

Catch Word #134 – Let's put it on the shelf for now

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:

- **'cause**: because
- **'em**: them
- **doin'**: doing
- **gonna**: going to
- **wanna**: want to

Transcript

Maura: Hello everyone. It's Maura.

Harp: And your friend Harp.

Maura: And we are here with your Culips English Podcast.

Harp: Make sure you check out our website, that's Culips.com, C-U-L-I-P-S.com.

Maura: And when you're at our website, you can also find out more about how to become a member. Because when you're a member, you can understand and learn from our episodes that much more. You get transcripts for every episode, more detailed explanations of the slang and expressions we use, and a quiz to help yourself for each episode.

Harp: Yes. And also, if you're on Facebook or on Twitter, come on over and say hi and if you have a question, you can leave it there.

Maura: That's right. So Harp, how are you doin' today?

Harp: I'm pretty good. I'm a little bit tired.

Maura: Oh yeah, why is that?

Harp: I went to bed a little bit late because I went to Toronto this weekend and my train got back late.

- Maura: Oh yeah. I love taking the train between Montreal and Toronto. It's so quaint and you get to see all these little towns and villages that you normally don't see when you drive.
- Harp: I love taking the train. It's relaxing. You can **do your own thing** and you don't have to worry about traffic or if the weather is bad. You just get to relax the whole way there.
- Maura: Very nice.
- Harp: So today we're doing a Catch Word podcast and that's where we take some expressions, we break 'em down, and we give you examples.
- Maura: That is right. And today, in our Catch Word episode, we're going to talk about expressions that mean that someone is delaying something or putting off something.
- Harp: Yeah. These expressions are related to not focusing on something right now.
- Maura: But planning to focus on it in the future sometime. So you're not going **to deal with something** at the moment, but later on you'll get back to it.
- Harp: Yes. Let's get started. Let's not delay.
- Maura: All right. The first expression in our episode today is ***to put something on the shelf***.
- Harp: Yes. ***To put something on the shelf***.
- Maura: That's right. ***To put something on the shelf*** means that you're not going to talk about it anymore, you're not going to discuss it, you're not going to think about it, but you'll talk about it again later, at some time in the future.
- Harp: Yeah. You're going to postpone making a decision or thinking about it or talking about it until later.
- Maura: Right. If you **put something on the shelf** that you're talking about, it doesn't mean that it's finished and it's over and you're not gonna talk about it ever again, it just means not today, or not at this moment.
- Harp: Yeah. And if you think about this expression, ***to put something on the shelf***, if you literally take an object off of a table and **put it on the shelf**, it's not there anymore, you're not thinking about it, you're not talking about it anymore.

- Maura: Right. You've put it away, it's not something that you're looking at or thinking about. It's the same idea with this expression, ***to put something on the shelf***.
- Harp: Yeah. For example, with ***to put something on the shelf***, you can **put a work project on the shelf**. You decide to not focus on it right now, to not think about it, and later, maybe in a month or two months, you'll come back to it.
- Maura: Yeah. This expression is often used in the work environment. It could be used in your private life too, with friends, but when I think about **putting something on the shelf**, I think about a meeting at work and a discussion taking place, and then people, or maybe the boss, deciding to stop discussing an issue but to discuss it later, and that's when the boss would use this expression.
- Harp: Yeah. It's used in a work environment often.
- Maura: All right. So, we're now going to give you, as we always do, a couple examples using ***to put something on the shelf***.

- Harp: Hey Jane. How are you?
- Maura: I'm pretty good. How are you?
- Harp: Good. So I forgot to ask you, when are you gonna start the home renovations?
- Maura: Actually, **funny story**. We decided to **put the home renovations on the shelf** for right now.
- Harp: Oh really? Why?
- Maura: Well, I discussed with my husband about the renovations so many times, and we tried to agree on something but we just could not **find common ground**.
- Harp: Yeah. It's hard 'cause you have to make so many decisions, so I understand.
- Maura: Yeah. We really couldn't agree on a concept so we just decided to put it off for now and maybe in a couple more months we'll decide to re-open the debate.
- Harp: Oh. Good idea.

- Maura: So in that example, we had someone who was supposed to have started some home renovations, but because they couldn't decide what concept to use in their renovations, they decided to **put the renovations on the shelf**.

