

Catch Word #143 – To beat someone to the punch

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:

- **gonna**: going to
- **gotta**: going to
- **wanna**: want to

Transcript

Maura: Hello everyone. It's Maura.

Andrew: And I'm Andrew. And we are here with another Culips episode.

Maura: That's right. And you should definitely check out our website. It is Culips.com, that's C-U-L-I-P-S.com, because on our website, you can become a member.

Andrew: And if you become a member, you get access to a lot of great stuff. You can check out the detailed explanations of all the terms that we talk about, and you have a transcript of the episode, and there's a quiz at the end for you to complete as well.

Maura: That's right. And on our website you can also see the hundreds of older episodes that we've recorded. They may be old, but we're still using the expressions.

Andrew: That's right. They're **still around**.

Maura: So you can check those out on our website and you can also listen on iTunes or Stitcher.

Andrew: And also don't forget to check us out on Facebook and Twitter.

Maura: That's right. You can always say hi to us there. So what's new with you? How's it going Andrew?

- Andrew: Well, I'm doing pretty well. I've had a ton of visitors staying at my apartment recently.
- Maura: Oh yeah. It is the summertime, so that's what happens.
- Andrew: Yeah. Hotel Andrew.
- Maura: Yeah. In the city I find the same thing when the summer comes around, that's when people wanna come and visit you. It really is the best time.
- Andrew: Yeah. It's great. It's good for me, I get to see my friends and family, and it's good for them. They get a cool place to stay in Montreal.
- Maura: What do you normally do with your visitors?
- Andrew: Well, Montreal has a ton of great parks, so we like to get outside and walk around and just see the city and hang out.
- Maura: Yeah. That's the good thing, is that they're so much stuff to do, so you can't really run out.
- Andrew: Absolutely. There's tons to do here.
- Maura: And our episode today is a Catch Word episode and that is where we look at different expressions. We explain what they mean, and how you can use them.
- Andrew: Yeah. And today's theme is all based around expressions that can be used to describe an advantage. So when you're in a situation with other people, and you have an advantage, or someone has an advantage compared to everybody else, well that's what we're gonna talk about today.
- Maura: Yup. That's it. So let's get started with our first expression. The first expression today is **to beat someone to the punch**.
- Andrew: That's right. Number one is **to beat someone to the punch**.
- Maura: Sometimes we have expressions that are quite long, so I'm gonna say this one again.
- Andrew: Sure.
- Maura: **To beat someone to the punch.**
- Andrew: Right. And what this means is to do something first, before anyone else gets a chance to do it.

- Maura: Right. So if you imagine that maybe another person was going to do the same thing as you, they were planning to do it, but you do the action first, you can say that you **beat this person to the punch**.
- Andrew: Yeah. Absolutely. When you're in a situation where you do something first, you have **beat everybody else to the punch**.
- Maura: Right. And whatever this action is, it's positive, you've gained something, so that's why we say that doing this action gives you an advantage.
- Andrew: Right. When you **beat someone to the punch**, you have an advantage over them.
- Maura: Right. And this expression could possibly be connected to boxing, and when I think of the word punch, I think about boxing.
- Andrew: They're very connected, yeah. And when you're boxing and manage to get the first punch out and hit your opponent, well you obviously have an advantage in that situation.
- Maura: Right. The person who gets punched first, maybe the weaker boxer or at least they don't look like they're very strong or their chances of winning seem to go down a bit.
- Andrew: Right. If you're getting punched you're not a very good boxer, I think. You wanna do the punching right.
- Maura: Exactly. OK, so let's give you now a couple examples with **to beat someone to the punch**.
- Andrew: Let's do it.

