

Catch Word #148 – It's as clean as a whistle

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:

- **'bout**: about
- **'cause**: because
- **gonna**: going to
- **gotta**: got to
- **wanna**: want to

Transcript

Maura: Hello everyone. It's Maura.

Harp: And your pal Harp.

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

Harp: Yes. Make sure you check out our website, Culips.com. That's C-U-L-I-P-S.com. Because there, you can find all our older episodes, and that's the only place where you can sign up and become a member.

Maura: And when you're a member, you get access to our transcripts, more detailed explanations of the expressions we use in our episodes, and quizzes.

Harp: Yes. So make sure you go there and sign up.

Maura: That's right. And you can also listen to us on iTunes and Stitcher, so check us out there.

Harp: Yes. And leave us a rating.

Maura: A good one, I hope.

Harp: Only good ones.

Maura: So, how's everything going with you, Harp?

Harp: Pretty good. How 'bout you?

- Maura: Good, good. I'm, you know, I'm feeling good today because I just got my hair cut.
- Harp: Yes. It's looking very nice.
- Maura: Thanks. You know, it's always nice when you get a haircut. You just feel kind of fresh and clean.
- Harp: Yes, I agree. And you know, that's a great segue to our episode, Maura.
- Maura: I know. It is.
- Harp: Because today we're gonna do a Catch Word, and that's where we look at some expressions, we explain them, we give you examples. And our expressions today are all about being clean.
- Maura: Right. Our expressions today describe something that is clean and fresh and new.
- Harp: Yes. Sometimes we have expressions that are a bit complicated to explain, but this time, it's quite simple. These are all expressions that are related to being clean.
- Maura: That's it. So, the definition for our expressions is really straightforward. It's really clear. All of our expressions describe something that is very clean.
- Harp: I think we should get started.
- Maura: OK. So our first expression for this episode is ***clean as a whistle***.
- Harp: ***Clean as a whistle.***
- Maura: Right. So you can describe something and say it is **as clean as a whistle**.
- Harp: And when you say that something is **clean as whistle**, you're saying that something is very clean.
- Maura: That's it.
- Harp: Yes. ***As clean as a whistle***. And you can use this for expression for almost everything.
- Maura: Yeah. You could use it to describe a place.
- Harp: A person.
- Maura: Or a thing.

- Harp: Yeah. Pretty much anything that you can clean.
- Maura: Yup. That's right. But I wonder what things you can't clean.
- Harp: Well, I wouldn't clean a flower.
- Maura: That's right. That would be kind of strange. Um... You're right. And then it would sound very strange to say a flower is **as clean as a whistle**. That doesn't work.
- Harp: No. But you could say his bedroom is **as clean as a whistle**. Or his car. Or the baby is **as clean as a whistle**.
- Maura: Yup. That's right. OK, let's give some more examples with this expression.

- Maura: The bathroom is clean now. It's **as clean as a whistle**.
- Harp: Already? That was really fast.
- Maura: I'm a fast cleaner. Come see.
- Harp: OK. I want to see this. Wow. It is really clean!
- Maura: I told you.
- Harp: I can **see my reflection in** the toilet bowl.
- Maura: I was **down on my hands and knees** scrubbing this floor clean.
- Harp: It's **as clean as a whistle**.

- Harp: So in this example, we had two people talking about a clean bathroom, and it was extremely clean, so we used the expression **as clean as a whistle**.
- Maura: That's right. You wouldn't use this expression if it was a little clean. This expression is used when something is very, very clean. Like, there's no dirt around and it looks brand new.
- Harp: Don't use my bathroom, OK Maura? Because it's not **as clean as a whistle**.
- Maura: Let's give one more example.

- Harp: Thanks so much for looking after Loopy this weekend.
- Maura: Yeah. No problem. I love taking care of other people's dogs, because I love dogs but I can't have one because I'm not allowed to in my building.