- Harp: Yeah. In this example, Jane couldn't decide if she wanted to do a modern concept, or more classic, or more contemporary. There are a lot of decisions to make for a home renovation.
- Maura: Right. So, for this reason, they decided to **put the renovations on the shelf**. It doesn't mean they're not gonna do the renovations at all. It just means that right now they're going to forget about it.
- Harp: Yeah. They're not going to think about, they're not gonna discuss it for a couple months.
- Maura: And, Harp, didn't we just say a few minutes ago that this expression is often used at work?
- Harp: It is. Should we give a work example?
- Maura: Well, of course.

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| Harp: | I just wanted to check in and see how the hiring was going for the two new secretaries . Are they gonna start soon? |
| Maura: | Well, actually, I was looking over our budget, and to be honest, we just don't have the money right now, so we're gonna have to put that on the shelf . |
| Harp: | Oh no. We really needed the help. |
| Maura: | I know. I'd love to have a few extra hands around here but we're just gonna have to wait. |

- Maura: And so there's a work example for you, where hiring had **to be put on the back burner** because there was not enough money to do it.
- Harp: Yeah. They had to delay hiring two new **secretaries** because they didn't have the budget. And later, when they have more money, they can hire the two **secretaries**.
- Maura: That's right. Now, let's look at the next expression.
- Harp: The next expression is **to put something on the back burner**.
- Maura: The beginning of this expression sounds just like the first expression, but it's different at the end. **To put something on the back burner**.
- Harp: Yes. **To put something on the back burner**.

Maura: And this means just the same as **to put something on the shelf**. When you **put something on the back burner**, you are not going **to deal with it** right now, you're going to temporarily put it on hold. And at some time in the future, you will **deal with it**.

Harp: Yeah. You're not gonna give it immediate action or thought, you're gonna let it go for a little bit and not think about, and later you're gonna **deal with it**.

Maura: Right. It's something that doesn't need to be discussed right now. Now, a back burner is actually part of a stove. And when you put something on the back burner, it's not something that needs your immediate attention while cooking. You can kind of put it on the back and just let it simmer on its own; you don't need to pay close attention to it. The same goes for whatever you're **dealing with**. If you're not going to give it full attention right now, you can say you **put it on the back burner**.

Harp: Yeah. You don't need to focus attention on it right now. You **put it on the back burner**.

Maura: Now, I think we owe you a couple examples. Let's give the first one.

Harp: OK.

Maura: OK. So, for the science project, I can't meet Monday night or Tuesday night, and Wednesday and Friday afternoons I'm not available. Do you have any limitations on your schedule?

Harp: Well, I can't meet on Tuesday night and Thursday in the morning.

Maura: OK.

Harp: I think we should focus on the topic, before we look at our schedules.

Maura: Yeah. Let's **put the scheduling on the back burner** for now and figure out what exactly we're going to do for the project.

Harp: This is a good plan.

Maura: OK, now, do you have any ideas?

Maura: Now in this example, the schedule wasn't the most important thing that these students had **to deal with**, so they **put it on the back burner**. It didn't need immediate attention. What was more important was figuring out what they were going to do for the science project.

Harp: Yeah. They decided to postpone deciding when to meet about the project and focus on the topic.

Maura: Right. Of course they would eventually have to discuss their schedules, but they just weren't going to do it right away. When you **put something on the back burner**, it might mean that you talk about it a few days later, or weeks later, or months later, but it also could just be 30 minutes later or an hour later. Probably by the end of this meeting, the students would've discussed when they were going to meet.

Harp: That's a very good point. Yeah, there's not a fixed amount of time that people **put something on the back burner** or **put something on the shelf**.

Maura: Yeah, it just means not right now, not in this moment. The future could be 10 minutes or 10 weeks.

Harp: Let's give one more example.

Maura: Sounds good.

Maura: So have you found a car you're interested in yet?

Harp: Well, you know, I actually **put it on the back burner**.

Maura: I thought you needed a new car.

Harp: I do, but you know, I've gone shopping at a lot of different places and it's just so expensive to buy a new car. I need to save some more money first.

Maura: Yeah. It's better to invest in a really good car that you feel comfortable with. You don't wanna end up with **a lemon**.

Maura: In this example, we had someone who was not going to buy a car right now. She was **putting it on the back burner**. She was still going to buy a car, but just not at this exact moment.

Harp: Yeah. She was not going to make a decision of which car she wanted right now, because she wanted to save more money.

Maura: All right. Let's look at the last expression for this episode.

Harp: The last expression is **to put something on ice**.

Maura: **To put something on ice**.

Harp: Yeah. **To put something on ice**.

Maura: This means, just like the first two expressions, to postpone doing something, to temporarily put it on hold and, sometime in the future, discuss it or **deal with it** again.

Harp: Yeah. Something right now is not the priority, so you're not gonna think about it, you're not gonna make a decision. You're gonna do it later.

