

Catch Word #139 – Working around the clock

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
- **dunno:** don't know
- **goin':** going
- **gonna:** going to
- **wanna:** want to

Transcript

Maura: Hello everyone out there. It's Maura.

Harp: And Harp.

Maura: And we've got another Culips English episode for you.

Harp: Yes. And make sure you go to our website, Culips.com, that's C-U-L-I-P-S.com, because there, you can find all our older episodes, and you can become a member. And being a member really enhances your learning experience, because you have a complete transcript, detailed explanations, and even a quiz, for each episode.

Maura: Yeah. And with the transcript, you could listen to our episode once, and then you could listen again with the transcript to see that you actually understood what we were saying. Or you could listen with the transcript first and then get rid of it to see if your listening comprehension improves.

Harp: And you can listen to us on our website, or with iTunes, or with Stitcher.

Maura: That's right. And we are on Facebook often, and Twitter, so if you wanna just say hi, you can say hi to us there, or if you want to suggest an episode, or if you have a question.

Harp: So how's it goin' Maura?

Maura: Good. I'm feeling very happy right now because I just had some ice cream.

- Harp: I know how much you love ice cream, so I'm sure you're happy.
- Maura: Yes. You know, in the winter, I **give it up cold turkey**. I don't have any. But in the summer, I like to have ice cream almost every day. Anyway, it's so good. It's so refreshing.
- Harp: It is delicious. Maybe I'll bring some to our next recording session.
- Maura: You should bring some to every recording session.
- Harp: That's a very good point.
- Maura: OK. Now let's get to our episode today.
- Harp: Today we're doing a Catch Word, and this is where we look at some expressions and we give you examples and we show you how to use them.
- Maura: That is right. And today we are going to look at expressions that are used to talk about something that is happening continuously, non-stop; something that is **going on and on** through the night and into the day.
- Harp: Yeah. It's something that is happening all the time.
- Maura: So let's look at the first expression in our episode today, Harp.
- Harp: The first expression is **around the clock**.
- Maura: That's right. To say that something is happening **around the clock**.
- Harp: Yes. **Around the clock**.
- Maura: And this means that something is happening at all times; during the night, during the day. If you think about a clock, and **the hands on the clock** moving around, it covers all 24 hours in a day.
- Harp: Yeah. It just keeps going on.
- Maura: But you know, sometimes this expression is used as an exaggeration. When someone is really focused on doing something and they're spending a lot of time doing something, they might say they're doing it **around the clock**. But it doesn't actually mean they're working on it 24 hours a day. It just means that they're spending a lot of time on it, and maybe staying up late.
- Harp: Yeah. They could take breaks to eat or do other things, but if they're working on something a lot of the time, they could say that they're doing it **around the clock**.
- Maura: OK. Let's give a couple of examples now with **around the clock**.

Maura:	So how's everything going with you and Jerome?
Harp:	It's going pretty well.
Maura:	Yeah? Good.
Harp:	It is good. But, you know, he has to work so much. It's like he's working around the clock .
Maura:	Oh. That's no fun.
Harp:	No.
Maura:	Well, does he at least take time off on the weekend?
Harp:	Usually one night. But he works all day on the weekend still; all day Saturday, all day Sunday.
Maura:	Hmm. Well hopefully it's just a busy period and things will let up soon.
Harp:	I hope so.

- Maura: So in this example, we heard about Jerome, who was working **around the clock**, which means that he was working all the time, during the day and at night.
- Harp: Yes. He was working a lot, so he was working **around the clock**.
- Maura: Now, this might be a case where it's exaggerated a little bit. Jerome probably was sleeping, so he actually wasn't working 24 hours a day, but he was working into the night and he was waking up early and working again. So that's how this expression is used.
- Harp: And **around the clock** is often used to talk about working.
- Maura: Yeah. This is kind of a classic way to use the expression **around the clock**. When people are working a lot, you'll hear that this person is working **around the clock** at something.
- Harp: Yes, exactly.
- Maura: But it's not the only way you can use it.
- Harp: Let's give another example with a different way to use it.

Harp:	So how's the situation with your new neighbours?
Maura:	Not good. They're still making noise around the clock and I wake up at all

hours of the night. I can't sleep, and then I can't get back to sleep. I don't know what I'm gonna do.

Harp: I think you might need **to call the police on them**. They sound very disruptive.

Maura: Yeah.

