

Catch Word #133 – Let bygones be bygones

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:

- **wanna:** want to
- **gonna:** going to
- **kinda:** kind of
- **gotta:** got to
- **thinkin':** thinking

Transcript

Maura: Hello Culips listeners. It's Maura.

Harp: And Harp.

Maura: And we are here with another Culips episode for you.

Harp: Yes. And make sure you check out our website, Culips.com. That's C-U-L-I-P-S.com. Because there you can, and you should, sign up to become a member. When you're a member, you have access to the Learning Materials, which include a complete transcript, detailed explanations, and even a quiz, for each episode.

Maura: And this is really great because it helps you understand our episodes even more. If you weren't sure about something that you heard, or we used an expression that you never heard before, we just might describe it in our Learning Materials. We actually just added a new section as well, which has to do with slang. So we talk about how we use *gonna*, *wanna*, all of those fun little words. So check it out.

Harp: 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. Today we're going to do a Catch Word episode for you. And that is where we look at different expressions and we talk about how you can use them, and we—of course—give you examples.

- Harp: Yes. And today we're going to talk about expressions related to unpleasant things that have happened in the past.
- Maura: Right. The expressions we're going to look at are telling us **to not think** about those unpleasant things that happened in the past, **to not spend** time talking about them or worrying about them, to try to forget that they happened.
- Harp: Yes. So let's get started with our first expression today.
- Maura: Yeah. The first expression today is **to let bygones be bygones**.
- Harp: Yes. **To let bygones be bygones**.
- Maura: This expression sounds very repetitive because it repeats the same word twice—**bygones**. So the expression is **let bygones be bygones**.
- Harp: Yeah. And **bygones** mean something from the past, something that happened at an earlier time. And so this expression, **to let bygones be bygones**, it means to let unpleasant things that have happened in the past stay in the past. You forget about them. You don't **bring them up** again. You just let it go.
- Maura: Right. It's like saying something that happened in the past happened in the past, not the present, so don't think about it now.
- Harp: For example, if you had an argument or a fight with someone in the past, don't **bring it up** again. Don't think about it. **Let bygones be bygones**.
- Maura: Right. This could definitely be referring to something unpleasant that a person did, so you might wanna feel mad at someone about it. But **to let bygones be bygones** means that you're not gonna be mad at this person, you're not going to think about what they did, you're just going to continue to live your life.
- Harp: Let's give an example with this expression.

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| Harp: | Hey Julie. I've been meaning to ask you, have you spoken with your sister since that big disagreement? |
| Maura: | Actually, no. I have not talked to her since then. |
| Harp: | Oh no. It's been so long. I think it's time to let bygones be bygones . |
| Maura: | Yeah. I don't know. I do kinda miss talking to her. I'll think about calling her. |
| Harp: | Family's important, especially sisters. I think you should forgive her. |

Maura: Yeah. I'll think about it.

Maura: In that example, there were sisters who had a disagreement and weren't talking to each other. And the friend gave the advice **to let bygones be bygones**, which means the disagreement happened in the past, you should forget about it, be friends with your sister again, talk to your sister, and move on.

Harp: Yeah. In this example, Julie had a disagreement with her sister and it was unpleasant and she didn't want to talk to her sister. But really, it's important to let things go.

Maura: Yeah. That is true. Especially with family.

Harp: Family is super important.

Maura: Family will be with you forever.

Harp: Exactly.

Maura: Kinda like this expression. This expression is very old, like it's **been around** forever.

Harp: That's what I was thinking.

Maura: This expression is yet another expression that is related to Shakespeare. He gets credit for beginning a lot of English expressions.

Harp: He definitely does, but he wrote so much and was so famous.

Maura: Yeah. So this expression goes back to the 15th century.

Harp: It's an old one.

Maura: OK. Let's give you one more example now with **to let bygones be bygones**.

Harp: Hey. How's work going?

Maura: Yeah, it's going all right.

Harp: Oh no. Are you still upset that your project wasn't picked?