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| Maura: | So did you end up getting anything at the big garage sale you went to on Saturday? |
| Andrew: | I was so close to buying this new chair. When I was at the garage sale , I saw it, and I thought, "Wow that chair looks amazing, I really wanna buy it." So I went and talked to the lady who was selling it and she told me it was already sold. Somebody had beat me to the punch , they bought it before I did. |
| Maura: | Oh. That sucks. Whenever you're buying stuff second-hand, you never now because there's only one of that item so you gotta move fast. |
| Andrew: | Yeah. First come, first serve . |

- Andrew: In the example that we just heard, one person was hoping to buy a chair at a garage sale, but he was unable to buy it because somebody had purchased it before him.
- Maura: That's right. So in that case, we could say, **someone beat him to the punch**. He wanted to buy the chair. That's the action that he wanted to do, but someone did it before him.
- Andrew: Right. So in this situation, we could say that the person that bought the chair actually had an advantage. They were able to get the chair in the end. So they **beat him to the punch**.
- Maura: Yup. And in this example we heard that someone had been to a **garage sale**. And a **garage sale** is usually put on by an individual family or maybe a group of families and they sell a bunch of their stuff, a bunch of their stuff that is used but they don't need anymore, they don't want anymore, so they try to make some money.
- Andrew: That's right. And **garage sales** usually happen in the spring and in the early summer and especially if somebody is moving. Before they move, they have all this extra stuff that they don't know what to do with. Should they bring it with them? Or maybe they don't have enough space, so they just end up selling it. And these happen at people's houses sometimes in their garage, but usually on their front part of their house, on their driveway. It's a great place to go and find a cheap sale, I guess.
- Maura: Yup. Definitely. You can get some good deals at **garage sales**. I like going to **garage sales**.
- Andrew: I love going to **garage sales** too.
- Maura: OK. Let's give one more example now with **to beat someone to the punch**.

- Maura: Oh man. You know how I told you that tonight I was gonna ask Shawn for his number.
- Andrew: Yeah. How did it go? Did you get it?
- Maura: No, because I didn't even get a chance to. Janine just told me she asked for his number, so now I can't really ask him out too, that just would be weird cause Janine and I are friends.
- Andrew: Yeah. That would definitely be awkward. I guess she just **beat you to the punch**.

- Maura: In this example, we heard from someone who was planning to ask Shawn for his phone number. And we can understand that she was interested in asking him on a date. She was interested in him romantically, but her friend Janine asked him first, so she **beat her to the punch**.
- Andrew: Yeah. Janine was able to get Shawn's number first, and she **beat her to the punch**.
- Maura: That is right. So too bad for the other friend.
- Andrew: But lucky for Shawn. He's got two girls after him.
- Maura: All right. Let's look at the next expression now. The next expression is **to be one step ahead of someone**.
- Andrew: That's right to be **one step ahead** of someone.
- Maura: And **to be one step ahead of someone** means that you have some advantage that the other person does not have.
- Andrew: That's right. Maybe you're better prepared than other people or you have some secret that other people don't know about it. Something you have is giving you an advantage and in that situation, you are **one step ahead of everybody else**.
- Maura: That's right. If you imagine an actual race, a foot race, where maybe people are walking, if you have **one step ahead of another person** that means that you're farther in the race than them so you have a better chance of winning.
- Andrew: That's right. When you are **one step ahead of someone**, that's a good thing, that's a good situation to be in; because, you are leading, you are in a situation where you have the advantage.
- Maura: Right. You're closer to the goal. If there's a goal, you're closer to reaching that goal than the other people.
- Andrew: Definitely.
- Maura: OK. Let's give you again a couple more examples with **to be one step ahead of someone**.

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|---------|---|
| Maura: | So how's the computer selling business going these days? |
| Andrew: | Things are OK. Sales are steady but there's so much competition in the market right now. I feel like if we are gonna be ahead of everybody else, if we want to stay one step ahead of the competition, we're gonna have to lower our prices to increase our sales. |

Maura: Yeah. Sometimes that's what you gotta do I guess, eh?

Andrew: That's right.

Maura: In that example, we heard from someone who was selling computers and in order stay competitive, he had to stay **one step ahead** of his competitors, which means that he had to be better prepared than his competitors. He had to find some kind of advantage, so that he could be more successful than his competitors.