Harp: I hope it gets better soon.

Maura: Me too.

Maura: So in this example, we heard about some new neighbours who were making noise **around the clock**, which means they were continuously making noise and being disruptive, including the nighttime, when people are trying to sleep.

Harp: Yes. They were just partying all the time and listening to loud music, and not really caring about their neighbours.

Maura: And in this case, maybe it wasn't an exaggeration. Maybe the neighbours were actually loud and disruptive all the time.

Harp: That would be very annoying.

Maura: But, you know, it does happen sometimes. Luckily, it's never happened to me personally. But I've heard stories where neighbours of friends have been really loud.

Harp: Yeah. I've heard that as well. And I'm lucky as well that I've never had that situation happen.

Maura: OK. Let's look at another expression now.

Harp: Our next expression is **24/7**.

Maura: That's right. This expression is just numbers: **24/7**.

Harp: **24/7**.

Maura: And this means that something is happening all the time, all day. **24/7** refers to 24 hours in a day and 7 days a week. So this is happening every hour of every day.

Harp: Yes. So it's happening all of the time.

Maura: That's right. So this isn't something that's just happening one or two days. It's usually describing something that is continuous forever, or always, really.

Harp: Yeah. And **24/7** was originally referring to a business or service that was available all of the time; during the daytime or the nighttime every day of the week.

Maura: Right. It makes me think of a convenience store that is open **24/7**, because those are pretty much the only businesses I can think of, maybe some fast-food restaurants too, that are open **24/7**, which means any time that you need something, you can go to this convenience store or restaurant and it will be open.

Harp: Yeah. I definitely think of a convenience store when I think of **24/7**.

Maura: Yeah, me too. And now this expression can still be used for businesses and services, but it can also be used to talk about things that people are doing or events that are happening as well.

Harp: Yeah. Let's give an example with this.

Maura: All right, let's do it.

Maura: I love this song.

Harp: Yeah. It's a good one.

Maura: You know, they're coming to Montreal at the end of the month.

Harp: We should go.

Maura: Uh... I wish. At the end of the month I have, like, three exams and two big essays to write. I'll be doing school work **24/7**.

Harp: Oh. That sucks.

Maura: Yeah. Well, maybe they'll come around again in the summer, when I'll be **free as a bird**.

Harp: I hope so. I'll check.

Maura: And here's an example where someone says she's going to be studying **24/7**, which means she's going to be studying all the time; 24 hours, 7 days a week.

Harp: This is definitely an exaggeration, because she needs to eat and to sleep.

Maura: That's right. If someone is studying **24/7**, it's probably not exactly accurate. It just means that they're going to be studying a lot and not doing much else.

Harp: Yes.

Maura: But as we said, this was originally meant to be that something was available 24 hours and 7 days a week. So let's do an example like that.

Harp: Let's do it.

Harp: I'm so frustrated.

Maura: Why? What happened?

Harp: My computer is broken and I've tried everything to fix it.

Maura: Well, why don't you call the technical service that came with the computer when you bought it?

Harp: 'Cause it's Sunday night at 9 pm. They're not gonna be working.

Maura: Sometimes they're available **24/7** in cases of emergency, so you should call.

Harp: That's a good idea. Let me go find the number.

Maura: And there was an example where we had a service that was, hopefully, offered **24/7**. So a technical service for a computer may be offered 24 hours a day and 7 days a week, may be actually available 24 hours a day and 7 days a week.

Harp: For my computer, it's definitely open **24/7**, because I've actually had to use their service really late at night on a weekend.

Maura: And I bet you were very happy to find that that service was still available.

Harp: It was amazing.

Maura: You know, I've read online that some companies claim to have their services available **24/7**, but they're not actually talking about all their services. They're referring to their online services, like online websites. So, they're kind of using this term in a way that's not really honest. But that's what we said; sometimes **24/7** is misused and is kind of used as an exaggeration.

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

Maura: All right. The last expression is maybe even the most straightforward out of the three. The last expression is **day and night**.

Harp: Yes. **Day and night**.

Maura: So when someone says something is happening **day and night**, it means that it's happening all day and all night. It's happening 24 hours in a day.

Harp: Yeah. It means that it's happening all of the time.

Maura: It means that it is going on continuously, non-stop.

Harp: If we think about it, **day and night**, other than day and night, what other part of the day is left? Nothing.

Maura: Right.

Harp: Let's give an example with this expression.