Harp:	She looks so clean.
Maura:	Well, I took her to the beach this morning, and so you can imagine how dirty she was. So I took her home and I gave her a bath, and now she's as clean as a whistle .
Harp:	Wow. Thanks so much.
Maura:	Yup. No problem. Let me know if you need someone to take care of her again. It was really fun.
Harp:	Wow, great. I will for sure.

Maura: So in that example, we heard one dog owner who was thanking her friend for taking care of her dog named Loopy. And the dog had had a bath. The dog was very, very clean. And so we heard that the dog was **as clean as a whistle**.

Harp: Yup. **As clean as a whistle**. And before we move on to our next expression, Maura, let's talk a little bit about the origin of this expression, 'cause it's quite interesting.

Maura: Well, there are a couple possibilities, but the one that I like best has to do with a whistle and the pure, clean sound that a whistle makes.

Harp: Yeah. And that really makes sense to me, because it's such a nice sound. **So clean as a whistle**.

Maura: Right. In order for the whistle to make that nice, clean sound, it should also be clean on the inside.

Harp: Exactly. Not just on the outside. It has to be very clean, just like this expression.

Maura: And one more thing I want to mention about this expression: You might have heard a slight variation, even in this episode. You can hear *it's as clean as a whistle* or you can hear *it's clean as a whistle*, without the first as. Technically, this expression should have the word as two times, but many people do not say the first one.

Harp: Yup. **As clean as a whistle** or **clean as whistle**.

Maura: Yup. Of course, if you're a member, we'll have more information about that in our Learning Materials.

Harp: Yup. So sign up and become a member.

- Maura: All right. Let's move on to the next expression that means that something is clean, new, and fresh.
- Harp: Yes. Our second expression is **spick and span**.
- Maura: That is three words: **spick and span**.
- Harp: Yup, **spick and span**.
- Maura: You know, this expression is so popular that it's actually the name of a cleaning product that helps clean your home. The cleaner is called Spic and Span.
- Harp: Which is a good marketing idea because when you see the cleaning product, you think, "Oh, this is gonna help me make my house really clean."
- Maura: Yup, for sure. And when I was doing research on the origin and meaning of this expression, there were so many possibilities. And it was actually quite confusing. If you're curious, we'll talk about that more in our Learning Materials, too.
- Harp: But the meaning of this expression, **spick and span**, is quite easy to understand because it means when something is really clean.
- Maura: That's it. So let's get to some examples for you.

- Harp: Samantha! Samantha!
- Maura: What, Mom?
- Maura: What are you doing?
- Harp: I'm just watching a video on YouTube.
- Maura: Well, you know your party's coming up soon and you need to clean your room.
- Harp: Yeah, yeah. I'm gonna do it.
- Maura: Your room needs to be **spick and span** before you're allowed to go to this party tonight.
- Harp: All right. All right. I'll start cleaning my room in, like, 5 minutes.
- Maura: OK.

- Maura: In the example that we just heard, there was a teenager who was going to a party and her mother told her that she could only go to the party if her room was **spick and span**. So of course this teenager, Samantha, needed to clean her room.
- Harp: Yup. Her room needed to be very clean and needed to be **spick and span** in order to go to the party.
- Maura: You know, I feel like this conversation is really a classic. Teenagers are known for having messy bedrooms. So I'm gonna ask you, Harp, was your bedroom messy when you were a teenager?
- Harp: Hmm. I was the kind of kid who would have it messy all week and then clean it up on Saturdays. And then it would be messy all week. But my mom didn't really have to ask me. On Saturday morning I would just get up and clean it. I like to pretend it was organized and clean, but I was a bit of a slacker during the week. How about you?
- Maura: Well, I have to say that recently I was going through some old pictures and I saw a picture of my bedroom when I was a teenager, and I was **blown away** by how messy it was. At the time, it didn't bother me. I knew it was messy, but I didn't care. But now, looking at it, I was really shocked.
- Harp: Wow! Really? Could you even see the floor?
- Maura: No.
- Harp: Just full of stuff everywhere?
- Maura: Yeah. You couldn't see the top of any of the desks or tables either, really.
- Harp: You were **a pig**.
- Maura: I've changed, I swear.
- Harp: I know. I've seen your house. It's so clean, so that's pretty surprising.
- Maura: OK. Let's give one more example now with **spick and span**.

