

Catch Word #128 – We all mess up sometimes

Transcript

Harp: Hello everyone. This is Harp.

Maura: And Maura.

Harp: And we're here at Culips Learning English Podcast, bringing you another great episode.

Maura: Don't forget to visit our website, Culips.com, that's C-U-L-I-P-S.com. You do know how to spell it, don't you?

Harp: I hope you do by now.

Maura: And when you're on our website, you can become a member. When you're member, you have access to the transcripts for all of our episodes, more detailed explanations of the expressions that we use in our episodes, and a quiz to test yourself.

Harp: Yes. And also, we're on Facebook and we're quite active. We're always answering questions. We're posting updates with some pictures. It's quite a fun, active, interactive place.

Maura: Right. So come on over and say hi to us there.

Harp: And if you have some questions related to English, oftentimes you'll get a response from our wonderful, amazing editor Jessie.

Maura: Right. So if you're wondering who Jessie is, she's our editor, who works behind the scenes. And if you're really curious, you can look back to some of our older episodes and you can hear Jessie, because she used to be part of our recording sessions too.

Harp: Yes. And hopefully she'll be back for a couple of episodes a little bit later on, but either way, she answers questions and she gives some really great responses.

Maura: So whaddya think about that weather out there, Harp?

Harp: It's cold!

Maura: I know. It's getting so cold. I feel like every time, at this time of year, the weather, the winter, just feels like it's going to be so long.

Harp: I know, like **there's no end in sight** for the winter.

- Maura: We hope every year that we won't have a long winter in Canada, but we never really know until we start to get to March or April if our winter's going to end soon.
- Harp: Yeah, exactly. Well, let's get started. Today we're going a Catch Word episode, and that's where we take some expressions, we explain them, we give you examples.
- Maura: Right. And we basically tell you how to use them.
- Harp: Yes. So today we're going to talk about some expressions when you make a mistake.
- Maura: Right. We can use these expressions to talk about when people have not done something well, when they've made a mistake or done something wrong.
- Harp: Yeah. And all of the expressions are a little bit different, but they're all related to making mistakes.
- Maura: Right. So let's start with the first one. The first expression we're going to look at is **to mess up**.
- Harp: **To mess up**.
- Maura: Right. **To mess up**.
- Harp: And this is when someone makes a mistake. They **mess up**.
- Maura: Right. It's a more casual way to say that you made a mistake, or you made an error. It could be used to talk about just about anything that you didn't do properly.
- Harp: Yeah. It could be something really serious or it could be something quite small, but it's when you make a mistake.
- Maura: Right. It would be something written, it could be something you do, it could be a performance. It's some kind of mistake.
- Harp: Yes.
- Maura: So, let's give you an example where someone **messes up**.
- Harp: Let's do it.

Maura: Hey, how are you? You don't look too happy.

Harp: I just made the worst mistake at work.

Maura: What did you do?

Harp: I sent an email and it was supposed to go to one person, just the president of the company. And instead, I sent it to everyone, **and I mean everyone**. The secretary, the vice president, HR. I sent it to everyone.

Maura: Oh no.

Harp: There was so much private, confidential stuff in that email.

Maura: So I guess your boss wasn't happy?

Harp: **To say the least**. He was extremely angry with me.

Maura: Well, did you say you were sorry and that you know that you really **messed up**?

Harp: Yeah, but I feel like maybe I'm gonna get fired. I just really **messed up** today.

Maura: Well, **give it some time**. Maybe he'll **get over it**.

Harp: I hope so!

Maura: In that example, we had someone who really **messed up** at work and sent an important, private email to everyone instead of one important person.

Harp: Yup. And this is actually a true story that's happened at my work. But, thankfully, it wasn't me who did it.

Maura: Yeah. So, that is one example of when a person **messes up**. Now, we can say **to mess up**, and we have a synonym for **to mess up**. That is...

Harp: **To screw up**.

Maura: Right. **To screw up**. So, we're going to give you a second example, but instead of using **to mess up**, we're going to use **to screw up**.