Maura: Yeah. And this one might possibly be related to food. If you're not gonna cook something up right now, like a piece of meat, you wanna keep it fresh, so you keep it on ice, so that in the future, it's still cool and fresh and ready to be cooked.

Harp: Yeah. That's a good visual for thinking about this expression.

Maura: When this expression is used, you're not talking about food. You're talking about a decision or a plan. All right, let's give you a couple examples.

Maura: Did you hear that the city **put the plans for building a new school on ice**?

Harp: Really? That's so disappointing.

Maura: I know. I was really excited to have a brand new school in the neighbourhood where my kids could go, but looks like they're not building it for now.

Harp: I'm very disappointed. I'm gonna call my **city councillor** and complain.

Maura: Yeah. Who knows when they'll actually get around to building it? Things get **put on ice** for ever.

Harp: I know. It could be years that we're waiting for a new school.

Maura: In this example, plans to build a new school were **put on ice**, which means they were not cancelled, but at this moment in time, no school was going to be built.

Harp: Yeah. And they didn't know how long it was gonna be **put on ice**. They didn't know if the school was going to be built next year or in 5 years. They didn't know.

Maura: Yeah. Because the **time frame** is not really clear, sometimes we don't know how long it's going to be. But I'm sure in this case it wasn't going to be 5 minutes.

Harp: Definitely not.

Maura: The bigger the project, or the bigger the decision, usually the longer the **time frame** is.

Harp: Yes. Let's give one more example.

Maura: Let's do it.

Maura:	So, did you wanna keep planning for our trip in June?
Harp:	I'm not sure, because Vanessa isn't sure if she's gonna get her vacation approved, so we might wanna wait.
Maura:	I guess you do have a point.
Harp:	Let's put it on ice and wait until she gets it approved.
Maura:	Yeah. I guess we wouldn't wanna make plans and then find out we couldn't go. That would be disappointing.
Harp:	That would be really sad.

Maura:	And in this example, we had friends who were planning a trip and they decided to put those plans on ice because their friend Vanessa wasn't sure to get the time off work. So they decided to temporarily put the plans on hold and hopefully resume them at a later time.
Harp:	Yeah. They were delaying making more plans for the trip because they didn't if they were gonna go or not.
Maura:	That is right. Now, we've gone over all three expressions for you and given you a few examples for each.
Harp:	Let's do a quick recap right now. We started with to put something on the shelf .
Maura:	And then we talked about to put something on the back burner .
Harp:	And we finished with to put something on ice .
Maura:	That is right. Now, don't put becoming a Culips member on the back burner ! Go to our website and check it out. If you're not sure, you can also see an example of what you'd be getting.
Harp:	Yes. Sign up and become a member. Don't delay. You can sign up on the website, Culips.com, that's C-U-L-I-P-S.com.
Maura:	And if you're online on Facebook or Twitter, you can always say hi or send us your comments there.
Harp:	And we'll talk to you next time.
Maura:	We definitely will. Bye.

Detailed Explanation

To do your own thing

Here's a cute little expression that means to do what you want to do, which is different from what others may be doing. When you **do your own thing**, you don't have to worry about anyone else or care what they are doing. You just do what you like. For example, if everyone is driving somewhere, one person could **do their own thing** by walking instead. Or there could be a group of people doing a variety of activities, but one person is not doing any of those activities, and is **doing their own thing** instead.

Harp uses this expression right at the beginning of this episode, when she talks about taking the train. One of the reasons she likes taking the train is because she can **do her own thing**. This means that she can do whatever she likes on the train. If Harp decided to drive instead, she would have to pay attention to the road and to what all the other drivers were doing. But on the train, she can read a book, take a nap, or just relax without worrying about anything.

When someone **does their own thing**, they do whatever they want and don't need to think of anyone else. In some cases, this can be rude. For example, if there were a group of people spending time together, it could be rude for one person to say that they do not want to be part of the group and are going to **do their own thing** instead. This depends on the specific situation.

Here are a couple more examples with **to do your own thing**:

Rhonda: What do you want to do tonight?

Oscar: I'm just gonna **do my own thing**. I'll probably stay in and read a book.

Donna: Do you want to go skiing with Jim and Sally today?

Brad: Not really. I'd rather we just take it easy and **do our own thing** today.

It's possible to use this expression to talk about more than one person, as in the second example above. In this way, a group of people are going to do what they want, separate from another group.