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|--------|--|
| Maura: | Hey, is this a new car? |
| Harp: | No, it's a rental. My car's in the garage so this is what they gave me. It's so nice, hey? |
| Maura: | Yeah. It's spick and span . Woo. |
| Harp: | I know. Do you think I have to return it in this condition? |

Maura:	Well, I think if you make a mess, you should clean it up a little bit, but I don't even think if you tried you could return it in this condition. It seems like it's brand new.
Harp:	I know, but I have it for 2 weeks. It's gonna be a mess by the time I return it!
Maura:	Well, they've gotta assume there'll be some wear and tear .
Harp:	That's true.

Harp: So in this example, we had two friends talking about a rental car, which was **spick and span**, which means that it was very clean.

Maura: You know that new car smell? It probably had that new car smell, too.

Harp: Yes. I know everyone talks about how they love the new car smell, but I think it's a bit gross.

Maura: I agree. I'd much rather have just a nice, natural kind of smell, because the new car smell is kind of like plastic, isn't it?

Harp: Exactly. I'd rather have it all clean and **spick and span**, with, like, a lemon cleaner.

Maura: Nice. OK. Let's get to our last expression for this episode.

Harp: OK. Our last expression is **spotless**.

Maura: Right. To say that something is **spotless** means that it is very, very clean, perfect, and untouched.

Harp: Yeah. So when something is **spotless**, it's immaculate. It's super clean.

Maura: **Spotless** means there are no spots on something. And if you think about a mirror, if there were spots on a mirror, it would be dirty. And you can actually say that. You can say, "Oh, **you missed a spot**," and it means that there's some dirt there that you didn't clean.

Harp: Yup. But when you say that something is **spotless**, it means that it's very, very clean.

Maura: That's right. So, shall we get to the examples?

Harp: Let's do it.

Harp: Wow! Your desk is **spotless**. What's going on?

Maura: Didn't you get the memo? **The head honcho's** coming today.

Harp: He's coming today?

Maura: Yup. The big boss from head office is taking a tour of the entire place.

Harp: Oh my goodness. I have to go clean my desk. It's **a disaster** right now.

Maura: Good luck! He'll be here in an hour.

Harp: Oh, I don't think that's enough time. I really need to go.

Maura: And so in this first example, we heard that someone's desk was **spotless**. And this means that it was very clean. And in this case, also probably very organized.

Harp: Yes. It was **spotless**. So that meant it was very clean and organized, and all papers were in stacks and it wasn't a mess.

Maura: That's right. Now I have another question. I have a lot of questions this episode.

Harp: That's OK.

Maura: How's your desk at work, Harp?

Harp: Kind of like how my room was when I was a kid. It gets messy and then I go through **a big cleaning blitz** and then it's **spotless**. And then about three days later it's a mess again.

Maura: That's true. One of the hardest things is keeping something clean.

Harp: Exactly. I'm good at cleaning it, but it's the maintenance that I just... I suck at.

Maura: Mhmm. OK. Now let's do one last example with **spotless**.

Harp: So, how was the visit to the in-laws this weekend?

Maura: Oh, it was good. But, you know, their house is always **spotless**. And I mean **squeaky clean**. I always think about my place and how it's clean, but it's never up to those standards, and I always feel bad.

Harp: Yeah, but she's retired and you're working and you have kids, so **cut**

yourself some slack.

Maura: All right. But that's what I'm gonna do next weekend. **I'm cleaning my house top to bottom.**

Harp: Good plan. And then invite her to dinner right after you're done.

Maura: Good idea.

Harp: So in this example, we had a friend talking about her recent visit to her in-laws and how their house was so clean.

Maura: That's right. It was **spotless**. Or we could also say it was **as clean as a whistle**. Or it was **spick and span**.

Harp: Exactly. And I think we should do a quick recap.

Maura: Let's do it.

Harp: So we started with **clean as a whistle**.

Maura: And then we gave you examples for the expression **spick and span**.