Harp: Yeah, because **to mess up** and **to screw up** mean the exact same thing.

Maura: Right. They both mean to make a mistake, big or small.

Harp: And they're used in exactly the same way, so let's give an example with **to screw up**.

Harp: Hey, how was your math test today?

Maura: Oh man, I really **screwed up** on my test.

Harp: Oh no. What happened?

Maura: Well, I guess I only have myself to blame. I really didn't study enough and then the questions just seemed so hard. I just **drew a blank**.

Harp: Eek, this isn't very good. You should have studied more.

Maura: I know. I **messed up**. There's nothing more I can do. Just gotta move on and study more for the next test, I guess.

Harp: Yeah, I guess so.

Maura: In that example, we had a person who **screwed up**, or **messed up**, on their test, which means they made a mistake, or in this case, many mistakes. And they didn't study, they weren't ready, they didn't do a good job.

Harp: Yeah. They **screwed up** by not studying. They **screwed up** on their exam.

Maura: Right. On a test, you need to perform, and they didn't perform well on this test at all.

Harp: Definitely not.

Maura: OK. So, let's look at another expression now, that also is talking about making mistakes.

Harp: Yes. The next expression is **to butcher something**.

Maura: Right. **To butcher something**.

Harp: **To butcher something** is to make a major mistake, or more than one mistake at a time.

Maura: Right. So if a person **butchers something**, they didn't just make a little mistake. They made a really big mistake or a lot of little ones that, added up, make it seem like a really big mistake.

Harp: Yeah. When you don't do a good job and you make lots of small mistakes, that can be **to butcher something**, or if you make one really big mistake you **butcher something**.

Maura: Right. So if you make a mistake, in this case, it means that you didn't do something properly and it wasn't done correctly.

- Harp: And there is a literal meaning for **to butcher something**, but we'll talk about that in the Learning Materials.
- Maura: Yeah, that's a good idea. But for now, we're just going to focus on **to butcher**, which means to make a really big mistake or to not do something properly.
- Harp: Yeah. I think we should give an example with this.
- Maura: All right. Let's do it.

- Maura: How are the **renos** going?
- Harp: They were going great. You know, the living room's looking fantastic.
- Maura: But then what?
- Harp: I started doing the bathroom.
- Maura: And, it didn't work out so well?
- Harp: Oh, I **butchered** it. The whole bathroom is leaking. We can't use it anymore. I had to call a plumber, but he can't come until tomorrow.
- Maura: Oh no! That sounds horrible.
- Harp: It's really bad.
- Maura: But I guess if you don't know what you're doing with plumbing, you gotta be careful.
- Harp: Yeah, next time I think I would just hire a plumber.
- Maura: Sounds like you **learned your lesson**.
- Harp: Definitely.

- Maura: In that example, someone **butchered** their bathroom, which means they made a big mistake, or many mistakes, to the point where the bathroom was not able to be used. Now when I think of using this expression, **to butcher something**, I often think of someone doing a performance, like a speech or a song. And in this case, they make so many mistakes that it's just horrible and it doesn't sound at all like it's supposed to.
- Harp: Yeah. I think the same thing. He really **butchered** that speech yesterday or she **butchered** that song.
- Maura: Yeah. So let's do this next example with a song.

Harp: OK. Let's do it.

Maura: Ah, karaoke was so fun last night. I wish you'd been there.

Harp: Yeah, me too. So, did you sing your favourite song?

Maura: You know I did!

Harp: And? How did it go?

Maura: Well, I **butchered** it, of course. I can't hit those high notes.

Harp: That's funny. At least you have fun when you're doing it.

Maura: Yeah. It's super fun, but I just feel sorry for anyone who has to listen.

Harp: That's true. It was probably better that I didn't go. I didn't get tortured.

Maura: And so there is an example where someone was singing a song and they didn't do a good job at singing the song, so we can say that this person **butchered** the song.