Maura: Actually, I am. I really think that it was the best idea. I can't believe that last week, when the boss heard all of the project ideas, mine wasn't picked.

Harp: I know you had a good idea, but won't you just **let bygones be bygones**?

Maura: I don't know. I'm sure I'll get over it eventually. But right now I'm still **miffed**.

- Maura: So in this example we had someone whose idea was not picked at work and she continued to be upset about it. She wouldn't **let bygones be bygones**, which means she wouldn't forget about it, she wouldn't move on, and she was still mad about something that happened in the past.
- Harp: Yeah. It was unpleasant for her that her idea wasn't picked and that someone else's was, and she was just not willing to let it go.
- Maura: Mmhmm. She wouldn't **let bygones be bygones**.
- Harp: Which wasn't good, because she wasn't enjoying her job.
- Maura: OK. Let's look at the next expression in our episode today, which is **to put something behind you**.
- Harp: Yes. **To put something behind you**.
- Maura: And this expression means to decide to forget about something unpleasant that happened in the past, **to not think** about it, not dwell on it, and to move on.
- Harp: Yeah, because if you think about it, if you actually put something behind you, a physical object behind you, you can't see it anymore so you forget it.
- Maura: Right. And in that way, it's like it doesn't exist. Just like the past is **behind you**. So you might as well not spend time thinking back to it all the time, especially if something was unpleasant. Just move forward with your life.
- Harp: Yeah. Focus on the positive and move forward.
- Maura: So this expression could also be said as **to put the past behind you**. In that case, it would probably be referring to a specific event that you both know about, or in general. If you just had a really bad year, in general, then you might say, *I'm going to put the past behind me*, which means you're going **to put everything about the past behind you**.
- Harp: Yeah. I think we should give an example with this expression.
- Maura: Yeah. Let's give an example with **to put something behind you**.

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|--------|--|
| Harp: | Hey, I've been meaning to ask you. Are you still feeling pain from the car accident? |
| Maura: | Um, actually, I'm pretty good now. Um, I guess my right leg hurts sometimes. It flares up when I'm walking a lot, but I feel pretty good. |

Harp:	OK. That's good. It was a bad car accident, so I'm happy you're feeling good now.
Maura:	Yeah. I really am just trying to put it behind me now. Ah, I don't even like talking about it, to be honest.
Harp:	Oh, OK. I understand. I'm sorry.

Maura: In this example, we had someone who was in a car accident, and she was trying **to put that behind her**. Obviously a car accident is an unpleasant experience, and so she didn't want to think about it, she didn't want to talk about it, she just wanted to move forward with her life.

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

Maura:	So how's your daughter's math class going this summer?
Harp:	It's going really well. You know, she was so discouraged when she failed her class last year, but she's putting it behind her and she's focusing on this class and she's learning a lot and she's doing really well.
Maura:	That's great. You know, you really gotta be that way. Because when you don't pass a subject, you can really get down on yourself .
Harp:	I know. She failed the math class and she was really upset, so I'm so happy to see her succeeding now.
Maura:	Yeah. That's great. I'm glad to hear it.

Maura: In that example, we had a young girl who was taking a math class in the summer because she had failed during her regular school year. And when you fail, sometimes you might feel bad about yourself.

Harp: Yeah. It's very unpleasant to fail a class, so it's very discouraging and you can focus on the negative, but in this example, the young girl decided to focus on the positive and **to put it behind her**.

Maura: Exactly. All right, so let's look at our last expression today about leaving things in the past and not spending time being mad today.

Harp: Yeah. Our last expression **to let sleeping dogs lie**.

Maura: Mmhmm. **To let sleeping dogs lie**.

Harp: It's kind of a funny expression: **to let sleeping dogs lie**.

