

Catch Word #153 – Word

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
- **gonna**: going to

Transcript

Harp: Hello everyone. This is Harp.

Andrew: Hi! I'm Andrew and we're here with another Culips episode.

Harp: Yes. Check out our website Culips.com. That's C-U-L-I-P-S.com because there you can sign up and become a member, and when you're a member - what do you get, Andrew?

Andrew: Well, you get the joy of knowing that your money is helping us make great podcasts, and you also get access to transcripts of everything that we say during our episodes. As well, you get access to our detailed explanations of all our key expressions that we talk about and you get a quiz.

Harp: Yeah. And you get this for every episode we've made, and we've made a lot of wonderful episodes. So go check out our website.

Andrew: Mmhmm. And while you're on the Internet check out our Twitter and our Facebook page, and send us a message. We love to hear from you.

Harp: Yeah. And if you have any questions about English or about North American culture, you can send them to us there. And if you have any suggestions for some upcoming episodes, please leave them there. We have made some wonderful episodes based on fan suggestions.

Andrew: That's right. So, Harp, how are you?

Harp: I'm really good and super busy.

- Andrew: Super busy?
- Harp: Yeah. At work we're doing a couple of different cultural celebrations this week.
- Andrew: Oh yeah? Like What?
- Harp: Well we're a super multicultural organization, and we have quite a few people who come from India and also from Iran, so this week we're gonna be celebrating the Iranian New Year, which is March 21st and also Holi which is celebrated on March 17th in India. So we're doing a joint celebration, and it's going to be pretty awesome.
- Andrew: Wow. That's great. How do you celebrate?
- Harp: Mainly just with food and some of the people will do a dance and someone's going to sing a song as well.
- Andrew: Well, that sounds like a great time.
- Harp: Yeah. It's pretty fun when we do these events.
- Andrew: Well, happy new years to all our Iranian listeners.
- Harp: Very cool. So should we get started with today's episode, which is going to be a Catch Word episode?
- Andrew: Yeah. Today's episode we are going to introduce three expressions to you that can all be used to agree with somebody's statement or question in a very casual and **laid-back** way.
- Harp: Yeah. These are all slang expressions used when you're casually agreeing with someone.
- Andrew: Yeah. So these expressions I use often with my friends but never in a serious or professional situation.
- Harp: Yeah. And you would never use them in an essay that you were writing. It's just really a casual way to use them.
- Andrew: And our first one is **word**.
- Harp: **Word**.
- Andrew: Yeah. It's just a one-word expression, which is **word**.
- Harp: Yeah. And so you use this expression to say yes when someone has said something. You say **word**.

Andrew: Right. So if you want to agree with a statement that somebody has made, you can say **word**. And this expression is really a shortened form of a longer expression, which is **my word is my bond**.

Harp: **My word is my bond**.

Andrew: And this means that what you're saying is true. You're being honest. If **your word is your bond**, you're telling the truth.

Harp: Exactly. So when you say **word**, you're casually agreeing with what the person has said.

Andrew: Right. And this expression originates in hip-hop culture. The full expression, **my word is my bond**, started being used in hip-hop songs as **word is bond** and eventually that got shortened again to just **word**. And, yeah, now it's used still in hip hop culture but also in the broader culture, and it's just used by people when they want to agree with something.

Harp: Yup. And this is the case with many English expressions. We shorten a sentence down, so for this we just say **word**.

Andrew: Mmhmm. I like this one.

Harp: This expression is used verbally most of the time.

Andrew: Yup. And you really wouldn't want to use this in a formal writing situation, but if you're sending a text message or you're chatting on the Internet then it's totally OK to use these expressions.

Harp: Should we give some examples with this expression?

Andrew: Yup. That's a good idea.

Harp: Bob, I **can't handle** this winter. It's so cold. It's never ending.

Andrew: **Word**.

Harp: Is it spring yet? When is this winter going to end?

Andrew: Soon I hope. I'm sick of it too.

Andrew: So in this example we heard a woman complaining about the long winter. And when she told Bob how much she hates this long winter, he agreed by saying **word**.

