

Catch Word #132 – It's in mint condition

Informal Contractions in this Episode

Informal contractions are unofficial short forms of other words, and they're usually only used in casual conversation. For example, when a native English speaker talks casually, they might say *gonna* instead of *going to*, or *whaddya* instead of *what do you*. Even though informal contractions are usually only used in spoken English, we include them in the Culips written transcripts to help you get used to how they're used and what they sound like.

These are the informal contractions used in today's episode, along with their meanings:

- **gettin'**: getting
- **gonna**: going to

Transcript

Harp: Hello everyone. This is Harp.

Maura: And your pal Maura.

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

Maura: That's right. Now, don't forget to go to our website, Culips.com. That's C-U-L-I-P-S.com. And when you're on our website, you can, first of all, have access to all of our past episodes, and it is also where you can become a member. And when you are a paid Culips member, you have access to transcripts for all of our episodes, more detailed explanations of the expressions we use in those episodes, and a quiz to test yourself at the end.

Harp: Yeah. Become a member! And also, if you're on Facebook, come on over and say hi! And if you have a question, leave us a question there and we will respond to you.

Maura: That's right. Now today we're going to do a Catch Word episode, and that is where we talk about different expressions and slang. Of course, we explain them for you and we give you examples of how you can use them.

Harp: Yes. Today we're gonna look at expressions that are used to talk about what kind of condition an object is in.

Maura: Right. Is it in good condition or bad condition? So we're going to look at expressions that talk about the condition of something.

- Harp: Yeah. These expressions are often used when you're buying or selling something.
- Maura: All right. So, first we're going to talk about an expression that means something is in very, very good condition; that it's like **brand new**.
- Harp: Yeah. This expression is ***mint condition***.
- Maura: You know, I really like this expression. It is ***mint condition***.
- Harp: Yeah. ***Mint condition***.
- Maura: Now, you know, I kind of remember when I was a kid and hearing this expression for the first time, and thinking that it was so strange. I didn't understand, because I was thinking of mint, you know? Like the herb or, like, you have a mint after dinner. And I did not understand how ***mint condition*** could mean very good condition.
- Harp: Yeah. It's interesting and it's got a very interesting origin. A mint is a place where money is made. And when money leaves the mint, it's in perfect condition. So ***mint condition*** is when something is in awesome condition. It's really nice. It's like it's new still.
- Maura: Yeah. I think when I was a kid, I didn't know that a mint was also the place where money was made.
- Harp: Yeah. I definitely did not know that when I was younger.
- Maura: Right. So ***mint condition*** means that it's like new. You wouldn't say that something is in ***mint condition*** if you bought it **brand new** from the store. Something is described as being in ***mint condition*** when it's actually not new, but it looks like new or it functions like it's **brand new**.
- Harp: Yeah. When it's as good as new, you would use the expression ***mint condition***.
- Maura: That's right. So, we are now going to give you, as we always do, a couple examples using ***mint condition***.

- | | |
|--------|--|
| Maura: | I really love your dress. Is it new? |
| Harp: | It's new to me . |
| Maura: | Oh. Well, where'd you get it? |
| Harp: | I got it at the used clothing store near my house. |

Maura: Really? It looks **brand new**.

Harp: Yeah. It's in **mint condition**. It actually had the tags still on it.

Maura: Oh, I love those finds at thrift stores.

Harp: Yeah. I don't even know if someone wore it before me.

Maura: Great find.

Maura: In that example, somebody had a dress that was in **mint condition**. Now, she didn't buy her dress at a department store, but she bought it at a used clothing store, which means that the clothes there are usually used and worn already; someone's already bought them and they've already been in someone's house.

Harp: Yeah. So when it had the tags on it, she didn't know if the person had worn it before or not.

Maura: That would explain why the dress was in **mint condition**; if someone had purchased it and not really worn it.

Harp: Yeah, exactly.

Maura: Have you ever done that with clothes?

Harp: I think I actually have. I've bought something on sale and it was just such a good deal, and then I never wore it.

