't remember who told you. Maybe a lot of people have been talking about it and you can't even name the source because you don't remember.

Harp: Yeah, exactly. The source is not important. The news is more important.

Maura: Exactly. This expression puts the emphasis on the news, not who said it.

- Harp: Yup. Should we move on to our next expression?
- Maura: Yes. Let's do it. The next one is actually a very well-known expression. I think that if you've taken a class in English as a second language, you've probably heard this expression.
- Harp: Yes. It's a fun expression: ***to hear something through the grapevine***.
- Maura: Right. ***To hear something through the grapevine***. And this means that you have heard news from someone who probably heard it from someone else, who heard it from someone else, and on and on and on.
- Harp: Exactly. And again, the source is not important or the source might be a secret, but it's a way of sharing news.
- Maura: Right. And this expression really does imply that it's a rumour or a story that you might not even know is true.
- Harp: Yeah, exactly. You don't know for sure if this story or this information is true.
- Maura: Now this expression does have an origin and it's connected to the telegraph. And the telegraph was an invention from a long time ago that was used to share information between people. This was so long ago it was before radio and television, when people were first learning how to communicate with a lot of people. So after the telegraph was invented, the term *grapevine telegraph* was used. And this was first in the dictionary way back in the 1850s, so this expression, ***to hear something through the grapevine***, is quite old.
- Harp: Yeah. And we'll give some more information about this origin in the Learning Materials.
- Maura: Now, when I think of this expression, I think of all of the little grapes on the vine and I imagine that each grape is a person that's passing the information on to the next person. And the vine is kind of like the information or story that connects all of these people.
- Harp: Yeah. And again, if we know about gossip, we know that it's not always true and the story can get mixed up by being told by one person to another person to another person. So it's not always true information.
- Maura: Yeah. It's not always trustworthy. So, let's give a couple of examples now with ***to hear something through the grapevine***.
- Harp: OK.

Maura: Guess what?

Harp: What?

Maura: I heard that Jennifer is pregnant.

Harp: How did you hear that?

Maura: I **heard it through the grapevine** at work.

Harp: Wow. It's supposed to be a big secret. I'm surprised that everyone knows.

Maura: Well, once you tell a few people, they get excited and they can't **keep their mouth shut**, so it **spreads like wildfire**.

Harp: Yeah. That's true.

Maura: So in that example, one person heard a story about Jennifer being pregnant. And this person did not want to reveal where they heard the information, so she said that she **heard it through the grapevine**.

Harp: Yes. And in this example, it was actually true information. But sometimes maybe it's not true.

Maura: Yeah. You never know. OK, let's do one more example.

Harp: Let's do it.

Maura: So I ran into Paul the other day, from high school.

Harp: Oh yeah? How is he?

Maura: Well, he seemed to be doing great. We just chatted for a few minutes at the grocery store, but he seemed really happy.

Harp: Oh that's interesting, because I **heard through the grapevine** that he just got out of jail.

Maura: Really? That's surprising.

Harp: Mhmm. It's interesting.

Maura: I wonder if there's any truth to it.

Maura: So, in that example, someone **heard through the grapevine** that their friend Paul was possibly in jail, but they didn't know if it was really true or not.

Harp: Yup. It's unverified information.

- Maura: That's right. OK, let's look at the last expression for this episode.
- Harp: All right. Our last expression is another fun one. It's **a little birdie told me**.
- Maura: **A little birdie told me**. I like this one. It sounds cute.
- Harp: I agree.
- Maura: So someone who has some new information could say that **a little birdie told them**. And in this case, the source is definitely being hidden.
- Harp: Yes, because you're saying that a bird told you the information, not that you're telling the source of the information.
- Maura: Right. And I don't know about you listening out there, but I've never really been able to have a conversation with a bird.
- Harp: Yeah. Maybe a parrot, but they usually just mimick what people are saying.
- Maura: Yeah. Some of them can speak, actually. You're right. But you probably couldn't hear a story from a bird.
- Harp: Exactly. So they're keeping their source hidden and secret.
- Maura: A possible origin for this expression actually does have to do with birds, because in the past, people would use birds to send messages, especially in times of war. They would attach a message to the leg of a bird, the bird would fly to the destination, and then the person would open up the message and get the news.
- Harp: Yes. Oh, that really makes sense. I like it. Good image.
- Maura: Yeah. It's a pretty old expression, too. There are references to it in the Bible and Shakespeare has also made reference to birds as messengers.
- Harp: Oh, super interesting.
- Maura: All right. So now let's give a couple of examples where some people have heard some information and they say that **a little birdie told them**.
- Harp: OK. Let's get started with some examples.