Andrew: And the way that he decided to do that was to lower his prices to attract more customers and to stay ahead of all the other computer businesses in the city.

Maura: And you know, this is really a classic example; because, in business people often talk about staying **one step ahead** of the competition. They always want to have a better advantage than their competitors. They want to have more people interested in their products. They wanna have better prices. They wanna have better marketing strategies. Pretty much in every way, they wanna be **one step ahead**.

Andrew: Yeah. The business world is so **cutthroat** it's so competitive that everybody is trying to find a way to stay one step ahead of the competition.

Maura: That's right. It sounds so nasty.

Andrew: Yeah. **Dog eat dog**, I guess out there, but that's the way it is.

Maura: Yeah, it can be. OK, let's do one more example.

Maura: So I heard another story on the news last night where someone's identity was stolen, and I'm just getting really paranoid about how to protect my information online.

Andrew: Yeah. That's awful. I would hate if that happened to me. Do you know is there anything we can do? How can we stay **one step ahead** of these Internet criminals?

Maura: Well, the only thing I tried to do is have complicated passwords that aren't easy for these people to figure out.

Andrew: Oh yeah. That's a good idea. I guess I should always use a really difficult password so that nobody can just easily access my accounts.

Maura: Yeah. And when I'm online I don't give away personal information freely, I don't think anyway. It's hard to tell.

Andrew: Yeah. You gotta make sure not to do that. You never know where you're information is going.

Andrew: So in this example we heard from two people who were a little bit worried about Internet privacy and having their information stolen. So they discussed how they could stay ahead of the Internet criminals that are out there stealing identities.

Maura: Right. So this means that they wanted to be better prepared and smarter about protecting their information. They wanted to know how to protect their information.

Andrew: Yeah. In this example, staying one step ahead of the Internet criminals was a way of defending their information from future attacks.

Maura: If you stay **one step ahead** of a cyber criminal, you have the advantage because you are able to protect your information.

Andrew: And today's final expression is **to have a head start**.

Maura: **To have a head start.**

Andrew: And basically what to have **a head start** means is to already have an advantage. When you're in a situation where it's easy for you to be successful because of the advantage then you **have a head start**.

Maura: Right. So, if you have **a head start**, it means that from the very beginning you have an advantage that your competitors do not have. And this advantage is going to be able to help you eventually achieve your goal or be more successful in whatever it is you're doing.

Andrew: That's right. And the literal definition of to have **a head start**, is in a race, in a running race, if one person has **a head start** then they get to begin the race at a position that's closer to the finish line than all the other runners.

Maura: Yeah. That's right, so, the person with the **head start** gets to start farther down the track and they don't have to run as far as the other people. So it doesn't necessarily mean they're going to win because maybe they're really slow, but they do have an advantage.

Andrew: Yeah. I remember when I used to play with my sister when we were kids, I was always faster than her, because I'm older than her. So whenever we would race I'd give her **a head start** or she wouldn't play with me.

Maura: But then she still wouldn't win or did she win sometimes?

Andrew: No, she never won.

Maura: So right. When you **have a head start**, it doesn't necessarily guarantee that you're going to be successful, but **the odds are more in your favour**.

Andrew: That's right. And it makes people feel good when they have **a head start**, at least you think there's a possibility that you might be successful one.

Maura: OK. Let's give a couple examples now with to have **a head start**.

Andrew: How's your daughter Sara doing these days?

Maura: Oh, she's good. You know, she's really smart, and since I'm going back to work, I'm thinking of sending her to one of those educational daycares because I really want her **to have a head start** when she starts kindergarten.

Andrew: Oh yeah. I think that's a great idea. I've heard that kids learn a lot there.

Maura: Yup. I just want her to have all the advantages that she can, so hopefully, the educational day care is the way to go.

Andrew: Yeah. I think that's a good idea.