Harp: Yup. And this is how it's usually used. You just say **word**. You don't say **word**, it's really cold. You just say **word**.

Andrew: Yeah. It's a cool expression because the one word, **word**, says a lot. It really gets a whole idea out with just one little statement.

Harp: Exactly. I think that we should give one more example with this expression.

Andrew: OK.

Andrew: I'm starving. What should we do for dinner? Do you want **to grab** a pizza?

Harp: **Word**.

Andrew: OK. What are you thinking? Take out or delivery?

Harp: Let's do delivery, and we can relax here.

Andrew: Yeah. Good idea.

Harp: So in this example we had two friends talking about ordering pizza, and the one friend said "**word**" to say that, yes, ordering pizza was a good idea.

Andrew: Yup. So whenever you want to agree with something - it could be a statement, it could be a question - you can just say **word**.

Harp: Yeah. And one thing about this expression is that it's often used by younger people. Like I feel a little bit funny saying it because I feel like I should be more mature now.

Andrew: Yeah. It's kind of slangy. Kind of used by teenagers and people in their 20s.

Harp: Yeah. I often use it in text or when I'm doing just MSN or gChat.

Andrew: Mmhmm. It's a common Internet text and chatting word and expression to use.

Harp: All right. Let's go on to the next expression.

Andrew: So our second expression is **to be game**.

Harp: Yes. **To be game**.

- Andrew: And this expression is similar to **word**, but it is a little bit different. And that is because it can only be used to agree to do something. So if somebody asks you if you want to do an activity, you can say **I'm game** to agree that you want to do that thing.
- Harp: Yup. You're agreeing to do an action.
- Andrew: Or that you're willing to do something.
- Harp: Yup. So if someone asks you if you want to go to a movie you say **I'm game**, which means "yeah, sure".
- Andrew: And interestingly, this expression has a very long history. I thought before I researched that this expression was a pretty new expression. It feels new to me. But when I looked it up, I realized that it's very old, and it dates back to the 1600s.
- Harp: That's interesting. 'Cause when I hear it, and when I use it, that **I am game**, I do think that it's really young and hip and a new expression. So that's interesting that it's an older expression.
- Andrew: Yup. There is an old English word, *gammen*, I think I'm pronouncing that right. *Gammen*. And this means sort of joy, play, or pleasure. And this where this term originates from. **I'm game** comes from *gammen*.
- Harp: So interesting. We'll explain more about the origins in the learning materials.
- Andrew: Should we do some examples using this expression?
- Harp: I think we should.

- Andrew: What do you want to do this weekend?
- Harp: Well, did you hear about the new Picasso exhibition at the museum?
- Andrew: No, that sounds really cool.
- Harp: Yeah. It's at the downtown museum.
- Andrew: Well, we should go to that.
- Harp: **I'm game** if you are.
- Andrew: Yeah. **I'm game**. Let's go.

Harp: So in this example, we had two friends talking about what to do for the weekend. And to agree with the idea of going to the museum, one friend said “**I'm game**”.

Andrew: Exactly. To respond to the suggestion that they should go to the museum she said “**I'm game**”.

Harp: Exactly. So you can use this to say “yes” to an action. Let's give one more example.

Harp:	Did you hear that we have that big new Robertson project that we have to work on?
Andrew:	I know. That's sort of a nightmare . It's going to be so much extra work.
Harp:	Yeah. We're definitely going to have to distribute the work among the team. Do you think Mary's going to take on more?
Andrew:	Yeah. You know what? I actually talked to her last week, and she said that she was willing to take on more responsibility. Yeah. She's totally game for this.
Harp:	That's great news.

Andrew: So in this example, we heard about a workplace scenario where the company suddenly got a lot of new work, and they had to distribute this work among all of the employees. But a co-worker asked if Mary would be willing to **take on** more responsibility, and we heard that she was **game** to do the extra work.

Harp: Yup. And it's funny when you think of this expression **I'm game** or **she's game**, you think that it's something that's fun or exciting because usually a game is fun, but it could be for a work task or something more serious.