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| Maura: | So, Melissa, a little birdie told me that you won a trip to Hawaii. |
| Harp: | Yeah. I did. |
| Maura: | Yeah. I'm wondering, have you decided who you're going to take with you yet? |

Harp: Umm. Not yet, but I think I'm gonna take my sister.

Maura: Oh. Well, congratulations anyway. That's great.

Harp: Thanks.

Maura: In this example, one person does not want to say the source where they heard this information that probably should have been kept as a secret. So this person says that **a little birdie told her**.

Harp: Yeah.

Maura: All right, let's do one more example with **a little birdie told me**.

Harp: So I hear Sarah's quitting.

Maura: Who told you that?

Harp: **A little birdie told me.**

Maura: Well, it's true, she is. But she hasn't given her **two weeks' notice** yet and wasn't telling anyone, so I'm sure she'd appreciate it if you didn't pass on that information to anyone else.

Harp: I won't tell anyone, but she should probably put in her notice.

Maura: All right, so in that example, **a little birdie told a person** that one of their colleagues was quitting her job. Again, in this case, the person wanted to keep the source hidden.

Harp: And if you don't know what **two weeks' notice** is, we'll explain it in the Learning Materials.

Maura: That's right. So, if you're not a member yet, what are you waiting for? Go to our website, Culips.com, and you can become a member, where you can get all of these extra explanations, you can get transcripts, and a quiz for every episode.

Harp: Yes. Before we finish though, let's do a quick recap.

Maura: Let's do that. The first expression was **to get wind of something**.

Harp: The second expression was **to hear something through the grapevine**.

- Maura: And then ***a little birdie told me***. And you know what? If you're interested in these kinds of expressions about gossip, we have some other Culips episodes that have to do with gossip and rumours. So check them out if you're interested.
- Harp: Yes. And remember to say hi to us on Facebook if you're there. And that's it for us today.
- Maura: All right. We will talk to you again soon. Bye everyone!
- Harp: Bye!

Detailed Explanation

To come on over

One aspect of English that can be confusing for people learning English as a second language is two-word verbs. Sometimes we even add another preposition, and this can cause even more confusion!

But here's the good news in this case: *to come over* and ***to come on over*** have the same meaning. In both of these forms, a person or a group of people is being asked to come to where the speaker is. ***To come on over*** can be more casual and playful than *to come over*, but they really can be used interchangeably.

In this episode, Maura invites you ***to come on over*** to Facebook and say hi.

To get wind of something

To get wind of something means to hear something or to learn something. Usually the information you hear is news about another person. As we say in this episode, the information you hear could also be a secret or the source of the information could be a secret. The information you hear might just be a rumour, which means we don't know whether it's true or not.

For example, someone could ***get wind*** of a story at work about their company merging with another. Maybe this person hears the information directly from two bosses who are discussing the situation. In this case, the person knows that it must be true. But the information at this time might also be a secret because no one else knows and this person heard the news by accident. Even if the news is a secret now, eventually everyone will hear the news.

We can also ***get wind*** of a story that is more like a rumour. For example, a person might hear a story at school that a girl cheated on her boyfriend, but there is no proof that it is true and it is likely something that should be kept private if it is true.

Here's one more example with ***to get wind of something***:

Paula: My husband ***got wind*** of a crazy story recently. It's about the new neighbour.

Olivia: I love good gossip. Tell me what he heard.

To keep your mouth shut

To keep your mouth shut means to not tell a secret. If a person's mouth is closed, they are not talking, so they are not telling the secret.