Maura: Yeah. I think I've done it once or twice before too.

Harp: But I love shopping in vintage stores, so when I find something with the tags on, it's very exciting.

Maura: That is true. OK, let's do one more example with **mint condition**.

Maura: So I'm going to a comic book fair this weekend. I'm pretty excited.

Harp: Oh, that should be cool. Do you like collecting comic books?

Maura: Well, I don't have a big collection **or anything**, but I do like to buy some comics, some of my favourites, but only if they're in **mint condition**.

Harp: Yeah. That's when they're the most valuable.

Maura: Right.

- Maura: In that case, someone was going to a comic book fair. And she only liked buying comic books that were in **mint condition**, which means were in perfect condition, like **brand new**.
- Harp: Exactly. Let's move on to the next expression.
- Maura: All right. The next expression does not mean that something is in perfect condition. It means that this object has been used a little bit. The expression is **wear and tear**.
- Harp: ***Wear and tear.***
- Maura: So an object can be described as having **wear and tear**.
- Harp: Yeah. There's some **wear and tear**. This means you can tell something has been used, but it's usually still in pretty good condition.
- Maura: **Wear and tear** happens to any object as you use it. For example, if you buy a new pair of shoes and you wear the shoes, with time, the soles will get worn in, they'll get dirty, they might crack. This is just regular **wear and tear**. If you buy a sweater, and you wear it a lot—this happened to me recently—you might wear through the elbows. It might rip. So when you use an object, **wear and tear** happens.
- Harp: I actually have a hole in my jeans right now. There's some **wear and tear** in them.
- Maura: Nice. So, when something is described as having some **wear and tear**, it's very general. It means that you can tell that it has been used. When you look at it, you know it's not new. Something can have a little bit of **wear and tear**, and that means it looks like almost new. Something could also have a lot of **wear and tear**, which means it looks very, very worn in and very used.
- Harp: Yeah. And how much is too much **wear and tear**? It's really personal. It's hard to say that there's a set limit.
- Maura: Yeah. It is a very general statement. So if I describe something to you, Harp, as having some **wear and tear**, it's really a personal judgement. So you wouldn't be able to know if it was used a little bit or a lot. You'd probably have **to see it for yourself** to judge.
- Harp: Yeah. And with this expression, you can say "there's a little bit of **wear and tear**" or "there's a lot of **wear and tear**."
- Maura: That helps you to know if it looks new or if it looks old.
- Harp: Yeah.

Maura: You know, one thing I like about this expression, as well, is it rhymes. I like that. It's cute. So **wear** means that you wear the object, or you use it, and **tear** is talking about the damage that is done to it. So a tear could be a rip or a hole or any kind of damage that's done to the object.

Harp: Yeah. So **wear and tear** is what normally happens to an object when you use it.

Maura: OK. Let's give a couple examples now with **wear and tear**.

Harp: How are the preparations for your move?

Maura: Yeah. They're going good. We've got a lot of stuff packed. But we're just looking to sell some things on **Craigslist** now; some stuff that we don't need anymore.

Harp: Ah, OK. Are you gonna keep your couch? Did you decide?

Maura: No. Actually we're going to sell it. You know, it's got some **wear and tear**, but it's in pretty good condition, so I think it'll sell.

Harp: Yeah. I'm sure someone will buy it.

Maura: In that example, someone is selling her couch because she's moving. And the couch isn't new. It definitely has some **wear and tear**, which means that it looks like it's been used.

Harp: Yeah. But she's gonna sell it and she most likely will, because she said there's not too much damage to it.

Maura: OK. Let's do one more example with **wear and tear**.

Harp: I'm so tired.

Maura: Why? What happened?

Harp: My apartment flooded yesterday.

Maura: Oh no. How did that happen?

Harp: I don't know. The pipes burst. They say it's just **wear and tear**.

Maura: Oh, wow. Well, I'm sure they'll **keep an eye on that** next time.

Harp: I hope they change all the pipes. They're gettin' old.