Andrew: In this example, we heard from a woman who was planning to put her child into an educational day care; because, she wanted her child to get a good education so that when she entered her formal schooling in kindergarten she would have an advantage and she'd be well prepared to start schooling.

Maura: Right. So in this way her daughter would **have a head start**. She would have an advantage and she would be probably ahead intellectually compared to the other students who hadn't gone to an educational day care.

Andrew: Right, and again, this isn't a guarantee. We're not a 100% certain that going to the educational day care will **pave the way** for future success, but she's doing all that she can for her daughter to give her the best opportunity to be successful.

Maura: And, you know, **head start** is often used when talking about school. You see a lot of programs for young children or even after school programs called **head start** and what they're trying to do is give children an advantage so that they can learn more and be even more successful.

Andrew: Yeah. I think I used to have a book that helped me with math and it was called **Head Start Math**.

Maura: Yup. That sounds about right. OK, let's give one more example.

Maura: So how's school going this semester?

Andrew: Well, actually it's not that bad. I do have to write one essay but it's OK because actually I'm gonna write it on something I've already written about last year. So I have **a head start**. I've done all the research. All I need to do is the writing.

Maura: I love when that happens. It feels like a gift.

Andrew: Absolutely.

Maura: Well, good luck with that. I hope it goes quickly.

Andrew: Yeah. Like I said I think it will be easy because I've already done the work, I **have a head start**.

Maura: In this example we heard from a student who had to do an essay and on this essay he **had a head start** because he had already done the research so it was going to be much easier and faster to complete the essay.

Andrew: That's right. Because he had already done the work last year, when he has to write the essay again this year, it'll be easy for him. He **has a head start**.

Maura: Right. And all the other students will have **to start from scratch** and do all of the research, so they don't have that advantage that he does.

Andrew: That's right. They have more work to do. So that's why we can say this one student has the **head start** compared to everybody else in the class.

Maura: All right. I think that about does it for today, so let's go back over the expressions that we looked at.

Andrew: Sure. Expression number one is **to beat somebody to the punch**.

Maura: And the second expression we looked at was **to be one step ahead of someone**.

Andrew: And our final expression is **to have a head start**.

Maura: That is it. So if you want to have **a head start** in your English class, you should definitely listen to all our episodes.

Andrew: And you can find all of our back episodes on the Culips website, at C-U-L-I-P-S.com.

- Maura: That's right. It's also on our website where you can become a member, and when you're a member you have access to all kinds of extra learning materials.
- Andrew: That's right. And don't forget to check us out on Facebook and Twitter.
- Maura: Yes. We will definitely see you online. We'll talk to you soon. Bye.
- Andrew: Take care everybody.

Detailed Explanation

To be around

To be around means to be available. The word *around* means on all sides or circling something, so **to be around** means to be in the region of or in the area. In this episode, Andrew uses the expression **still around** to talk about how the older Culips episodes are still available. Sometimes you will hear this expression with a *still* in front of the *around*. **Still around** is a very common way of saying still available. **Not around anymore** is a very common way to say no longer available.

Here is another example of to be around:

- Jackson: When's your swimming lesson tonight?
- Trina: Oh, it doesn't start until about 7 tonight.
- Jackson: So you'll **be around** until then? I was just hoping you could keep an eye on something I have in the oven while I run over to the grocery store.
- Trina: Yeah, I'll be here. I can watch it for you.

To beat someone to the punch

To beat someone to the punch means to do something before another person gets the chance to. The expression comes from the sport of boxing, where two people fight each other. If one person punches the other first, that person has an advantage in the game. He or she may even win with that one punch. So, if you're **beating someone to the punch**, you're gaining an advantage over the other person, or winning.

Here is another example of **to beat someone to the punch**:

- Jean: Did you go to the sale at that new clothing store yesterday? I heard it was amazing.
- Kbayruna: Yeah, there were so many good things at such low prices.
- Jean: Did you buy anything? I heard that things sold out really quickly.
- Kbayruna: Yeah, I was there right when they opened the store, so I **beat everyone to the punch** and was able to get some really good stuff.