Harp: Yes. When we say it's a major mistake **to butcher something**, it doesn't mean it's the most important mistake; it just means it was a big mistake. The song didn't sound like it was supposed to. It was nothing like it. When she sang, she didn't do a good job at all.

Maura: Right. So, this kind of mistake, this major mistake, means that the song doesn't sound like the song is supposed to sound.

Harp: OK. Let's move on to our last expression.

Maura: Yes. The last expression in this episode talking about mistakes is **to choke**.

Harp: Yes. **To choke**.

Maura: **To choke**. And, there is a literal meaning of **to choke**, which we'll talk about in our Learning Materials, but for this episode, we're going to talk about how it's used for slang.

Harp: Yes. So **to choke** is to make a mistake in your performance.

Maura: Right. To fail to perform at something. So you're supposed to do something specific, people are looking at you, someone's watching you, and you make a mistake. You don't do what you're supposed to do.

Harp: Yeah. So you fail to perform.

- Maura: Right. And this is especially used in sports.
- Harp: Yeah. It's definitely used very often in sports. If you're watching sports in English, you'll hear them saying, "Oh, he **choked** there." Or "He **choked** here."
- Maura: And this makes sense, because when you're playing a sport, you have to perform. You have to do a good job and if you make a mistake and you don't do what you gotta do, then someone might say that you **choked**.
- Harp: Let's give some examples, one with sports and one without.
- Maura: OK, let's do the first one.
- Harp: OK.

- Harp: How was your son's baseball game yesterday?
- Maura: Well, it was all right, but Casey totally **choked** when he was up at bat.
- Harp: Aw, that's not good. So he **struck out**?
- Maura: Yeah. He seemed confident to start but then he just missed all the pitches and he **choked**.
- Harp: Oh no. I'm sure he'll do better next time.
- Maura: Yeah, it just takes some practice and he's gotta feel more comfortable.
- Harp: Yup.

- Maura: So there is a sports example for you. This time was baseball. And this is often when this expression might be used, when someone goes up to bat and they're supposed to hit the ball, but for some reason they fail to perform and they just don't hit any balls.
- Harp: Yeah. Like we said, it's used so often in sports, just like how it was used in this example.
- Maura: Right.
- Harp: Let's give another example where it's not about sports.
- Maura: Right. But of course, it's again a case where someone is supposed perform in some way and they make a mistake and they're unable to perform.

Harp: So, the wedding's this weekend. How's the wedding speech?

Maura: Well, I'm still working on it. I'm pretty happy with, you know, some of the jokes I incorporated. I'm going to talk about my friend and some of the stuff that she did that was crazy when she was younger, but, you know, I'm more nervous about being in front of everyone. I'm afraid I'm gonna **choke**.

Harp: I know. It's hard to give a speech in front of a lot of people. You know, they say focus on one person, pretend like it's not a big crowd. Maybe that'll make it easier.

Maura: Yeah. I don't know what's going to make it easier. I'm too nervous.

Harp: I'm sure it'll be fine.

Maura: And there's an example where someone is thinking that she might **choke**. She might make a mistake. She might **mess up**, or **butcher**, the wedding speech.

Harp: Giving a speech or doing a sport, it can often be stressful because people are watching you, so that's why you sometimes **choke**, because you're stressed.

Maura: Right. You could **choke** for a variety of reasons, but one of the major causes is because of stress, because you're in front of people and everyone's watching you, expecting you to do something very well. It can be a lot of pressure. All right, so let's go over these expressions about making a mistake one more time.

Harp: OK, so we started with **to mess up**, or **to screw up**.

Maura: Right. And then we talked about **to butcher something**, and that's when you make a lot of mistakes or a really big mistake.

Harp: And the last expression was **to choke**.

Maura: That's it. So if you want to know more about these expressions or any of the other expressions that you heard in our episode, you can do that by checking out our Learning Materials, which you can only see if you're a Culips member.

Harp: Become a member, support us, and you get access to all the wonderful Learning Materials.