Harp: And we finished with **spotless**. And all three of these expressions describe something that is very clean.

Maura: And now that this episode is done, I feel like I wanna go home and do some cleaning, Harp.

Harp: I know exactly what you mean. My floors are the opposite of **spotless**. They are so dirty right now.

Maura: Well, let's get to it then. We will remind you before we go to visit our website, Culips.com. That's C-U-L-I-P-S.com. And please think about becoming a member because when you listen, it only enhances your experience and your money goes to help us continue making these episodes for you.

Harp: Yup. That's true, so sign up and become a member. And remember that we're on Facebook and Twitter, so you can always leave us a question or a comment there.

Maura: That's right. We'd love to hear from you.

Harp: That's it for us today. Bye everyone.

Maura: Bye.

Detailed Explanation

As clean as a whistle

Something that's **as clean as a whistle** is extremely clean and free of dirt or stains. This expression became popular after a very similar phrase appeared in the poem "Author's Earnest Cry," written by the Scottish poet Robert Burns in 1786. In the poem, Burns describes a young lady's beer mug as being "toom's a whissle," which means it was totally empty and very clean—**as clean as a whistle**.

A whistle is a small type of flute. In order for the flautist to get a pure tone out of the flute, it needs to be very clean. If there is any gunk stuck in the flute, it won't sound good. This is why when we say something is **as clean as a whistle**, we mean that it is very, very clean.

In everyday speech, a lot of people drop the first *as* from this expression. It's common to hear someone say **clean as a whistle**. The meaning remains the same either way, and it's your choice which you'd like to use.

Here's another example with **as clean as a whistle**:

Tim: What did you do this afternoon?

Pam: I took my car to the carwash and gave it a good scrub. It's **as clean as a whistle now**.

To see your reflection in something

When you can **see your reflection in something**, it means that the object you're looking at is very clean and shiny. A reflection is an image you can see on a mirror, glass, or water, but also on something that's really clean. So, when something is so clean and shiny that when you look at it you can see your own image, you can say that it's so clean you can **see your own reflection in it**.

Here are a couple more examples with **to see your reflection in something**:

Mina: I found this really cool old silver platter at the thrift store the other day and picked it up for only \$5.

Wes: That's awesome.

Mina: Yeah. I got such a good deal because it was in rough shape, but after I gave it a wash, it was so clean **I could see my reflection in it**.

Max: My softball team won our tournament on the weekend.

Linda: Congrats! That's great!

Max: Yeah! We won a big trophy that's so clean and shiny that **I can see my reflection in it!**

To be down on your hands and knees

The expression **to be down on your hands and knees** is used to describe how much effort you put into cleaning something. We usually use this expression when we're talking about things in the house that need to be cleaned regularly, like the kitchen floor or the bathroom.

When you've really worked hard to clean something, you can say that you were **down on your hands and knees** cleaning it. We only use this expression to describe cleaning things that are low to the ground and might actually require you to kneel on the ground to clean them. For example, you couldn't say "I was **down on my hands and knees** cleaning the top of the fridge." Even though you may have worked hard to clean the top of the fridge, the expression doesn't work because you would be more likely to stand on a chair to clean the top of your fridge than to kneel down.

Here are a couple more examples with **to be down on your hands and knees**:

Kara: Wow! Your kitchen floor looks amazing.

Randy: Thanks. I actually put on a new coat of wax last week.

Kara: Isn't that a difficult process?

Randy: Not really. You just have to make sure you give it a good scrub first. So **I got down on my hands and knees** and really gave it a deep clean. Then I just applied the wax and voilà!

Perry: I thought you said you were going to clean the bathroom yesterday. It still looks really dirty to me.

Walt: Oh, yeah, sorry about that. I know living with a messy roommate like me isn't fun. I'll clean it really well this afternoon. I'll even **get down on my hands and knees** to make sure it's super clean!