Garage sale

A garage sale is an outdoor sale, where people sell their old belongings to other people. It's called **a garage sale** because traditionally people would hold the sale in their garage. There are many types of outdoor sales like garage sale. *A yard sale* is similar to **a garage sale**, but the person sells their stuff on their lawn. *A street sale* is held on the street and usually involves more than one household.

Here is another example of **garage sale**:

- Prince: I was just going through my closet yesterday and realized how many clothes I have that I never wear.
- Doug: I'm the same way. We should have **a garage sale** to get rid of everything.
- Prince: That's a good idea. Hey, if we get a couple more people who want to sell the stuff we could have a street sale instead!
- Doug: That sounds fun. I'll ask my neighbours.

Second hand

Second hand means previously used or owned. The expression comes from the fact that a used item is in a second set of hands (the first set of hands were the original owner). The expression can also be used to talk about something you heard from someone other than the original speaker, as in you heard about a concert **second hand**. This means that you heard about the concert from someone else, but didn't hear about it yourself. In both ways, **second hand** means that it is not in the possession of the original owner.

Here is another example of **second hand**:

- Yuan: Those are really cool sneakers. They look like they're from the 1980s!
- Tunc: They probably are. I bought them at a thrift store. They're **second hand**.
- Yuan: Sometimes you can find the coolest used stuff at thrift stores. I really love stuff from the 1980s.
- Tunc: Me too! We should go to the thrift store by my house together sometime. It's got all sorts of cool stuff from that time period.

First come, first served

First come, first served means that priority is given to the first people to show up somewhere. It comes from the restaurant industry, where the first people to show up are the first people to get served their food, regardless of who they are. It is a common saying used in most service industries that cater to a lot of customers at one time.

Here is another example of **first come, first served**:

- Imran: How was your plane ride home?
Oscar: Not great. I thought I was able to choose my seat before the flight, but when I got there it was first come, first served, so I got stuck with a seat beside the washrooms!
Imran: Oh, no. I heard you can pay a little extra to choose your seat sometimes.
Oscar: I thought so too, but not for this flight.

Man

Man, as in **oh man**, is used casually to mean quite a few things, but mainly it is used for emphasis when you understand or sympathize with someone. It can be an exclamation of disappointment or frustration. This kind of interjection is actually called a *minced oath*. A minced oath is a less-offensive way of saying *oh God*, or *oh Jesus*, which some people find offensive because of the religious aspect. Sometimes people say *oh brother* instead of **oh man**. Oh brother is used more when people are frustrated, and **oh man** when they are disappointed. Another common minced oath is *oh dude*, which is used more casually than the other two and is often used as an exclamation of sympathy. Either way, minced oaths are always masculine, (boy, man, dude), because they are a replacement for oh God, and the figure of God has been depicted as masculine in many religious traditions.

Here is another example of **man**:

- Melinda: How did your doctor appointment go?
Gosina: Not good. Turns out I have strep throat.
Melinda: **Oh, man**. That sucks. I'm sorry.
Gosina: Thanks. I'll be okay. I'll just feel rotten for a while.

To ask someone out

To ask someone out means to ask to ask someone on a date. A date is when two people go and spend some time together, like to the movies or a restaurant. A date is when two people go somewhere to get to know each other better, usually for romantic reasons. **To ask someone out** is just a shorter way of saying ask someone on a date.

Here is another example of **to ask someone out**:

Yovinus: How was your day yesterday?
Junhee: Pretty good actually. I finally got the nerve to ask Sam out!
Yovinus: Really? That's great! What was the response?
Junhee: Sam said yes! We're going to see a movie Friday night.

To be after someone

To be after someone means to be pursuing that person or bothering him or her. If you think of **being after someone** as oppose to before them, it means you are behind them or following them. When we hear this expression, it usually means that someone is being pursued, and the person chasing may not have good intentions. Sometimes, as we see in this episode, it is used more casually to talk about someone being chased for lighter reasons, like to ask someone on a date. You will often hear someone say that someone is after them to do something. This means that someone is bugging them to get something done.