Andrew: Exactly. So you can **be game** to do things that are not really fun.

Harp: Exactly. Let's move on to our last expression for today.

Andrew: Sure. And our last expression is **to be down**.

Harp: Yes. **To be down**.

Andrew: Not **to be down** like sad, but **to be down** to do something.

Harp: Yup. And this expression, **to be down**, is short for I'm **down** with that or she's **down** with that.

Andrew: Yup. And this was originally a slang term that was used by jazz musicians in America in the 1930s, but it's kind of spread way far away from that, and now it's used by lots of different people.

Harp: Yup. It's similar to **to be game** because you're agreeing to do an action.

Andrew: That's right. So when somebody asks you if you want to do something you can respond by using **to be down**.

Harp: Yes.

Andrew: Should we show some examples, Harp?

Harp: Yup. Let's give some examples.

Andrew: Hey, so there's that conference at the university this weekend. I was thinking about going. What do you think? Do you want to come too?

Harp: **No way José.**

Andrew: Well, it'll be interesting though. And you know what? Actually, afterwards there's a **wine and cheese**. Does that change your mind at all?

Harp: OK. OK. I'm **down**.

Andrew: **Sweet.**

Andrew: In this example we heard about two people talking about potentially attending an academic conference at a university. And when one friend asks the other friend if she wants to go, at first she said, "**No way José,**" no way at all I want to go to this conference. But once she learned that there was some free **wine and cheese** after the conference, she changed her mind and she was **down** to go. She agreed to go.

Harp: Exactly. She agreed because of the wine and the cheese, so she was **down** to go to the conference.

Andrew: Mhmm. How about another example?

Harp: Let's do it.

Andrew: Hello.

Harp: Hey, how are you?

Andrew: Good and you?

Harp: I'm good. You still want to hang out tonight?

Andrew:	Definitely. What should we do?
Harp:	We could go see a movie?
Andrew:	A movie? I actually saw a movie last night. How about we go grab something to eat?
Harp:	I'm not really hungry. I just ate right now.
Andrew:	Hm. Well how about you just come over to my place and then we'll figure out what we want to do then?
Harp:	I'm down.
Andrew:	Cool. Well I'm free after seven, so does that work for you?
Harp:	That's perfect. I'm going to go to the gym for a quick workout first.
Andrew:	OK. See you at seven.

Harp: So in this example, we had two friends discussing plans for the evening, and they couldn't agree, but they agreed on just hanging out and making plans from there. So one friend said "**I'm down**" and she meant to hang out.

Andrew: Exactly. So whenever you want to agree with something, you'd say **I'm down**.

Harp: Yes. For an action.

Andrew: Exactly.

Harp: All right. Let's do a quick recap of the expressions that we talked about today.

Andrew: Sure. So our first expression was **word**.

Harp: Yes. And then the second expression was **to be game**.

Andrew: And our last one was **to be down**.

Harp: Yes. And just so you know there are different ways that you can use these expressions, but we're gonna explain those in the learning materials so remember, go to the website Culips.com. That's C-U-L-I-P-S.com. Sign up and become a member, so that you can learn even more.

Andrew: That's right. Thanks for listening everybody. We'll catch you next time.

Harp: Bye everyone.

Detailed Explanation

To be laid-back

When something or someone is **laid-back**, it means that the thing or person is calm and relaxed. In this episode, Andrew describes this episode's three catch word expressions (*word, to be game, to be down*) as **laid-back**. He does this because these expressions are informal and used often in casual speech. When we speak in an informal register with friends, we are more likely to use **laid-back** language that is relaxed and comfortable.

So, when something or someone is relaxed, easy going, or calm, we can say that it or they are **laid-back**. Here are a few examples that use this expression:

Jamie: You should meet my friend Paul. I think you two would get along really well. He's really **laid-back** and funny.

Thomas: Yeah, you've talked so much about him. We should all hang out together sometime.

Jamie: Why don't you come over for pizza on Friday? I'll invite Paul too.

Thomas: Cool, sounds fun!

Petra: Did I tell you that I joined a choir?

Lin: No, that's awesome!