Maura: All right.

Maura: So, how's your **little one** doing?

Harp: Well, he's adorable, but he won't stop crying. He's crying **day and night**.

Maura: Yeah. It can be tough at the beginning. Sometimes babies cry and you don't even know why.

Harp: It's really tough. I hope he sleeps better soon.

Maura: Well, babies are always changing, and they're always going through phases so hold on and I'm sure this phase will pass too.

Harp: I hope so.

Maura: And here we had an example where a baby was crying **day and night**, which means that this baby was crying all the time, continuously.

Harp: And in this case, it might be an exaggeration and it might not. We don't know.

Maura: I would hope that it is an exaggeration, because you'd think if a baby even cried for 10 hours, they'd have to take a break, right?

Harp: I hope so!

Maura: OK. So let's give one more example now with **day and night**.

Harp: OK. Let's do it.

Harp:	So, how's the speech going?
Maura:	Not good. I'm afraid I'm not gonna be ready for Friday. I've only got a handful of days left.
Harp:	Oh no. What are you gonna do?
Maura:	I'm just going to start practising day and night , and hoping that I'll have it polished and perfect by then.
Harp:	I'm sure you will.
Maura:	I dunno. I'm feeling nervous.
Harp:	Get to work!

Maura: And here we had someone who was preparing a speech. She didn't feel very good about it, so her plan was to practise **day and night**. Now, is she really going to be practising all day and all night? Harp, what do you think?

Harp: Probably not.

Maura: Yeah, probably not. But this means that she's going to be very focused on practising. She's probably gonna spend most of her free time practising. And she's going to continuously focus on the speech until Friday.

Harp: Yeah, exactly.

Maura: All right. So, I think that covers our episode. Let's go back over the expressions that we used in this one.

Harp: So we started with **around the clock**.

Maura: And then we looked at **24/7**.

Harp: And we finished with **day and night**.

Maura: Right. And all of these expressions mean that something is continuously happening all day and all night. But remember, they're often used as an exaggeration to mean that someone is doing something a lot.

Harp: Yes. And if you want to practise English all the time, **24/7**, we have hundreds of episodes on the website. So go check it out, Culips.com, C-U-L-I-P-S.com.

Maura: And you can also listen on iTunes and Stitcher.

- Harp: Yes. And, remember, if you have a question or you just wanna say hi, come on over to Facebook and leave us a comment. We love to hear from you.
- Maura: That's right. Don't be shy.
- Harp: That's it for us today. Bye everyone.
- Maura: We'll talk to you again soon. Bye.

Detailed Explanation

To quit cold turkey

To quit cold turkey is a slang expression that means to suddenly and completely quit an addictive activity. For example, when someone decides to quit smoking, they have a few options. The first is to slowly reduce the number of cigarettes they smoke each day until they are no longer addicted. The second option is **to quit cold turkey**. This means that they suddenly stop smoking completely, and from that moment on, never smoke again.

The expression **to quit cold turkey** is often used when talking about people who quit using addictive drugs or alcohol. But this expression can also be used to describe quitting any habit. In this episode, Maura says that every winter she **quits eating ice cream cold turkey**. This means that she abruptly and completely stops eating ice cream (although she starts again when the weather gets warm).

The origin of this expression is unclear, but one possible explanation is that a cold turkey carcass shares some of the same characteristics as a heroin addict going through withdrawal, for example, goose bumps and cold sweats.

Here's another example with **to quit cold turkey**:

Dan: You know, my brother has had a problem with alcoholism for a long time. But now he's quit drinking and is feeling happy and healthy.

Tim: That's great! Did he attend support group meetings to help him quit?

Dan: Nope, he just **quit cold turkey**.

Sometimes this expression is also said as **to go cold turkey** or **to give something up cold turkey**.

To go on and on

To go on and on means to continue without stopping for a very long time. When something (for example a movie, a sports game, or a speech) is very long and it feels like it might never end, we can say that it **goes on and on**.

Sometimes people repeat "and on" many times in this expression to emphasize just how long something lasts. Often, this expression carries a negative meaning, but not always.

Here are two examples with the expression **to go on and on**; in the first example, the expression has a negative meaning and in the second, a positive meaning:

Bill: You went to the opera last night, right? How did you like it?

Jack: I hated it. It just seemed **to go on and on and on**, like it would never end. I was bored the whole time.

June: I went on a date last night with a guy I met at a dinner party.