Here is another example of **to be after someone**:

Troy: What did you do this weekend?
Giuseppe: Mostly chores. My mom **has been after me** all month to do some yard work, so I mowed the lawn and did some gardening. That took up most of my time.

To be one step ahead of someone

To be one step ahead of someone usually means that you are slightly in advance of someone or something, or have done something before anyone else. Sometimes you will hear this expression said as to be **one step ahead of**, which is a more general expression and can be applied to situations or experiences, not just people. Often, you will hear someone say that they are **one step ahead of something or someone** if they've already done something that someone is telling them to do.

Here is another example of **to be one step ahead of someone**:

Pina: How'd your job interview go last week?
Ricardo: Pretty good. I feel like I made a good impression.
Pina: Great! You should send them a follow up thank you email. I hear that's a good thing to do after interviews.
Ricardo: I'm **one step ahead** of you! I sent them a thank you card this morning.

To be cutthroat

To be cutthroat is a rather gruesome expression that means that someone or something is ruthless or cruel and very competitive. Usually it refers to someone who is very focussed on a goal and does not seem to care if people get hurt or harmed in order to achieve that goal. The origin of the expression is unclear. It could come from an old word used to describe criminals who would cut their victims throat to steal from them, or it could come from the name of an old card game originating in the 1500s. Today, the expression is often used casually, sometimes to emphasize or exaggerate the competitive aspect of something.

Here is another example of **cutthroat**:

- Ayak: Are you nervous about the audition today?
Kanami: Very nervous. I know all my lines and I've played the same part in the play last year, but this year the casting judge is Mr. Brown.
Ayak: Oh, yeah. I heard he's pretty **cutthroat**.
Kanami: Yes, he's very hard on actors and tells them whatever he thinks without thinking about how it might hurt them.
Ayak: Well, stay strong. It's just the way he is. You're an amazing actor.

Dog eat dog

Dog eat dog is an expression used to describe a situation that seems cruel or ruthless. It is very similar to **cutthroat**, and is often used as a synonym for **cutthroat**. **Dog eat dog** is usually only used to refer to situations that involve several people acting ruthless, whereas **cutthroat** can describe just one person. When a situation is **dog eat dog**, it means that everybody is out for himself or herself and they do not care who gets hurt in the process. Like **cutthroat**, you will often see this phrase used casually to emphasize or exaggerate the competitive aspect of a group of people.

Here is another example of **dog eat dog**:

- Soumaya: Have you seen the movie The Hunger Games?
Tabitha: No, but I've read the books. It's a really good series.
Soumaya: Yeah. It was really disturbing though, how it was such a **dog eat dog** experience, but it was little kids.
Tabitha: Yeah, it was upsetting. But, at least it's fictional!

To have a head start

To have a head start means to go before others, or to have the opportunity to do something before other people get to. It is often used to describe a situation where one person gets the advantage over others by doing something before the rest. It comes from a term used in competitive races where someone who takes off from the starting line first has **a head start**. If you are watching the race from the side, the first runner's head is literally out in front of the others.

Here is another example of **to have a head start**:

- Renan: You coming up to the cottage this weekend?
Kayin: Yep! I'm going to be the cook all weekend, actually.
Renan: Awesome! I love your cooking. Are you driving up on Saturday?
Kayin: No, I'm going to leave Friday night. I want **to get a head start** so I can prepare the barbeque and pick up all the right ingredients.
Renan: Great! See you there!

The odds are in your favour

The odds are in your favour means that the chances are good that things will go the way you want them to. The origin of this expression is mathematical and represents something called relative probabilities, which is sort of a way of predicting things. Odds means the chance something will or will not occur. **Odds in your favour** means that you have a good chance that something will happen the way you want it to. **The odds can be out of your favour** if something doesn't happen that you wanted not to happen, or they can be **in your favour** if something does happen that you wanted to happen.