- Maura: In that example, someone's pipes burst in her apartment building and this was because the pipes were a bit old. They had been used for probably some time, so they said that it was **wear and tear** on the pipes.
- Harp: And it's interesting, because this winter it was quite cold, and it happened many times in Montreal, one time with a big flood in downtown at McGill University.
- Maura: Right. It wasn't just in the buildings, it was out on the streets. There was water flooding the streets and reports said the pipes burst because of **wear and tear**.
- Harp: We'll post an article about this.
- Maura: All right. Now, let's look at our last expression.
- Harp: Our last expression is **it's seen better days**.
- Maura: Right. So, you can describe something and the condition it's in by saying that **it has seen better days**. And if you've been paying attention, the first expression, we talked about something that was in very good condition, the second was kind of so-so, and now we're using an expression to talk about something that is in not very good condition at all, that looks old and used.
- Harp: Yeah. When you say **it's seen better days**, you're saying that it doesn't look very good. You can tell it's really old.
- Maura: If it's something that is mechanical, you can tell that it doesn't work as well as it used to. It doesn't function as it should.
- Harp: Yeah. In the past it was nicer, it was better. **It's seen better days**; the better days were in the past.
- Maura: Right. So this expression really means this object looked better in the past. **It has seen better days**. And today, now, it doesn't look so good.
- Harp: Yeah. This expression can be used for situations or people, not just things, but we're gonna focus on things and we'll explain some more in the Learning Materials.
- Maura: Sounds good. All right, let's do a couple examples with **it's seen better days**.

Harp: How's the car search going?

Maura: Umm... It's going all right, I guess. Last night I went to go check out a car, but, let me tell you, **it's seen better days**. I wasn't really interested when I

saw it. I thought it was gonna be in good condition, but up close, it didn't look very good.

Harp: Oh no. Definitely need to find something that's only seen a little bit of **wear and tear**.

Maura: Yeah. I'm gonna **keep my eye out** for a good deal on a newer car.

Maura: In this example, someone was trying to buy a car, and she saw a car. She said that **it's seen better days**, which means that the car, today, **is not in good shape**.

Harp: Yeah. The car looks old.

Maura: Right. And maybe the engine looked old and it didn't look like it was going to function as well as it should.

Harp: Not a good idea to buy that car, for sure. Let's do one more example.

Harp: Hi Grandma. How are you?

Maura: I'm doing all right. You know, **my corns** are bothering me a bit, and my hips **have seen better days**.

Harp: Oh no. Are they hurting?

Maura: It's causing me some pain and I saw the doctor yesterday. I think I might be going in for an operation soon.

Harp: Oh no. Keep me updated.

Maura: I will, honey. Now you take care of yourself.

Harp: Thanks. You too.

Maura: And in that example, where I pretended to be a grandma, the grandmother said her hips **have seen better days**, which means they are not in good condition. And she actually said that she's probably going to have them operated on.

Harp: Yeah. This expression is used sometimes with hips or knees for older people, because they have to get hip replacement or knee replacement surgery.

Maura: Yeah. We can use these expressions to talk about used items; anything that has been used. And our joints in our body are used. We use them all the time.

- Harp: Yeah, definitely.
- Maura: This expression actually has a Shakespearean origin. I'll explain more about that in our Learning Materials, so if you're interested and you're a Culips member, check that out.
- Harp: Yes. So let's do a quick recap. We started with ***mint condition***.
- Maura: Right. Which is perfect condition, like new. And then we talked about something having some **wear and tear**, which means that you can tell it has been used.
- Harp: And we finished with ***it's seen better days***, when it's obvious that the item is old and not in good condition.
- Maura: That's right. Now these are just some expressions that we can use to talk about the condition of things. There are lots more. But here's enough to get you started.
- Harp: Yup. And remember to check out our website, Culips.com. That's C-U-L-I-P-S.com. And become a member to support us.
- Maura: Right. Because when you become a Culips member, you support us and in that way we're able to keep making these episodes for you.
- Harp: Yes. And remember to say hi to us on Facebook.
- Maura: Yes. We love to hear from you. Now, we will be talking to you again soon, in our next episode, so stayed tuned until then. We'll see you later. Bye!
- Harp: Bye everyone.