- Maura: Right. This just means that we should leave things in the past that happened in the past. We shouldn't try to **bring them up** again, start talking about them, because that could just cause problems today.
- Harp: Yeah. It's **to not bring up something** again and again and focus on the negative, something bad that happened in the past. Just leave it.
- Maura: Right. And if you imagine a dog who's sleeping, well, the dog already fell asleep in past. Everything is calm and quiet, and if you wake up the dog, then you might have a problem. The dog might be angry or start barking. So that's why it's best **to let sleeping dogs lie**. In the same way, you wanna leave something that happened in the past in the past and not start talking about it, or thinking about it, again.
- Harp: Yeah, and again, this is a really old expression, and it comes from the English author Chaucer.
- Maura: Yeah. He's one of those old, old, English writers who have **been around** for a while. Let's give you an example with **to let sleeping dogs lie**.

- Harp: Hey, are you excited to be working on the new marketing report?
- Maura: Well, I am, except I'm going to be working on it with Joseph.
- Harp: What's the problem?
- Maura: Well, I'll never forget, about a year ago, when I was working on a report with him, and he didn't get his work done. And we got in a lot of trouble. I'm actually thinking about asking to work with someone else.
- Harp: Oh. I think you should **let sleeping dogs lie**. You need to give him a second chance. He's done really good work this year.
- Maura: Yeah. I don't know. Maybe you're right. Maybe asking for a new partner is more trouble than it's worth.
- Harp: Yeah. I don't think it's a good idea at all.
- Maura: He better get his work done though. I'm gonna **be on him**.
- Harp: I'm sure he will.

Maura: So, in this example, we had somebody who wasn't very happy with her colleague and this was about something that happened a year ago. And she was thinking of **bringing it up** again. That's why the expression **to let sleeping dogs lie** was used, because another friend was saying don't **bring it up** again, don't start talking about something that happened a year ago. Leave it in the past.

Harp: Yeah. It would have probably caused quite a few problems. It was just better **to let sleeping dogs lie** and to forget it.

Maura: Yeah. OK, we are going to give you one more example now with **to let sleeping dogs lie**.

Harp: Guess what?

Maura: What?

Harp: David called me yesterday.

Maura: You mean David your **old flame**?

Harp: Yeah. It was really nice. He called just to chat. We laughed a lot. It was fun.

Maura: You're not gonna **go down that road again**, are you? Remember how much you guys used to fight and how horrible your break-up was?

Harp: I know. But it was nice talking to him yesterday.

Maura: I'm gonna give you some advice: **let sleeping dogs lie**. Don't start thinkin' about getting back together with him.

Harp: Yeah. You're right. It was pretty bad back then.

Maura: I'm glad you **came to your senses**.

Maura: And in that example, we had somebody who was thinking about dating a person, maybe for the second time, a person who it didn't go well with the first time. And so the expression **to let sleeping dogs lie** was used to mean don't start dating that person again, don't go back to the way things were in the past.

Harp: Yeah. It was really unpleasant back then. Just leave the whole situation in the past.

Maura: And hopefully she will. Who knows?

- Harp: Who knows? People are silly when it comes to that. All right, let's do a quick recap. We started with the expression ***to let bygones be bygones***.
- Maura: And then we looked at ***to put something behind you*** or ***to put the past behind you***.
- Harp: And then we finished with ***to let sleeping dogs lie***.
- Maura: You know, Harp, this episode was a little bit depressing.
- Harp: I know. It's all about unpleasant things.
- Maura: And people trying ***to possibly bring them back up*** again in the present, and not getting over things.
- Harp: We need to record a positive, happy episode now. And remember to check out our website, Culips.com. That's C-U-L-I-P-S.com. Because we have lots of fun, happy expressions there.
- Maura: Yeah. Lots of other episodes with fun, happy, uplifting expressions.
- Harp: And make sure you say hi to us on Facebook.
- Maura: That's right. We love to hear from you. And I especially love to hear from people who are in warm countries now, although I do feel a little bit jealous of the sun and the warm breeze that they're probably feeling.
- Harp: Spring is coming. It's ***right around the corner***, Maura.
- Maura: Thanks Harp. All right, we'll talk to you again soon. Bye everyone.
- Harp: Bye.

Detailed Explanation

To let bygones be bygones

To let bygones be bygones means to forget unpleasant events that happened in the past. It's just like saying to leave unpleasant events in the past. This expression is used to give advice to people who are not doing this, and who are focusing on negative events from the past.