Petra: Yeah at first I was a little bit worried about singing in front of other people, but everyone is so **laid-back** and supportive that it isn't stressful at all.

Lin: That's great. If you ever are going to perform publicly, let me know. I'd love to come watch.

Word

We can use the expression **word** whenever we want to agree with something that was said. This could be a suggestion, statement, or question. As we mention in this episode, **word** became popular because of hip hop music and culture. We'll talk more about this expressions origins in the next entry, **my word is my bond**.

So, whenever someone says **word** they are agreeing with something that was said in an informal way.

Here are a few examples that use this expression:

Rhonda: I had such a good time skiing with you today.

Bill: Yeah that was really fun but I'm so tired now.

Rhonda: **Word** me too. I'm going to go to bed early tonight for sure.

Bill: Yup, same here.

Steve: Let's go to the park Saturday afternoon. I heard the weather is going to be awesome.

Rina: **Word**. Good idea.

My word is my bond

When someone says **my word is my bond**, it means that they are trustworthy and that they always keep a promise. In the business world, a **bond** is a written agreement or promise. Governments and companies often sell financial **bonds** to raise money. When you buy a financial bond, the bond seller will give you a document that states that they promise to pay you back at a later date.

The official motto of the London Stock Exchange is *dictum meum pactum*. This translates from Latin as **my word is my bond**. At the stock exchange, a lot of business deals are done without official agreements and contracts being signed. Stockbrokers used to say **my word is my bond** to show that they promise to do what he agreed to do.

The expression **word** originates out of the longer phrase **my word is my bond**. Although it was originally used to mean *I promise* now the shortened expression **word** is used whenever someone wants to agree with what has been said.

My word is my bond is not often used these days. It is an old fashioned expression but you may come across it in an older book or movie. Here are a few examples of how it can be used:

Eddie: When can come by to help me paint my house?

Jasmine: Is Sunday ok?

Eddie: Sure, but I really need your help. Don't cancel, ok?

Jasmine: No problem, I'll be there. **My word is my bond**.

Lisa: It's so frustrating how so many people lack integrity these days.

Ron: I agree.

Lisa: If I say something, I'm going to do it. **My word is my bond**.

Ron: That's a great way to live.

To handle something

When someone **can handle something**, it means they can deal with, be responsible, or tolerate a situation. In this episode, we hear an example about a woman who **can't handle** the winter. This means that she doesn't like winter and is having a difficult time with the cold temperatures and constant snowfall.

So, whenever someone can **handle** something, it means that they are able to tolerate, manage, or deal with that situation. This expression is frequently used in conjunction with the modal verbs **can/can't**.

Check out the following example to see how this works:

Walter: Can you cover my shift on Wednesday? I'd really like to have the day off because it's my daughter's birthday.

Laura: Sure, I don't mind.

Walter: I feel bad though because you won't have a day off this week.

Laura: Don't worry about it, I **can handle it**.

Rebecca: What's your secret for **handling** stress? You're always so calm and relaxed.

Bob: I try not to take things so seriously. I also try to exercise often, and I've recently started doing yoga every morning.

Rebecca: I should try that. Thanks for the tips!

To grab

In this episode, we use the verb **to grab** two times to talk about ordering food. In this context, **to grab** means to have or get something really quickly, because you're busy or you don't have much free time. For example, in this episode we hear an example about two friends who want to **grab** a pizza. They decide to get the pizza delivered because they don't want to waste time going to the pizzeria. Instead, they would rather spend their time hanging out together.

So, whenever you **grab** something, it means that you get, use, or enjoy that thing quickly.

Here are some examples that show you how to use **to grab**.

Carolina: If we don't leave in the next five minutes we're going to be late!

Steve: Relax. Let's just **grab** a cab instead of taking the bus. We'll be there with plenty of time to spare.

Carolina: Ok, good idea.

Wendy: Do you want to come over for dinner tonight Bill?

Bill: No, sorry I can't. I have meetings all evening.

Wendy: What are you going to do for dinner then?

Bill: I'll just **grab** a quick bite to eat between meetings. Don't worry about me.