Spick and span

A place or thing that is **spick and span** is very clean and neat. The phrase **spick and span** has an interesting history that dates back to 1579. Back then, a nail was sometimes called a spick and a piece of wood, a span. When a spick (a nail) was hammered down into a span (a piece of wood), a strong bond was formed that looked clean and neat. People therefore began to use the expression **spick and span** to refer to places and things that are really clean and tidy.

Here's another example with **spick and span**:

Nick: How's the apartment hunt coming along?

Anna: I actually signed the lease on a place yesterday!

Nick: Congratulations! That's great.

Anna: Thanks. I can't wait to move in. It's a nice two-bedroom close to downtown, and it's really **spick and span**. It's in great condition and I'm really excited.

To be blown away

When someone is **blown away**, they are really surprised or shocked. In this episode, Maura tells us that she recently looked at some old pictures of the bedroom she had when she was a teenager and was **blown away** by how messy it was. She was really surprised to look back at her old room and realize that she used to live in such a messy place.

When someone is really surprised or shocked by something, we can say that they are **blown away**.

Here are a couple more examples with *to be blown away*:

Ben: Have you heard the new Beyoncé song?

Nancy: Yeah! I was totally **blown away** by how good it is!

Mia: I filled up my gas tank yesterday and it cost me over \$100.

Maria: Wow! That's really expensive.

Mia: I know! I was **blown away**. Gas prices have really spiked recently.

A pig

Calling someone **a pig** can have many different meanings, depending on the context.

In this episode, Harp tells Maura that she used to be **a pig**. In this context, calling someone **a pig** means that they are dirty or messy. So Harp was saying that Maura used to be messy when she was younger.

When someone is difficult to deal with or offensive, we can also call that person **a pig**. In this context, the word is often used to describe men who are sexist and believe that men are better than women.

We can also use **pig** to describe someone who is greedy or eats too much food. When someone doesn't share food with other people but instead decides to eat everything himself, we can call that person **a pig**.

But be careful. Calling someone **a pig** is offensive. Harp is able to call Maura **a pig** because they're close friends and Maura knows that Harp is just joking around. However, if you call a person you don't know very well **a pig**, you're likely to upset them.

Here are a few more examples with **a pig**; one for each of the contexts described above:

Mitch: Man, you should clean your room. How can you live like this? You're such **a pig**.

Yan: I know. I'm too lazy. I think I'm just going to hire a maid to do all my housework.

Stan: Hey! Get in the kitchen and make me a sandwich!

Jandy: Ugh. You're such **a pig**. Go make your own lunch! I'm not doing it for you.

Mike: Hey, don't be such **a pig**. Save some food for us too, will you?

Tina: Oh, sorry. I thought you guys were finished eating.

Wear and tear

Wear and tear is the damage that happens to something when it's used normally and properly. In this episode, we hear a story about a rental car. The woman who rented the car was worried that by the time she had to return the car, it would be dirty. But she felt better when she realized that car rental agencies don't usually penalize customers for **wear and tear**, or in other words, for normal everyday use.

We discussed the expression **wear and tear** in more detail in a previous Culips episode, called *It's in Mint Condition*. Check it out at:

<http://esl.culips.com/2013/03/learn-idiomatic-and-everyday-expressions-its-in-mint-condition/>

Here are a couple more examples with **wear and tear**:

Jiang: I just bought a new computer.

Pat: Did you buy any insurance for it?

Jiang: No. Should I have?

Pat: Well, it might be a good idea. Even if your computer breaks just from normal **wear and tear**, you can get it replaced for free.

Sara: I'm thinking about selling my car and getting a new one.

Lars: You should be able to get a good price for it. Other than some typical **wear and tear**, it's in perfect condition.

Sara: Yeah, you're right!

Spotless

Something that's **spotless** is totally, 100% clean. In this episode, we hear a dialogue example about a desk that was very clean. The desk was so clean that it was described as being **spotless**. When something is **spotless**, it's really clean and not dirty at all.

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

Dave: I'm a little upset with you. When I lent you my white dress shirt, it was **spotless**, but now there's a big stain on the front.

Ron: Yeah, I'm sorry about that. I'll get it dry cleaned for you.