Shakespeare wrote in *The Winter's Tale*, "The by-gone-day proclaym'd." This is what started the word *bygone*. *Bygone* can be used to talk about anything from the past.

Here's one more example with **to let bygones be bygones**:

Mary: I know I should just **let bygones be bygones**, but I can't forget what a jerk my brother was to me when I was young.

Madison: Yeah, you gotta let that go. He's a much better person now, and he feels bad about the way he treated you.

To bring something up

To bring something up means to intentionally start a new topic in a conversation. For example, if a group of friends were talking about their weekends, and one friend, Sandy, changed the topic by asking whether anyone had heard from their friend Charles, then we could say that Sandy **brought Charles up**.

This expression is used a number of times in this episode. This is because people often **bring up events** from their past, especially when they are not letting bygones be bygones. People who still think about their past usually also talk about it, so they **bring it up** often.

Here are a couple more examples with **to bring something up**:

Becky: Do you think Rebecca had a good time at the party?

Larry: Why are you **bringing up that** again? Just forget about it. Who cares if she had a good time?

Mike: Before we end this meeting, I need **to bring up** one more problem. The water in the water cooler is never cold!

Nathan: It really bugs you that much, eh? We'll get someone to look at it.

As with many two-word verbs, you can put the object after **to bring up** or right in the middle, like **to bring something up**. *To bring up* also has other uses and meanings, including *to vomit*.

Miffed

Here is a cute little adjective that means upset, angry, or in a bad mood. It's not as common as the word *angry*, but you might hear it when people are just a little bit angry, or if some time has passed since the person was first upset. If a person were really angry, they probably wouldn't use this word, because it just doesn't sound angry enough!

In this episode, Maura says she is **miffed** in an example dialogue, because her project wasn't chosen at work. She's annoyed and bothered by that. She also says that she knows she'll eventually get past it.

Here's another example with **miffed**:

Brad: Is Doug still **miffed** about our plans getting cancelled?

Octavia: Yeah, but he'll get over it eventually. Don't worry.

To put something behind you

To put something behind you means not to think about an unpleasant event from your past. If you're walking and something is behind you, it's in your past, because you've already walked by it. **To put something behind you** means to not continue to think about it.

As we mention in this episode, you might also hear **to put the past behind you**. This could refer to a large part of the past that someone should forget and not think about. If an unpleasant event in someone's past is already being discussed, then saying **put the past behind you** could also refer to that specific event.

Here are a couple more examples with these expressions:

Heather: Sometimes I still feel dumb when I think about the fact that I failed grade 2 when I was a kid.

Simon: Just **put the past behind you**. That was a long time ago.

Justina: I can't believe my boss just totally didn't appreciate all the extra hard work I put in.

Brian: You should **put that behind you**, or it could affect your future work.

To flare up

When something **flares up**, it begins suddenly and quickly, and intensifies. In this episode, **to flare up** is used to talk about a physical condition that suddenly and quickly begins to get worse. **To flare up** can be used in other ways too. For example, a war can **flare up** or a fire can **flare up**. This expression can also be a noun: **a flare-up**.

In this episode, in the dialogue example about being in a car accident, **to flare up** is used to describe pain from the accident. Usually the pain is not strong, but going for a walk causes the pain to **flare up**.

Here is another example with **to flare up**:

Nick: My eczema is **flaring up** again. I think it's because of the weather.

Kate: Oh, that sucks. You'd better put the cream you have for it on right away.

To get down on yourself

When a person is described as down, this means the person is not feeling well, and is feeling depressed. The meaning of *down* is the same in the expression **to get down on yourself**. **To get down on yourself** means to feel negatively about yourself. This usually means that a person feels badly in some way, like feeling stupid or ugly.

In this episode, in the dialogue example about a daughter failing math, Maura says that people can **get down on themselves** in situations like that. If a person fails a class, they may feel stupid. Luckily, the daughter didn't seem to be feeling this way.