Here is another example of **the odds are in your favour**:

- Richelle: I really hope it's going to be sunny this weekend. I want to spend the last weekend of summer outside.
Varvara: Well, I think **the odds are in your favour**. I watched the news this morning and they're calling for clear skies the entire weekend!
Richelle: Oh, that's so great to hear. I hope that it's true!

To pave the way

To pave the way means to smooth something out before others have to do it. It can also be used to describe a foundation or basis that will make it possible for something to happen in the future. If you think about a dirt road that's about to get paved with tar to make it smooth, it would make driving on the road much easier for people.

Here is another example of **pave the way**:

- Imène: Do you have any brothers or sisters?
Joyce: Yeah, I'm the oldest of four girls. I have three sisters.
Imène: Oh wow! It must be nice being the oldest in a way. You've done everything first.
Joyce: Yeah, I definitely **paved the way** for them, but it wasn't easy doing that. Sometimes I had to do things the hard way, and then my parents saw how difficult it was, so my sisters didn't have to do them at all!
Imène: Oh, that would suck.
Joyce: Yep, but I get to stay out later than them, so there's also a lot of benefits to being the oldest.

To start from scratch

To start from scratch is another way to say to make something from the beginning or from the very basics. **To start from scratch** is very similar to another expression, to make something from scratch. The expression *to make something from scratch* is often used to refer to cooking. A recipe that **starts from scratch** means that none of the ingredients have not been prepared beforehand or were bought packaged, and everything is made fresh. The term *scratch* used to refer to items in people's pantries that would be the last of food they had left, or scraps left over from previous meals, that they would make into another recipe. So, **starting from scratch** meant that they had to start from the very beginning, having little to work with. In a previous episode called *Cooking Up a Storm*, we describe in more detail what it means to start something from scratch in terms of cooking.

To start from scratch can be used a little differently than to make something from scratch, because if you **start from scratch** it could mean you are starting something over again from the very beginning, whereas making something from scratch means you're starting it for the first time. **Starting from scratch** can be used the same way that back to the drawing board is used. *Back to the drawing board* is an expression that is described in a previous episode called "Back to the drawing board."

Here is another example of **to start something from scratch**:

- Yago: How are your sewing lessons going?
Samira: Good, actually. I'm really enjoying it. It's really satisfying to make your own clothing.
Yago: It must be so nice to be able **to make clothes from scratch** and not have to buy them from stores. Then you can make something really unique!
Samira: Exactly! And I know that everything I make will fit me really well, too.

Quiz

1. **What does beat someone to the punch mean?"**
 - a) to sell a used item to them
 - b) to do something before they do
 - c) to ask them out on a date
 - d) to bother them while they are trying to work

2. **Which of the following is NOT an outdoor sale where people sell their used belongings to others?**
 - a) yard sale
 - b) garage sale
 - c) street sale
 - d) pirate sale

3. **What does first come, first served mean?**
 - a) Priority is given to those who arrive first.
 - b) The first people who come get served last.
 - c) The only ones who get anything are those that don't come.
 - d) A business is closed.

4. **What does dog eat dog mean?**
 - a) when people are only looking out for themselves
 - b) a dogfight
 - c) a school subject that you are failing
 - d) a way to make more money

5. **What does to start from scratch mean?**
 - a) to start something very badly
 - b) to begin with very little, just the basics
 - c) to finish something early
 - d) to try to finish something before anyone else does

6. **What does pave the way mean?**
 - a) to make the future very difficult for someone
 - b) to smooth the future path to something
 - c) to only care about yourself and not about others

d) to make something new out of something old

7. If the odds are in your favour, what does that imply?

- a) You have a good chance at something.
- b) You will never be able to win a prize.
- c) Your chances of something happening are very bad.
- d) Your future will be very difficult

Answers:

1.b 2.d 3.a 4.a 5.b 6.b 7.a