Pattie: Really? How was it? Tell me more!

June: It was great. We had a perfect night that just **went on and on**. I never wanted it to end.

Around the clock

If something happens **around the clock**, that means that it happens all day and all night, continuously. The event or action goes on for all of the 24 hours in a day, without stopping.

This expression originates from idea of the hands of a clock travelling all the way around the clock face.

Here's another example with the expression **around the clock**:

Rick: Wow that concert was amazing. The fireworks at the end of the show were unbelievable.

Tina: Yeah! I heard that the stage crew worked **around the clock** to make sure everything was set up properly. They sure did a great job.

The hands on a clock

The hands on a clock are the bars that start in the centre of the dial and point to the numbers on the clock face to show the time. The clock face is the part where the numbers are. It's strange that so many parts of a clock are named like parts of the body!

On a clock, **the hour hand** is the shorter and thicker **hand**, which makes a full revolution around the clock face every 12 hours. This is sometimes also called **the little hand**, because it's shorter. **The minute hand** is longer and thinner, and moves more quickly than **the hour hand**. It makes a full revolution around the clock face every hour. Sometimes it's called **the big hand**.

Some clocks also have **a second hand**, which is long and very thin. It moves quickly, and goes around the clock face once every minute.

To take time off

To take time off means to not work when you would otherwise be working. For example, many people **take time off** to go on vacation or to go to an appointment, or for various other special reasons. When people are busy and working all the time, they usually don't get **to take very much time off**.

In one of the dialogue examples in this episode, Harp and Maura talk about Jerome, who only **takes time off** one night per week. The rest of the time, he works.

Here's another example with **to take time off**.

Patty: I'm going **to take some time off** in August and go to New York City for two weeks.

Rod: That sounds amazing, have a great time!

To let up

To let up means to slowly stop or to become calm. For example, if something is moving very quickly and then starts to slow down, we can say it is letting up. A person can also **let up**, for example, if someone is complaining a lot and then starts to complain less, we can say that they **let up**. When something or someone returns to a normal, calm condition, we can say it has **let up**.

In order for something or someone **to let up**, usually the state before was not good or ideal. Generally, when something is calm, it's a good thing. **To let up** is often used to talk about weather, especially rain. When the rain has **let up**, this means that it is raining less or has even stopped raining completely. Of course, when the rain stops, this is usually a good thing.

In this episode, Maura uses the expression **to let up** in the dialogue example about Jerome. He is working a lot and his girlfriend hopes that his work will **let up** soon. This means that she hopes that his work will become less busy and that he will stop working all the time.

Here are a couple more examples with **to let up**:

Nick: Working in a mall during the Christmas holidays is stressful. There are so many shoppers and I have to work long hours.

Tina: That's true, but it will **let up** soon. As soon as Christmas is over, things will go back to normal.

Randy: It's raining really hard right now, but as soon as the weather **lets up**, would you like to go for a walk?

Beth: Sure, that sounds great.

To call the police on someone

When someone calls the police to report an illegal behaviour being done by other person, we can say that someone **called the police on this person**. For example, if someone is doing something illegal, like parking in your parking space, and you report this incident to the police, then you have **called the police on them**.

In this episode, in one of the dialogue examples, Maura's neighbours are making so much noise that she is having a hard time sleeping. Harp suggests that a possible solution might be **to call the police on the neighbours**.

Here's another example with **to call the police on someone**:

Jen: My neighbours keep smoking in the hallway right outside my apartment. It's really gross! All the smoke keeps blowing into my place.

Becky: You should **call the police on them**. Maybe then they would stop smoking inside. That's illegal.

24/7

24/7 is a short form of the expression **24 hours a day, 7 days a week**. If a store is open **24/7**, that means they never close. They are open every day, all day.

This expression is also often used as an exaggeration. For example, it is common for people to say they have to work **24/7**. In reality, they are not actually working all day, every day. So in this instance, **24/7** just means a lot.

In a dialogue example in this episode, Maura says she'll be doing school work **24/7**. Obviously, it's impossible for someone to work all day, every day because people need time to eat and sleep, so this is an exaggeration. Maura really means that she is very busy because she needs to do a lot of school work.

Here's another example with **24/7**:

Brian: I'm really hungry, but it's getting late. Do you think the grocery store is still open?

Rita: Yeah, it's definitely open. It's open **24/7**!