To put something on the shelf

When someone **puts something on the shelf**, this means that at this moment, they are not going to talk about it or think about it. In the future, they will probably continue to discuss the topic, but not now. There is no set time **to put something on the shelf**. A topic could be **put on the shelf** for minutes or months. Sometimes something is **put on a shelf** and then with time is completely forgotten.

Here's another example with **to put something on the shelf**:

Isla: Let's **put the plans for next year on the shelf** for now. We've got more important issues to discuss in the office.

Oliver: Agreed. We can talk about the plans after we finish the big project next week.

A secretary

In recent years, there have been some changes in terms used in the past, because some people find them offensive. This is called political correctness. Many people try to be politically correct, while others think that it is a waste of time.

The word **secretary** is a term that some people may find offensive. There are a variety of possible reasons for this. For some people, the word **secretary** refers to a simple job where not much skill or training is needed. People may find this offensive when they are called **secretaries**, but their work is much more complicated than typical secretarial work. In many cases, **secretaries** are now called administrative assistants.

To deal with something

The expression **to deal with something** is very general. It means to take action toward a person or thing. This expression is used a lot in this episode because when something is put on the shelf, this means that people are not **dealing with it**, as no action is being taken. An action could be, for example, having a discussion or fixing something that is broken.

Here are a couple more examples with **to deal with something**:

Jeff: My ex-girlfriend just called me again!

Karla: You should answer her call. You're going to have **to deal with her** sooner or later, so you might as well get it over with.

Carmen: I can't **deal with** all this stress today! I've got a really bad headache. I think I have to go home early.

Ivan: If you're not feeling well, you should.

Funny story

If you've been listening to the Culips podcast for a while, you might remember that native English speakers sometimes leave off the beginning of some sentences, especially when speaking. This is the case with this expression: **funny story**.

People say **funny story** to introduce that they are going to tell you something funny, interesting, or surprising. The full sentence could be *I've got a funny story to tell you* or *listen to this funny story*. You'll notice that when Maura uses this expression in a dialogue example, she continues by telling a short story of why she hasn't started her renovations. Here are a couple more examples with **funny story**:

Sara: OK, so, **funny story**. I ran into Chuck today!
Patrina: Really? What happened?

Bill: So tell me about your trip to Toronto.
Kyle: Well, **funny story**. I didn't end up going...

To find common ground

When two or more people **find common ground**, they find something similar between them. This might mean that people have a similar opinion when they usually disagree or they might have a shared experience when they seem to have lived very different lives. This expression is only used when the people are usually very different from each other in some way, when finding something similar is rare.

In this episode, **to find common ground** is used to talk about a couple who are trying to do home renovations. Their opinions on how to decorate were so different that they could not continue. Maura says that they could not **find common ground**, which means that they could not find a similar opinion on how to decorate.

Here are a couple more examples with **to find common ground**:

Gerry: Are the boss and the CEO getting along any better? Have they decided how they're going to handle the cutbacks?

Manuel: I don't think they've made any decisions. First they've just got **to find some common ground** before anything can happen.

Amanda: I just don't seem to get along with your sister. It doesn't seem like we have anything in common.

Morgan: Just get to know her a bit more. I'm sure that you'll eventually **find some common ground**.

Extra hands

When people talk about **extra hands**, they're really talking about extra people who can help with something, especially with physical work. Most physical work involves using your hands, right? Like in this episode, you might hear **a few extra hands** or **an extra set of hands**.

In this episode, this expression is used when Maura and Harp are doing a dialogue example about hiring new secretaries. Working in administration isn't always a physical job, but part of the job can involve filing, receiving, and sending mail, and other tasks that are more physical than mental.

Here are a couple more examples with **extra hands**:

Joan: I'm moving this weekend and I need **a few more pairs of hands**. Are you free?

Michelle: I can help you on Saturday morning if you'd like.

Georgie: The factory where I work is always looking for **a few extra hands** at this time of year. If you're interested, let me know.

Jamie: Yeah, I'm interested. How do I apply?

To put something on the back burner

To put something on the back burner means to discuss or think about something at a later time. Whatever is **put on the back burner** is not a priority at this time.

There is a connection between this expression and cooking, which is mentioned in this episode. When you're cooking, something that is put on the back burner of your stove does not need immediate attention; you can just let it continue to cook at the back.

Something that is cooking on the front burner may need to be watched, or stirred, or have some additional ingredients added. (Unfortunately, we don't have an expression about putting something on the front burner.)

Here's another example with **to put something on the back burner**:

Hilda: Let's **put the plans on the back burner** for now. We can discuss them again next week when we have more time.

Yasmina: Good idea. I'm so busy at the moment and we don't really need to finalize the plans until next week anyway.