Detailed Explanation

Mint condition

Mint condition is very good or perfect condition. The expression **mint condition** is usually used when an item is not directly bought new from a shop, but it's in such good shape that it looks like it could have been directly bought from a shop. **Mint condition** basically means used, but still in perfect condition.

In this episode, Harp explains the origin of the phrase **mint condition**. A mint is a place where coins are made. People who collect coins as a hobby use the phrase **mint condition** when they find an old coin that looks like it came right from the mint. The coins are actually old, so they did not come right from the mint, but when coins look brand new even though they are actually old, collectors say that the coins are in **mint condition**.

Here's an example with **mint condition**:

Virginia: Hey, Mizuki! Come over and see what I just found.

Mizuki: Oh wow, an old typewriter! I love thrift stores so much.

Virginia: I know. It looks like it's in **mint condition**, too! Either it was never used or it was used very rarely. I think I'm going to buy it.

Mizuki: You should! It's rare to find an old typewriter in such great shape! It looks just like new.

Brand new

The adjective **brand new** describes something that has never been opened or used. As we hear in this episode, the expression **brand new** is usually said so quickly that the "d" is not usually pronounced when spoken.

The origin of this expression is commonly thought to be that fact that the word *brand* is another word for the name of a product made by a company, so when something is **brand new**, it comes directly from a store or factory. This is close, but the origin of the phrase actually goes way back to the Middle Ages! The word *brand* comes from the old English word for burning. When potters or metalworkers finished making something, they would burn their name or mark into the products they made, right after they finished the item. So, when something was **brand new**, it meant it had just been finished.

Here's another example with **brand new**.

Danilo: I've never seen that coat on you before. It fits you really well.

Masmoudi: Thank you! It's **brand new**.

Danilo: Oh, really? Where did you buy it? It looks expensive.

Masmoudi: It wasn't. The department store is having a huge sale, and this coat was 50% off.

New to someone

In this episode, in one of the examples with the expression *brand new*, Maura asks Harp whether her dress is brand new. Harp answers with, "It's **new to me**." Harp means that the dress is not brand new, but that she's never had it before, so to her it's new, even though it's a used dress.

People commonly use this phrase to describe things bought from a second-hand store. Because they've never seen it or owned it, it's **new to them**, even though it's not actually brand new.

Here's another example with **new to someone**:

Noni: I like this couch. It's very comfortable. I don't remember it being here the last time I visited you.

Halina: That's because it wasn't here!

Noni: Oh, so it's new?

Halina: Well, it's **new to me**. My uncle had it in his basement and wasn't using it anymore, so he gave it to me.

Or anything

In this episode, Maura talks about her comic books, and tells Harp that she doesn't have a big collection **or anything**. When people say **or anything** in this context, when they are talking about something they don't have or feel, it is short for **or anything like that**, meaning **or anything similar**. So, what Maura is actually saying to Harp is that she doesn't have a big collection **or anything similar** to a big collection.

Here's another example with **or anything** used in this way:

Konstantin: Hey Alexandre! Where have you been? I haven't seen you all week.

Alexandre: I've been home sick.

Konstantin: Oh no. I hope it was nothing serious.

Alexandre: No, it wasn't the flu **or anything**. Just the sniffles, but I was really tired so I stayed home.

Konstantin: Oh, well I'm glad you're feeling better now.

Wear and tear

Wear and tear refers to signs that something has been used. Something could have a little **wear and tear**, a lot of **wear and tear**, or no **wear and tear**. The origin of this phrase is pretty simple. The words **wear** and **tear** both refer to damage. *To wear* is a verb, but the word **wear** can also be a noun that refers to the results of wearing or using something. So **wear and tear** is a noun that means the amount of damage because of use.

As Maura and Harp explain in this episode, **wear and tear** is a subjective term, meaning that its definition changes depending on personal judgment. What one person may consider a lot of **wear and tear**, another may only consider a little.