Here's another example with **to get down on yourself**:

Jen: **Don't get down on yourself** just because you didn't get to audition. You just have to prepare even more for the next competition.

Joey: I guess you're right, but it's hard to not feel bad about it. I really wanted to audition.

You might also hear **to be down yourself** or **to feel down on yourself**.

To let sleeping dogs lie

To let sleeping dogs lie means to not talk about something bothersome that may cause problems. If something is currently not causing problems, don't do anything to make it a problem now.

Think of a sleeping dog. The dog is calm and peaceful while sleeping, but if you wake him up, he could get angry and cause trouble. This is the idea behind **to let sleeping dogs lie**.

Chaucer wrote this in 1374: "It is not good a slepyng hound to wake." If this sentence seems strange to you, remember that languages change so much over the years, and so we don't write like this anymore. *Slepyng* is now spelled *sleeping*.

Here's one more example with **to let sleeping dogs lie**:

Belinda: I wanted to talk to you about what happened at Sinead's party this past summer.

Lindsay: I don't want to talk about that. Can't we just **let sleeping dogs lie**?

Split infinitives

Here's a brief grammar point worth writing about: **split infinitives**. There is debate about whether not to use them is a true grammatical rule. A split infinitive is when a word comes between *to* and the verb, like in ***to not do*** or ***to quickly make***. Many people believe that this is incorrect and those examples should be written as *not to do* or *to make quickly*. Professionally, it is probably best to avoid them, but they are actually used all the time, especially in speaking. Maura and Harp use a lot of split infinitives in this episode.

One popular split infinitive is "**To boldly go** where no one has gone before." This quotation is from the popular television series *Star Trek*. **To boldly go** is a split infinitive, and so it has upset many people who believe that we should not use them.

To be around

When something is described as **being around** for a certain amount of time, this is simply saying how long something has existed. You could say that a certain kind of shoes has **been around** for a couple years or a particular website has **been around** since the Internet first got popular.

This expression is used twice in this episode. First, Maura says that the expression *to let bygones be bygones* has **been around** forever. Of course she is exaggerating, but she is saying that this expression has existed for a long time. The second time this expression is used, Maura says that Chaucer has **been around** for a long time. She is saying that he has existed and been known for a long time.

Here are a couple more examples with **to be around**:

Greg: Have you been to Vince's restaurant downtown?

Kyle: Yeah. That's **been around** for a while. I used to go when I was a kid.

Cheryl: This medicine hasn't **been around** for very long, which is why I'm not sure whether I want to take it.

Yasmine: Well, do as much research as you can and then make an informed decision.

To be on someone

When we say that **one person is on another person**, it is possible that we mean this physically. But in this episode, when **to be on someone** is used, we're using it in a different way. **To be on someone** means to watch another person and make sure that they do what they are supposed to. It's as if the person will be on the other one's back, because they will be watching so closely to make sure they do things right.

In this episode, in the dialogue example where Joseph is described as not being a good worker, Maura says that when she works with him she is going **to be on him**. This means that she is going to be watching him and making sure that he does his work properly.

Here are a couple more examples with **to be on someone** used in this way:

Chris: My boss has **been on me** all week. I don't know what his problem is.

Olivia: I think he's just stressed about the report you're working on. Don't take it personally. It's just a really important project.

George: Are you still worried about your son doing his homework?

Jack: Yeah. My plan is **to be on him** about it for the next month, and see if things improve.

An old flame

An old flame is a person you dated, but are not dating anymore. This is an older expression and so is more common among older people. They might use this expression to talk about someone they dated when they were much younger. In this expression, the word *old* means *former* or *ex*, and *flame* represents the passion that existed before.

Here's an example with the expression **an old flame**:

Steve: I ran into **an old flame** at my high school reunion last month.

Victoria: Oh really? That must have been weird. I can't imagine seeing any of my old boyfriends now.

To go down that road (again)

To go down that road means to do something or talk about something in particular. Using *that* means that the particular way has already been discussed. When this expression is used with *again*, this means that the action has already been done and the person is thinking of doing it again.