A lemon

A lemon is a yellow, sour citrus fruit, but this word also has other meanings. In this episode, Maura calls a car **a lemon**. In this case, **a lemon** is something, usually recently purchased, that does not work properly. This almost always refers to a car that ends up costing more money because it is not in good condition or is of low quality.

Here are a couple more examples with **a lemon**:

Spencer: How do you like the car you bought?

Irene: It's turning out to be a real **lemon**! I totally regret buying it.

Heath: I'm thinking of buying a second-hand stove. You have one, don't you? Did it turn out to be **a lemon**?

Kevin: Nope. We're actually quite happy with it and we saved a bundle.

To put something on ice

The expression **to put something on ice** is just like other expressions we focus on in this episode. When we **put something on ice**, this means that we are not going to talk about it now, but have decided to wait to talk about it again in the future.

This expression, like *to put something on the back burner*, is related to food. If you put some fresh food, like fish for example, on ice, this means that you want to save it for later and keep it fresh. You are not going to cook the fish immediately, but you will cook it sometime in the future, just like this expression. You are not going to discuss a certain topic right now, but you will sometime in the future.

Here's another example with **to put something on ice**:

Sandra: What are we going to do about reorganizing the files? How are we going to do it?
William: Why don't we **put that on ice** for now and focus on getting rid of the files we don't need anymore first.

A city councillor

A city council is a group of people who work as part of the government at the local level, and the members of this group are called **city councillors**. **City councillors** meet and vote on different issues affecting their city. **A city councillor** can also be assigned an even smaller area of their city to represent. They make decisions as a group about what happens in the city they live in.

If you have strong feelings about an issue in your community, you can contact your **city councillor** to give your opinion. Your **city councillor** is supposed to represent the wants and needs of the people in their area, so if enough people call with a concern, it can result in change.

In this episode, in the dialogue example about plans to build a new school, Harp talks about calling her **city councillor**. She says that she will complain about the plans for the new school being put on hold. By talking to her **city councillor**, she might be able to get the plans to build the new school started again.

A city councillor can also be called a councilmember or a councilwoman/councilman.

A time frame

A time frame is a period of time that something is planned to happen in. Some specific action or event will take place within the time specified. If the **time frame** for something is a week from today, then something will happen within the week. **A time frame** could also be two hours. This means that something should happen within that amount of time. We can also talk about **time frames** in the past.

A time frame is used in this episode to talk about the plan to build a new school. Harp and Maura explain that if a project is really big, the **time frame** is almost always longer than smaller projects. For example, the **time frame** to build a new school might be from June 2013 to January 2014, but the **time frame** to finish writing an essay for class might be one week.

Here are a couple more examples with **a time frame**:

Daniel: Do you know when this report needs to be finished by?

Kathy: I don't know the exact **time frame**, but I'll get back to you when I find out.

Nancy: Let's put **a time frame** on when we should have the renovations finished.

Oliver: OK. Let's say that we'll be done by the end of the month. I think that's fair. That's **a time frame** of three weeks.

Quiz

1. Lisa: I think we should put the project on the _____ for now.
Owen: OK. I think we can put it off until next month.

Please fill in the blank.

- a) desk
 - b) back table
 - c) back burner
 - d) front shelf
2. What is a more politically correct term for *secretary*?
- a) administrative assistant
 - b) secretarial administer
 - c) supervisor
 - d) CEO
3. When do people use the expression *funny story*?
- a) at the end of a funny story
 - b) before they tell a funny story
 - c) in the middle of a funny story
 - d) before they tell a sad story
4. If two people have found common ground, what does this mean?
- a) They are walking together.
 - b) They cannot find something similar between them.
 - c) They have found something similar between them.
 - d) They do not get along.
5. If Heather needs an extra pair of hands, what does she need?
- a) help from another person
 - b) more time to finish something
 - c) more creativity
 - d) more work to do

6. **A lemon is something that does not work properly. What kind of item is this expression most often used to describe?**
- a) a refrigerator
 - b) a bike
 - c) a car
 - d) a piece of clothing
7. **Which of the following is NOT an expression discussed in today's episode?**
- a) to put something on ice
 - b) to put something on the table
 - c) to put something on the shelf
 - d) to put something on the back burner
8. **What is a city councillor?**
- a) a member of the local government
 - b) a member of the federal government
 - c) a person who offers others advice
 - d) a police officer
9. ***Between 1pm and 5pm* is an example of what?**
- a) a time of amount
 - b) a time clock
 - c) a time frame
 - d) a block time

Answers:

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