Here's another example with **wear and tear**:

Osa: How's your new sewing machine?

Matheus: It's OK, but I bought it used and I didn't realize that it had so much **wear and tear**.

Osa: Oh no. Is it not in good condition?

Matheus: It was hard to tell just from looking at it, but the mechanics need some work.

To see something for yourself

To see something for yourself means to make your own judgment about something by looking at it or finding out about it yourself. It usually means that you have to see or experience something you've heard about before you can judge it.

Sometimes people say this to other people in order to convince them that something is true. For example, if someone told you that they have a purple cat in their bathroom, and you told them that it's impossible for cats to be purple, they might say "**See for yourself.**" What they are saying is that you should go into the bathroom and look, in order for them to prove that what they are saying is true.

In this episode, Maura says that in order for you to form your own opinion about whether something has a lot of wear and tear, you have to **see it for yourself** to judge. You have to look at something yourself before you can decide whether you think it has a lot of wear and tear, because *wear and tear* is a very subjective term.

Here's another example with **to see something for yourself**:

Maki: How much is that sweater you want?

Fan: About 50 dollars.

Maki: \$50? Wow. That's a lot of money for a sweater.

Fan: You'd have **to see it for yourself**. It's worth the money because it's very well made.

Maki: Oh, well I guess that makes sense then. Let's go back to the store and look at it together.

Craigslist

In this episode, Maura mentions the name **Craigslist** when giving an example with the expression *wear and tear*. **Craigslist** is a website where people can post things they have for sale, services they offer, jobs available, or anything else they would like to share with others. Most of the time, the website is used as an online forum for people selling used stuff. It's sort of like a community bulletin board where people can post things that they have for other people to buy.

The name of the website comes from the original creator of the site, Craig Newmark. It began as a list of events in the San Francisco area. Grammatically speaking, because the website is named after Craig and is technically his list, the name of the site should be *Craig's List*. But in website addresses, or URLs, punctuation marks and spaces can't be used, so the name of the site just became **Craigslist**, without the possessive punctuation.

Here's another example with **Craigslist**.

Bahamin: This is an amazing guitar! Where did you get it?

Nigel: I got it from **Craigslist**.

Bahamin: Really? So it's used?

Nigel: Someone bought it but then decided they want it. It's not really used, but they were selling it for a really good price, since it's not brand new either.

To keep an eye on something

To keep an eye on something means to carefully watch it. For example, if you were waiting for a pot of water to boil, you could say you were **keeping an eye on it**. You wouldn't say this about something you were watching for entertainment, like a TV show or a movie. You should only use this expression about something you're monitoring the safety or the progress of, like a pot of boiling water, an auction, or a child you're babysitting.

Here's another example with **to keep an eye on something**:

Achmad: I really like the way these jeans fit. I wish I could buy them.

Erich: Why don't you?

Achmad: I have to wait until they go on sale.

Erich: Oh, well they have an online store too, right?

Achmad: Yeah.

Erich: Great. So you can check the website **to keep an eye on them**, and wait until they go on sale.

Achmad: That's a good idea.

To have seen better days

To say that something **has seen better days** mean that it is in better condition in former times. This expression is used when something is no longer in good condition, but was good in the past. It can be used to describe items, states of being, and even people. If someone looks old or tired, you could say that they've **seen better days**. As Maura says in this episode, you can also use this expression to describe an item that no longer functions as it should.

The origin of this phrase is a play called *Sir Thomas More*, which is thought to have been written in 1590 by William Shakespeare. It was used again in 1607 in another Shakespeare play, called *Timon of Athens*. In these plays, the expression is used to describe someone who used to be wealthy but is now poor.

Here's another example with the expression **to have seen better days**:

Mila: How's your dog doing? She must be getting pretty old.

Roberto: Yeah, she's seen better days. She mostly sleeps all day now.

Mila: Oh, it's sad when pets get old.

Roberto: Yeah, but she still has moments when she acts just like a puppy.

Mila: That's good, then.