- Maura: Right. Go to our website, Culips.com, that's C-U-L-I-P-S.com. And, you know, I want to say thank you to all of you who have been supporting us. We do check it out, we do see who's been signing up, and how many people, and we wanna thank you because we really do appreciate your support.
- Harp: Yes. And always remember to check us out on Facebook because we're very active there and we're always responding to your questions and we're posting fun updates.
- Maura: That's right. So, we hope it's not too cold where you are. Maybe you're all warm and hanging out on the beach. Well, that just depressed me to think about that.
- Harp: I know, I know. I'm super jealous now thinking about the people who are in warm places on the beach, relaxing.
- Maura: So if you are in a warm place, hopefully you're appreciating it.
- Harp: Yes. So we'll talk to you soon.
- Maura: OK. Bye!

Detailed Explanation

There's no end in sight

This expression, **there's no end in sight**, means that the speaker cannot see an end. It's not used to talk about a physical end, but rather an end to some experience, like a project or a time in a person's life. This is almost always a negative experience and the person wants it to be over, but unfortunately does not see when it will end.

In this episode, Harp uses this expression to talk about winter. If you've been a Culips listener for a while, you know that Harp doesn't like winter, so for her this is a negative experience. She wants winter to end, but at this point in the year, she doesn't know when it's going to.

Here are a couple more examples with **there's no end in sight**:

Sylvia: Can you come out for a drink tonight or are you still working on school stuff?

Tania: **There's no end in sight** to my schoolwork. I've got to stay in still.

Sarah: I don't know when I'll be able to get out of debt. It seems like **there's no end in sight**.

Oliver: Once you get in debt, it's hard to get out.

This is a fixed expression, but you might also hear similar phrases with the same meaning, such as *I just can't see an end to this* or *it feels like it's never going to end*.

To mess up/to screw up

To mess up and **to screw up** mean to make a mistake or do something wrong. These are casual ways to talk about a mistake, and don't sound very professional. Some people might even find **to screw up** rude, as *screw* can be used for other more vulgar slang meanings, but this is not very common, and most people don't think of it this way or find this expression offensive.

Here's one more example with **to mess up**:

Lewis: I can't believe I **messed up** like that.

Derek: Don't worry about it. The next time our band performs you'll be extra careful at that part.

And I mean...

This little expression is used to emphasize whatever was just said before, and is a kind of repetition. When someone says **and I mean**, directly after they say a key word from what was said before that they want to emphasize.

In this episode, this expression is used in the dialogue example about someone who accidentally sends a private email to everyone in her company. Harp says that she sent the email to everyone in the company. Then she says, “**and I mean everyone.**” She repeats *everyone* to emphasize just how many people she sent the email to.

Here are a couple more examples with **and I mean...**:

Yasmine: I caught a huge fish this weekend. **And I mean** huge!

Oscar: Wow. Did you take a picture?

Ryan: Remember when Sharon said that she’s got the most beautiful view from her cottage? Well, when she said beautiful, she meant beautiful.

This second example is a variation of the expression **and I mean...** This expression can be used in the past tense and with any subject, like *she*, *he*, or *they*. You can also say *when I say...*, **I mean...**, for example, *when I say crazy, I mean crazy.*

To say the least

To say the least is used when something or someone is being described. **To say the least** means that there is so much more to say and that the description that was already given is minimal. This expression means that what was already said is not enough or is downplayed, and that the truth is much more important or serious.

To say the least means that what was just said is the least that you could say, and that there is so much more to say. For example, a person might be described as a little sad. Someone else might say, “That’s **to say the least.**” The truth is that the person was crying all night and is actually very sad.

In this episode, in a dialogue example, Maura says that Harp’s boss wasn’t happy when she sent a private email to everyone in her company. Harp responds by saying, “**To say the least.**” This means that saying he wasn’t happy minimizes the description. Her boss was extremely angry, which is much stronger than saying he was not happy.

Here are a couple more examples with **to say the least.**

Ken: Are you feeling tired after your weekend of performances?

Timothy: **To say the least!** I’m so exhausted. I slept for 10 hours and I still feel sleepy.

Lucy: How was your test?