You missed a spot

You missed a spot is often said as a sarcastic joke. It's a way of criticizing someone's hard work even when they have done a good job. This joke is told usually said to someone after they have done a very thorough job cleaning something.

When you say **you missed a spot**, you highlight a very small imperfection in someone's otherwise excellent job at cleaning something.

Here's an example with **you missed a spot**:

Gaston: I just finished cleaning the kitchen. It was really, really dirty and it took me 2 hours.

Jamie: We'll it looks like you **missed a spot** over here under the table. You're gonna have to do the whole thing over again!

Gaston: Haha. Very funny. You're cleaning the kitchen next time!

What's going on?

Asking **what's going on?** is an informal and friendly way to greet someone. It's exactly the same as asking *what's up?* or *what's happening?*

This greeting is often used when some kind of change has taken place. For example, in this episode, we hear a dialogue example in which one of the characters asks **what's going on?** when she notices that a desk that's usually messy had been cleaned. The character realizes that a change has occurred and is curious about what caused or motivated the change to happen. This is a perfect situation to ask the question **what's going on?**

The American R&B singer Marvin Gaye has a famous album called *What's Going On*. He repeats this expression many times throughout the album, and it's an excellent place to hear how it can be used.

Here are a couple more examples with **what's going on?**:

Al: Hey, **what's going on?** Something's different about you. Did you get a haircut?

Beth: Nope, but I did get new glasses!

Neko: Hey! I haven't seen you in ages. **What's going on?**

Juan: Oh, not much. What's new with you?

The head honcho

The head honcho is a nickname that's sometimes given to someone who is a boss or leader. Most people probably wouldn't directly call their boss **the head honcho**, because it's quite familiar and informal, so might be considered disrespectful by someone you don't know well. If you work at a small company and have a fairly close, friendly relationship with your boss, it would probably be fine to use this expression.

Anyone who is in charge, like a boss or supervisor, can be called **the head honcho**.

Here are a couple more examples with **the head honcho**:

Gail: I'm going on a business trip to California next week.

Quinn: That's cool. What will you be doing out there?

Gail: I have to meet with **the head honcho** of the western division to work out a new national sales strategy.

Jasbir: You'd better get your quarterly report polished up by tomorrow. **The head honcho** wants you to present it at our staff meeting.

Moon: No problem. I'm just putting the finishing touches on it right now.

A disaster

If you casually call something **a disaster**, you are emphasizing that it is extremely chaotic, messy, or dirty. When something is disordered, disorganized, cluttered, or messy, we can call it **a disaster**. When we call something **a disaster**, we're comparing it to what a disaster zone looks like after being hit by a natural disaster like a tornado or flood.

Here are a couple more examples with the expression **a disaster** used in this way:

Perry: My life is **a disaster** right now. I'm so busy. I can't keep up with any of my commitments and I keep missing appointments.

Fae: Yeah, you need to slow down a bit. You've taken on too many things at once!

Victoria: You should really organize the files on your computer. Look at your desktop! It's **a disaster**! There are icons everywhere.

Zane: Yeah, you're right. I really need to clean it up.

A cleaning blitz

In German, the word **blitz** means lightning. Because a lightning flash is really quick and intense, in English we have the word **blitz** to describe something that's done quickly and intensely. So **a cleaning blitz** occurs when you rapidly clean something up.

In this episode, we learn that Harp's favourite way to keep her desk clean is to go through **a cleaning blitz** whenever it gets really messy. She quickly tidies up her desk and then a few days later it becomes disorganized again.

There are many English expressions that use the word **blitz**. Here are a few more examples of some of the more popular ones:

- **A media blitz**: when a lot of information about one subject is on the news and in the newspapers
- **An advertising blitz**: when a company advertises its product very intensely and you see ads for it everywhere
- **A shopping blitz**: when you go on a shopping spree and buy lots of things in a short amount of time

And here are a couple more examples with **a cleaning blitz**:

Tila: Our dinner guests will be here soon, and you still haven't taken care of the mess in the living room. Can you do it now?

Ron: Don't worry! I'll go on **a cleaning blitz** and get it all spick and span before they get here.