Up close

To look at something **up close** means to look at it when you are near enough to it to examine it very carefully. In this episode, Maura uses the expression **up close** in an example. She tells Harp about a car she was thinking of buying that didn't look very good **up close**. What Maura means is that when she saw the car herself and was able to examine it closely, she saw that it was not in very good condition. To look at something up close means that you are examining, inspecting, or scrutinizing it, as opposed to just looking at it.

Here's another example with **up close**:

Akira: I saw an ad online for a used dresser, and it's exactly what you're looking for.

Campos: Really? Does the ad have pictures?

Akira: Yeah, but I really think you should go see it in person so you can look at it up close. Sometimes pictures can make an item look like it's in better condition than it actually is.

Campos: You're right. OK, send me the ad and I'll call the sellers.

To keep an eye out for something

The expression **to keep an eye out for something** is similar to **to keep an eye on something**, except that **to keep an eye out for something** implies that you're looking or searching for something, instead of carefully monitoring it. Usually, **keeping an eye out for something** means passively (not actively) looking for something. In other words, it implies that you're just looking for something while living your daily life, instead of devoting time looking for it.

In this episode, Maura uses this expression in an example with the expression **up close**. She says that she is going **to keep her eye out** for a good deal on a newer car. What this means is that she is going to pay attention in case she comes across a deal on a newer car, but she's not actually going to try very hard to find one.

Here's another example with **to keep an eye out for something**:

Elisa: Have you found a new apartment yet?

Yukie: Not yet. It doesn't seem like there are many available this time of year.

Elisa: Well, I'll **keep an eye out** for any available places in my area.

Yukie: That would be great, thank you.

To be in good shape

To be in good shape is another expression that can be used to describe the condition of either items or people. **To be in good shape** means to function or look well.

In this episode, Maura says that a car **was not in good shape**, which means that the car was not in very good condition. Maura could've meant that the car either looked bad, or didn't work well.

Here's another example with **to be in good shape**.

Omar: Did you get a chance to visit your grandfather this past weekend?

Naomi: I did, yes.

Omar: How is he? You told me last week that he had been ill.

Naomi: Yeah, he's doing a lot better. For someone who's 86, he's **in very good shape**.

Omar: Wow, he must take good care of himself.

Naomi: Yeah, he eats well and exercises a little bit every day.

A corn

In this episode, Maura pretends to be a grandmother and mentions her **corns**, in one of the examples about the phrase *to have seen better days*. **Corns** are bumps that can appear on people's feet and toes, and they can actually be quite painful. **A corn** is sort of a cross between a wart and a callus, because **corns** are shaped like warts, but they are actually build-ups of dead skin, like calluses.

Older people tend to get **corns** a lot, because they are caused by friction, which is the rubbing together of two surfaces. **Corns** happen after friction occurs for a long time, so the older someone is, the more friction their feet have experienced.

Quiz

1. What does *mint condition* mean?

- a) perfect condition
- b) not very good condition
- c) clearly used and dirty
- d) worth a lot of money

2. What is the origin of the expression *mint condition*?

- a) Mint is another word for bad or dirty.
- b) Mint is an herb that is refreshing, so something that's in mint condition is fresh.
- c) A mint is a place where money is made.
- d) Mint is an acronym for *many items new today*.

3. What does *brand new* mean?

- a) handmade instead of made in a factory
- b) used but in good condition
- c) new and unopened, like when bought from a store
- d) bought on sale

4. If someone tells you that something they own is new to them, what does this mean?

- a) They don't like it.
- b) They got it as a present and plan to return it to the store.
- c) It's in bad condition.
- d) It was previously owned by someone else.

5. What does the expression *wear and tear* mean?

- a) something that has been purposely made to look old, like fake antiques
- b) the amount of use and damage something has
- c) the number of miles or kilometres a used car has on it
- d) your age

6. What is Craigslist?

- a) an online encyclopedia
- b) a website that allows you to determine the age and condition of an item
- c) a website where you can post used items, services, jobs, and announcements
- d) a menu at a cafeteria

Answers:

1.a 2.c 3.c 4.d 5.b 6.c