In this episode, in the dialogue example about the old flame, Maura says that her friend should not **go down that road again**. This means that she should not get into a relationship with her old flame again. This expression is often used like this, to tell someone not to do something or to question them about doing it.

Here are a couple more examples with **to go down that road**:

Freda: How's the job hunt going? Are you thinking of taking a part-time job, just for now?

Katerine: No. I don't want **to go down that road**. I'd rather wait to get a full-time position.

Kevin: I might get my sister to help me redesign my kitchen this summer.

Theo: I wouldn't **go down that road again** if I were you. Last time your sister helped you with home renovations you got into a big fight.

Kevin: I know, but she really knows what she's doing and I need her help.

To come to your senses

To come to your senses means to realize something that you previously had not known. This expression is used when a person begins to think clearly about something. The word *senses* refers to the senses of sight, hearing, touch, taste, and smell. It's as though you couldn't see something before and then you begin to see. Or you couldn't hear something and then you begin to hear. When a person **comes to their senses**, they also understand that before they were not thinking clearly.

In this episode, in the dialogue example about the old flame, Harp is thinking about seeing her ex again. After Maura reminds her of how bad things were with him, Harp sees the situation more clearly and decides that she will not see him. Maura says that she is glad Harp has **come to her senses**. Harp was previously not seeing the situation clearly, but now she understands that seeing this old boyfriend is not a good idea.

Here are a couple more examples with **to come to your senses**:

Tyrone: So you've decided to stop lending Paul money all the time. Good. You've finally **come to your senses**.

Jamie: I thought I was helping him out, but I don't have the money to lend.

Carl: I wonder what made Dot **come to her senses** about that dress. It was awful!

Alisha: I think that when she was showing people pictures of it, no one was really excited about it. So she decided not to buy it.

To be right around the corner

If an event is said to be **right around the corner**, this means that it will be happening soon. This expression refers to time, not physical space. In this episode, Harp says that spring is **right around the corner**. This means that spring will arrive soon.

Here are a couple more examples with **to be right around the corner**:

Dean: Hey! Your birthday is **right around the corner**, isn't it?

Lucy: Yeah. The big 3-0 is coming soon. I can't believe I'm already turning 30.

Adam: We're almost done school!

Dave: I know! Graduation is **right around the corner**.

You might also hear a similar expression with the same meaning: **to be just around the corner**. Of course, something can also be physically right around the corner, which usually means that it's nearby and located around a street corner.

Quiz

- 1. Matthew always brings up the fact that he's Canadian.**

What does *to bring up* mean in the above sentence?

- a) to begin to talk about
- b) to stop talking about
- c) to not like to talk about
- d) to vomit

- 2. If someone is miffed, how are they feeling?**

- a) happy
- b) excited
- c) angry
- d) sad

- 3. If someone tells you to put something behind you, what are they telling you to do?**

- a) forget about it
- b) talk about it
- c) plan for it
- d) be angry about it

- 4. Asif: My old ankle injury is _____ again. It's bothering me now.**

Please fill in the blank.

- a) suiting up
- b) flying high
- c) bearing down
- d) flaring up

- 5. Which of the following it NOT a split infinitive?**

- a) to not meet
- b) to meet up
- c) to slowly study
- d) to never exercise

6. **Ted: My brother has been _____ all week about the plans for our parents' anniversary party. I don't think he trusts me to do the job right.**

Please fill in the blank.

- a) an old flame
- b) around
- c) on me
- d) on vacation

7. ***To go down* _____ is an expression that means to do something in a particular way.**

Please fill in the blank.

- a) a road
- b) that road
- c) any road
- d) that street

8. **Which of the following expressions means to start seeing something clearly?**

- a) to come to your senses
- b) to be around
- c) to let sleeping dogs lie
- d) to be right around the corner

9. **Jonas: My trip is right around the corner!**

What does this mean?

- a) Jonas does not have a trip planned.
- b) Jonas is walking around a corner.
- c) Jonas is going on a trip soon.
- d) Jonas is going to plan a trip soon.

Answers:

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