Sammy: Don't worry about doing the dishes. I'll wash them later.

Paula: Nonsense. I'll just go on **a quick cleaning blitz** and get it over with.

Squeaky clean

When something is **squeaky clean**, it's completely clean. We call really clean things **squeaky clean** because when you rub your finger across a recently cleaned piece of glass, like a plate or a mirror, it makes a squeaking sound.

But we can use this expression for anything that's really clean, not just things that actually squeak. For example, you could describe your hair as being **squeaky clean** after taking a shower!

Here are a couple more examples with **squeaky clean**:

Ian: I'm going to run down to the store.

Mia: Why?

Ian: I just noticed that we're almost out of shampoo, and that brand that leaves my hair feeling so **squeaky clean** is on sale right now.

Kim: I love the feeling I get after I brush my teeth. My mouth feels so great and **squeaky clean**.

Pam: Oh yeah. I love that too!

To cut someone some slack

When you **cut someone some slack**, you are less critical or strict with them than you typically would be. Usually, you **cut someone some slack** when they have a special situation that prevents them from acting normally.

In this episode, we hear a dialogue example where a mom **cuts herself some slack** because her house isn't always clean. The mom realizes that her house can't be as clean as her in-laws' place, because she has two kids that keep her really busy, while her in-laws are retired.

Here are a couple more example with ***to cut someone some slack***.

Billy: Have you found a new job yet?

Rosie: Hey, **cut me some slack!** I just graduated from university last week. These things take time!

Gord: Did you hear that Linda's mother passed away last night?

Jane: Oh, really? That's awful. We should **cut her some slack** for the next little while and help out around the house. Maybe we should cook dinner for her tonight.

Gord: That's a great idea. She's always been such a good roommate to us. We should do our best to help her through this difficult time.

To clean something from top to bottom

If you **clean something from top to bottom**, it means that you clean all of it. In this episode, we hear a story about a mom who promises **to clean her house from top to bottom** next weekend. This means that she intends to clean her whole house—all of the rooms—next weekend. When you plan to clean something completely, especially a space like a house, room, or car, you can say that you will **clean it from top to bottom**.

Here are a couple more examples with ***to clean something from top to bottom***:

Rita: My car is a total mess from our road trip.

Henry: You should take it over to A-Plus Carwash. They do a great job and **clean everything from top to bottom** for only \$15.

Jasmine: I'm exhausted! I just cleaned my garage **from top to bottom!** It was hard work, but it feels great to have everything organized now.

Tina: That reminds me: it's about time that I clean out my garage too!

Quiz

- 1. Someone who's very messy can be called which of the following?**
 - a) a horse
 - b) a sheep
 - c) a pig
 - d) a chicken

- 2. What does it mean when your house is a disaster?**
 - a) It's haunted.
 - b) It's really messy.
 - c) It's in danger of being knocked over by a tornado.
 - d) It's for sale.

- 3. Which of the following expressions uses a word borrowed from German?**
 - a) a cleaning blitz
 - b) the head honcho
 - c) to cut someone some slack
 - d) squeaky clean

- 4. Which of the following is a sarcastic joke you could say to someone to criticize the job they did at cleaning something?**
 - a) You are a terrible cleaner.
 - b) You did a bad job.
 - c) You missed a spot.
 - d) You missed everything.

- 5. What does it mean to be blown away?**
 - a) to be jealous of someone else
 - b) to be surprised or shocked
 - c) to feel happy
 - d) to feel stressed

6. Which of the following expressions DOES NOT mean very clean?
- a) spick and span
 - b) squeaky clean
 - c) spotless
 - d) shineful
7. When you use a lot of effort to clean something really well, you can say that you were _____ cleaning.

Fill in the blank.

- a) chin-deep
 - b) top to bottom
 - c) on your hands and knees
 - d) up to your eyeballs
8. Which of the following things, if recently cleaned, would you probably NOT use the expression *to see your reflection in* to describe?
- a) a window
 - b) a dish
 - c) a car
 - d) laundry

Answers:

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