You may also see this expression written as **twenty four seven**, but the most common way to write it is **24/7**.

24/7 services in Canada

In Canada, many gas stations offer 24/7 service. Some major convince stores like Mac's and 7-Eleven are also open all the time. Fast-food restaurants like Tim Horton's and MacDonald's are usually open 24/7, and some grocery stores are open 24/7 too. Stores that stay open all night long are more common in big cities than in small towns.

Free as a bird

Free as a bird means totally free to do whatever you want. When you have no obligations or responsibilities, and lots of free time, you are as **free as a bird**. Just like a bird is free to fly anywhere it wants, when you're as **free as a bird**, you have the ability to do anything you want.

In a dialogue example in this episode, Maura isn't able to go to a concert because she has a lot of school work to do. She hopes that in the summertime, when she will be as **free as a bird** (because she'll have no responsibilities), the band will play again so she can go to the concert.

Here's another example with **free as a bird**:

Sue: I'm so busy these days I feel like I never have any time to myself.

Kate: Well, you can retire once you're 65, so you only have to wait another 20 years and then you'll be as **free as a bird**!

Day and night

Day and night means all the time. When something happens **day and night**, it happens consistently, without stopping. Occasionally, you may see this expression reversed and written as **night and day**. This means exactly the same thing: that some is happening all the time.

In a dialogue example in this episode, Harp says that her baby cries **day and night**. This means that her baby never stops crying. The baby cries all the time, all day and all night. Like the expression *around the clock*, **day and night** is also sometimes used by people to exaggerate how busy they are.

Here's another example with **day and night** used as an exaggeration:

Peter: Did you finish your report?

Dale: Not yet! I'm super stressed out. I'm going to have to work **day and night** to get it done by the deadline.

Of course, Dale will not actually work all day and all night until he has completed his report. He is really saying that he will work extremely hard for many hours to finish the report by the deadline.

A little one

A cute way to refer to a baby or a young child is to call them **a little one**. You can call your own children or other peoples' children **little ones**. Once a child is around 5 years old, it becomes less common to call them **a little one**.

Here's another example with this expression:

May: John and I want to go on a date on Friday night. Would you mind watching our **little ones** for a few hours while we go out?

Sara: No problem. I'd love to babysit the kids for you.

To polish something

To polish something means to make it smooth, shiny, and glossy by rubbing it. Some things that people **polish** are cars, trophies, and stones. When we talk about **polishing** non-physical things, like speeches or our ability to speak a foreign language, it means to refine or improve that thing. When you **polish** something, you make it better.

In this episode, **to polish something** is used to talk about a speech. When a speech has been edited and practised and the person giving the speech knows it well, we can say that the speech has been **polished**.

Here's another example with **to polish something**:

Mellissa: I'm so excited! I just got a new job in Berlin. I'm moving there next month.

Harvey: Wow! Congratulations! You're going to have **to polish** your German before you leave. It's been 5 years since we last took a German class.

Quiz

- 1. Which of the following types of businesses are most often open 24/7 in Canada?**
 - a) shopping malls
 - b) fast-food restaurants
 - c) hardware stores
 - d) bookstores

- 2. Which of the following is a cute way to refer to a baby or a young child?**
 - a) a young one
 - b) a cute one
 - c) a little one
 - d) a teen

- 3. Which expression refers to the process of suddenly quitting an addictive habit?**
 - a) quitting cold turkey
 - b) quitting cold chicken
 - c) quitting hot bacon
 - d) quitting hot potato

- 4. What is the maximum number of hands you can find on a normal clock?**
 - a) 1
 - b) 2
 - c) 3
 - d) 4

- 5. Which of the following means that you have no responsibilities or obligations?**
 - a) You let up.
 - b) You're as free as a bird.
 - c) You call the police on them.
 - d) You're day and night.

6. I'm super busy this week, but next week things will _____ and I'll have some free time.

Please fill in the blank.

- a) let out
 - b) let in
 - c) let down
 - d) let up
7. Which of the following expressions does NOT mean all the time?
- a) 24/7
 - b) day and night
 - c) front to back
 - d) around the clock
8. Which expression means to continue without stopping for a very long time?
- a) to let up
 - b) to stay 24/7
 - c) to quit around the clock
 - d) to go on and on
9. Fill in the blank:

This summer I will _____ and go to Europe on vacation.

- a) time out
- b) time away
- c) take time on
- d) take time off

Answers:

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