In this episode, Maura says that some people can't **keep their mouths shut**, which means that some people can't keep a secret. This expression, **to keep your mouth shut**, is a little more aggressive than saying *to keep a secret*. People often use **to keep your mouth shut** when they are upset about people telling secrets.

It would be rude to use this expression at someone directly like, "Sally, **keep your mouth shut** about Kyle's marks!" If you wanted to be more polite, you could say something like, "Sally, please keep Kyle's marks a secret" or "Please don't say anything about Kyle's marks."

Here are a couple more examples with **to keep your mouth shut**.

Jack: I've got some big news, but you can't tell anyone.

Maureen: Don't worry. I know how **to keep my mouth shut**.

Wendy: I don't think Jane is going to tell anyone about the baby name she chose because she doesn't want everyone around the office knowing.

Michelle: That's understandable. Some people around here can't **keep their big mouths shut**.

Like in the example above, you can also say **to keep your big mouth shut**. When someone is described as having a big mouth, it means that they often tell secrets.

To mind your own business

To mind your own business means to only be interested in things that involve you, and to take care of aspects of your own life. It also means to not be interested in aspects of other people's lives, especially if someone has not directly involved you. Someone who **minds their own business** respects the privacy of others. A person who **minds their own business** generally does not gossip about other people.

Directly telling someone **to mind their own business** could be considered rude, or might show that you are angry. For example, Paula might say, "**Mind your own business**," to a friend who asks too many questions about an aspect of her personal life that she does not want to talk about. In this case, Paula is angry and uses this expression to show that she is offended.

Here are a couple more examples with ***to mind your own business***:

Fiona: Do you hear a lot of gossip at work? The people in my office are always spreading rumours.

Oscar: No, I keep to myself at work and **mind my own business**.

Isla: I've got this guy in my Ancient Civilizations class who's always asking me personal questions. It's really annoying.

Sharon: Yeah. You should tell him to **mind his own business**.

In this episode, Maura gives an example of someone **minding their own business** when they accidentally hear a secret. This means that the person was not interested in aspects of other people's lives and that they heard the information accidentally. Used in this way, ***to mind your own business*** is like saying to be innocent before something accidental happened.

Here are a couple of examples with ***to mind your own business*** used in this way:

Matthew: What happened to Bob yesterday?

Dean: It was crazy! He was just **minding his own business**, walking down the street, when a guy on a bicycle ran into him and knocked him over.

Sylvia: I was just **minding my own business** yesterday in the hall between classes and I overheard Joel breaking up with his girlfriend!

Tom: Wow! How did she react?

Have I got something for you!

In English, we sometimes make statements that seem to be in the form of a question.

Have I got something for you! is not a real question, and it doesn't need to be answered. Saying ***have I got something for you!*** is like saying, "I have something for you that you will be excited about."

In this episode, in a dialogue example, Maura says "**Have I got some news for you!**" This means, "I have got some exciting news for you." The person being spoken to will be interested in the news.

Here are a couple more examples with ***have I got something for you!***

Steve: **Have I got something to tell you!**

Wayne: What? What? Tell me!

Ben: **Have I got something for you!**

Laura: I hope you picked me up some chocolate cake while you were out!

To hear something through the grapevine

To hear something through the grapevine means to hear some information from someone who heard it from another person, and many more people could be involved. When this expression is used, it usually means that the information heard is gossip. The source of the information is unknown, but a lot of people are talking about it.

In this episode, we talk a little bit about the origin of this expression, but here's some more information. In the late 1800s, the latest device used to communicate information across long distances was the telegraph. Telegraph wires were hung between trees or poles and they looked like vines, so this system, which passed along information to many people, was soon called the grapevine telegraph.

In the late 1960s, there was a song called *I Heard it Through the Grapevine*, by Marvin Gaye. This song is still widely known today and it helped to make this expression popular.

Here's one more example with **to hear something through the grapevine**:

Jenna: Guess what I **heard through the grapevine** today?

Ivan: Is it about Sebastian? Because I think I heard it already.