Diane: It was difficult, **to say the least.**

Just like in this last example, sometimes people do not explain how the situation is more serious or important. Diane says that the test was difficult **to say the least**, which means that it was very difficult for her, but she doesn’t share any more specific details.

To give it time

We have lots of expressions about time in English. When we **give something time**, this means that as we let time pass, a bad situation may improve. When time passes, things change and people are able to change their minds, too. Sometimes if you **give something time** it gets better, but sometimes it doesn't.

In this episode, this expression is used in the dialogue example where Harp made her boss angry by accidentally sending a private email to many people. Maura tells her **to give it time**. This means that right now her boss is very angry, but as time passes he will probably become less angry. Talking about angry or sad people feeling less emotional is often a way this expression is used.

Here are a couple more examples with **to give it time**:

Isla: I'm just so torn up over Chris still. I can't believe he dumped me.

Freda: **Give it some time** and you'll see that it was for the best.

Hilary: I can't believe how angry Shannon is that I borrowed her shirt without asking.

Greg: I wouldn't worry about it. Just **give her time** and by next week she won't even remember it happened.

There are lots of expressions that talk about the benefits of time. A couple more related expressions are *with time* and *time heals all wounds*.

To get over something

When a person **gets over something**, it means that they have accepted that something unpleasant happened and they do not feel upset or bothered about it anymore. Some people **get over** negative situations pretty quickly, but it takes others a long time.

The expression **to get over something** is used in this episode to talk about Harp's angry boss in a dialogue example. At the time of the conversation, her boss is really mad, but eventually he won't be very angry anymore and at this point he will have **gotten over** it.

Here's another example with **to get over something**:

Kyle: When do you think you'll **get over** the fact that you didn't get the job?

Anthony: I'm already **over it**... because I got a call for an interview somewhere else this morning!

The expression **to get over something** is used to talk about the process of accepting a negative situation, and **to be over something** describes a person who has already accepted a negative situation.

To draw a blank

To draw a blank means to not be able to think of something, to have no answer to a question, or to simply not know what to say. A *blank* is empty, similar to a person's brain when they cannot think of anything.

The origin of this expression helps to explain the wording. Way back in the 1500s, there was a lottery. There were two pots with cards, one filled with names and the other with prizes and blank cards. One card would be drawn from each pot. If your name was drawn along with a prize card, you won that prize. If your name was drawn along with a blank card, then you won nothing. So **to draw a blank** is to be unsuccessful. When we use this expression nowadays, **to draw a blank** means to be unsuccessful in your thinking.

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

Spencer: Do you remember the name of the new guy in accounting? I need to email him.

Fatima: Sorry, I'm totally **drawing a blank**.

Justin: I **drew a complete blank** on the last question of the test. Did you get it?

Dean: It was hard, but I think I got it.

To butcher something

To butcher something is to make a big mistake or many small mistakes when doing something. These mistakes cause whatever you were doing to be unrecognizable. It's like saying that you destroyed something with your mistakes.

Butchering is a traditional job; a butcher is a person who sells pieces of meat. Part of the butcher's job is also to cut up the pieces of meat for sale. In this way, **to butcher** a piece of meat is to cut it up into smaller pieces. And after someone does this, the meat is unrecognizable from its original form. So by looking at the literal meaning of **to butcher**, we can find an explanation for this expression.

Here's one more example with **to butcher something**:

Philip: They really **butchered** the play, didn't they?

Stephanie: Yeah. It's too bad. I think they didn't have enough time to rehearse.

Renos

The word **renos** is a short form of *renovations*. *To renovate* is to make something new again by changing, repairing, or rebuilding it. Renovations can be done on any building, like offices, stores, or homes. Doing renovations is a very popular way to update your home. Some people complete the **renos** themselves and others hire professionals to do the work.

In a dialogue example in this episode, a lot of **renos** were being done on Harp's home. Harp was doing the renovations herself. In this case, you can say it was DIY, which stands for *do it yourself*.

To learn your lesson

When we say that a person **learns a lesson**, this means that they go through some unpleasant experience, but they learn something about life from it. This expression is often used with children, because they learn a lot as they grow up, but it can also be used with anyone at any age. The idea is that the next time the same situation happens, the person will act differently, because they learned from what previously happened.

In this episode, in the dialogue example where Harp has done her own bathroom renovations without success, Maura says, "Sounds like you **learned your lesson**." This means that from the experience of trying to do her own bathroom renos and failing, Harp has learned that it may be better to hire a professional in cases where you don't know what you're doing.

Here are a couple more examples with **to learn your lesson**:

Heather: Amanda put her hand on the stove the other day. Luckily I had only just turned the burner on.

Victor: She likely **learned her lesson** though, anyway.

Donna: I **learned my lesson** the other day when I tried to help Shawn with his work.

Ivan: Yeah. He never takes help. It's not worth the bother.

You can also say **to learn a lesson**. Saying **to learn your lesson** just makes the lesson a little more personal to the person who learned something.

To choke

To choke is to fail to perform by not doing what was required, to make a mistake. This kind of mistake is usually made in front of others. The stress of performing in front of others may be the reason why a person **chokes**, but it could also be for a number of other reasons. As we say in this episode, this expression is especially common in sports when a player or a team is expected to do well and does not succeed.

Here's one more example with **to choke**:

Tyler: I totally **choked** during my driving the test. I got so nervous trying to remember everything that I went through a red light!

Daniel: Oh no! Better luck next time.

The literal meaning of **to choke** is to not be able to breath. For example, a person could choke if a piece of food gets caught in their throat.

To strike out

In this episode, in the dialogue example with Casey, **he struck out**. This is baseball slang, which means that the batter missed three good pitches.

Like many baseball expressions, this expression can also be used in everyday conversations. If a person has tried to accomplish something and has failed without another chance, we can say that the person **struck out**.

Here's an example with **to strike out** used in a conversation not about baseball:

Steve: How did it go with Natalie? Have you talked to her yet?

Jon: Yep, but I **struck out**. I asked her out for Friday and she turned me down.

Quiz

1. Rene: I really need to find a job. I hate being unemployed, but I feel like _____.

Please fill in the blank.

- a) there's no end in sight
- b) there's no sight
- c) I have no sight
- d) the end will happen

2. Which expression is an exact synonym for *to mess up*?

- a) to strike out
- b) to draw a blank
- c) to screw up
- d) to choke

3. Yolanta: My apartment is so small, _____ really small.

Please fill in the blank.

- a) which means
- b) not
- c) very
- d) and I mean

4. Fred: Was your mom upset when you got home late last night?
Jennifer: To say the least!

What does Jessica's response mean?

- a) Her mother was not upset.
- b) Her mother was very upset.
- c) Her mother did not notice that she was home late.
- d) Her mother at least said hi.

5. What is the belief behind the expression *to give it time*?

- a) If you let something cook longer, it tastes better.
- b) If you let time pass after a good experience, it may not seem as good.
- c) If you let time pass after a bad experience, the bad situation may improve.
- d) If you pick food up off the ground within 5 minutes, it is still good to eat.

6. Shauna is drawing a blank.

What does the above sentence mean?

- a) Shauna cannot think of anything to say.
- b) Shauna is sleeping.
- c) Shauna is not very smart.
- d) Shauna cannot stop talking.

7. If Dwayne butchers Jamie's haircut, what does this mean?

- a) Dwayne makes a very small mistake that no one will notice.
- b) Dwayne makes so many mistakes that Jamie's hair looks horrible.
- c) Dwayne uses the wrong pair of scissors to cut the hair.
- d) Dwayne does an excellent job on the haircut.

8. What should happen after Dorian learns his lesson?

- a) He should not make the same mistake again.
- b) He should make the same mistake again.
- c) He cannot make the same mistake again.
- d) He should take a test.

9. About what subject is the expression *to choke* most often used?

- a) movies
- b) hobbies
- c) cooking
- d) sports

Answers:

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