To spread like wildfire

When something is said **to spread like wildfire**, this means that it spreads quickly. A fire in the wild spreads across the landscape very quickly and easily, so this expression uses that reference to talk about when other things spread quickly.

Rumours often **spread like wildfire**, and this is exactly how Maura uses the expression in this episode. When people hear an interesting story, they often spread the story by telling other people, and so many people hear of the story quickly.

We usually talk about some kind of information **spreading like wildfire**, but this expression can also be used to talk about trends that become popular quickly, like a style of clothing or an activity. We could also talk about a computer virus **spreading like wildfire**.

Here are a couple more examples with **to spread like wildfire**:

Paul: Have you noticed that everyone is wearing those boots with the tassels lately?

Luke: I know! I don't think I ever even saw them before last week, but they seem to have **spread like wildfire**.

Mitchell: Did you hear that Doug might be leaving the company at the end of the week?

Brad: I don't know if that's true. I think that story just **spread like wildfire** because everyone is hoping that it's true. That guy's a real jerk.

A little birdie told me

People use the expression **a little birdie told me** when they don't want to reveal the source of some information that they heard. As with the other expressions we talk about in this episode, this information may or may not actually be true.

This expression is old. As we mention in this episode, even Shakespeare made references to birds giving messages to people. The Bible doesn't use this exact expression, but it is likely the first written account of birds as messengers.

Here is one more example with the expression **a little birdie told me**:

Sophia: Who told you that it's my birthday today? I didn't think anyone in the office knew.

Philip: Let's just say **a little birdie told me**.

You might also hear simply **a little bird told me**.

Two weeks' notice

When a person gives their **two weeks' notice**, it means that the person is quitting their job and has told their employer that they will stop working in two weeks. A person should give notice to their employer whenever they plan on quitting.

In Canada, the United States, and many other countries, it is customary and respectful to tell your employer that you are quitting about two weeks before you are actually going to leave. In certain cases, some people might only be able to give **one week's notice**, and other people might give **three weeks' notice** or more, but **two weeks' notice** is standard.

When someone says, "I gave my **two weeks' notice**," this is just like saying, "I told my employer that I am quitting in two weeks."

Here is one more example with **two weeks' notice**:

Selma: I gave my **two weeks' notice** today! I can't wait to finish up and start my new job.

Pete: I'm glad you got that over with. It's always a bit stressful giving your notice.

This expression can also be used without the possessive pronoun: *to give **two weeks' notice***.

Quiz

1. Which of the following is just like *to come over*?

- a) to come on over
- b) to come out over
- c) to come in over
- d) to come up over

2. John can't keep his mouth shut.

Which of the following is true about John?

- a) John is a friendly guy.
- b) John is good at keeping secrets.
- c) John is not good at keeping secrets.
- d) John always has his mouth open.

3. Which of the following sounds rude?

- a) She was just minding her own business when a guy tried to steal her purse.
- b) Mind your own business!
- c) I always try to mind my own business at work.
- d) Minding your own business is a good way to stay out of trouble.

4. Which of the following is an expression that means "I have something for you"?

- a) Did I get something for you?
- b) Do I ever get your anything!
- c) Have I got something for you!
- d) They have something for me.

5. Which of the following is true about the expression *to get wind of something*?

- a) The source of the information is unknown.
- b) The information may be secret.
- c) The person possibly heard the information accidentally.
- d) All of the above are true.

6. I heard it _____ the grapevine

Fill in the blank to complete the expression.

- a) by
- b) through
- c) in
- d) around

7. When something spreads like wildfire, what does that mean?

- a) It spreads slowly.
- b) It causes a lot of damage.
- c) It spreads quickly.
- d) It does not spread.

8. Which of the following is an expression that keeps the source of the information or story a secret?

- a) A bird told me
- b) A big bird told me
- c) A little birdie told me
- d) A big birdie told me

9. When should a person give two weeks' notice?

- a) when they are ending a relationship
- b) when they are going on a trip
- c) when they are moving
- d) when they are quitting their job

Answers:

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