Wendy: Ok, fair enough. Catch you later.

Bill: See ya!

To be game

When you are willing to do something, you are **game**. In this episode, we hear an example about a co-worker who is **game** to take on more responsibility at work. This means that she is willing to accept more work and responsibility at the office.

This expression is used when you want to positively respond to a suggestion. It is used to show that you are willing and want to do what someone has suggested. So, whenever you're **game** to do what someone has suggested, it means that you want to do that thing. Here are some examples that use this expression:

Ming: I just noticed that there is a seat sale and plane tickets to Florida are super cheap right now. Wouldn't it be fun to take a little vacation? What do you think, should we go?

Mel: That would be so fun! I'm **game**! Let's do it!

Eduardo: Did you ever hear back from Beth about getting together for dinner next week?

Phil: Yup I talked to her and she said she was **game**. I'll go ahead and make a reservation for us at a nice restaurant.

Eduardo: Sounds great. I can't wait to see you guys.

To be a nightmare

When a situation or experience is really horrible or unpleasant, we can call it a **nightmare**. In this episode, we hear an example where two co-workers discuss a new project that is a **nightmare** because it is going to be a lot of extra work.

A **nightmare** is a bad dream. So, whenever a situation turns out to be difficult to deal with, just like a bad dream is, we can call it a **nightmare**.

Check out the following examples that use this expression:

Fraser: How was your trip to New York?

Georgia: It started off ok but getting back to Montreal was a **nightmare**.

Fraser: Ah that's too bad. What happened?

Georgia: My flight was cancelled because of mechanical problems and the airline wasn't able to reschedule the flight until the next day. I had to spend the night in the airport.

Fraser: That's the worst!

Peter: Hey you were supposed to be here two hours ago? Why are you late?

Brenda: Traffic was a **nightmare**! There was an accident on the highway and things were really backed up!

Peter: Well, we are not going to be able to see a movie now. What should we do instead?

Brenda: Let's just go for a walk. After being cooped up in my car forever, I could use some fresh air.

To take on

When you **take something on**, you decide to do something and agree to be in charge of or responsible for that thing. In this episode, we hear an example about a woman named Mary who is going to **take on** more responsibility at work. This means that she has agreed to do more work around the office and is willing to have more responsibility at work.

So, whenever you add a new job or responsibility to your already existing job, then you have **taken something on**. The phrasal verb **to take on** can also be used in a few different ways. Here is a quick rundown on some of the other meanings for **take on**:

1. To hire: When a business **takes on** a new employee, it means they have hired a new staff member. Usage example: *I hope our boss takes on some new staff this summer. We'll be really busy and we'll need more help around the office.*
2. To compete against: If you **take someone on**, it means you agree to compete against him or her in a game, sport, or fight. Usage example: *I can't wait to see the Brazilians take on the world at the Summer Olympics. It's going to be great!*
3. To change: If a person or thing **takes on** a quality, it means that it has changed or adapted. Usage example: *The spy took on the look of the locals while he was working.*
4. To pick up: When a vehicle **takes on** people or things, it means that it takes them on board. Usage example: *We have room in the van to take on three more passengers.*

And now here are a few example sentences that use **take on** to mean accept more responsibility:

Ross: Want to hang out sometime this weekend?

Bill: I don't think I can. I just agreed to volunteer at the food bank and I'm pretty busy.

Ross: Wow, if you **take on** any more activities you're going to burn out.

Bill: I like to stay busy. But thanks for your concern. I appreciate it.

Su: I just found out that there is a summer softball league in town. I was thinking about joining a team. Would you be interested too?

Lisa: That would be super fun, but I think I'm too busy to **take on** anything else at the moment.

Su: No problem. Just thought I'd ask.

To be down

When you are **down** to do something, it means that you want to do that thing. In this episode we hear an example where two friends are discussing an academic conference. After hearing that there is a **wine and cheese** party following the conference, one friend says that she's **down** to go. This means that she wants to go to the conference because of the free food.

So, whenever someone says that they are **down** to do something, that person has agreed to do something or wants to do something.

There are also a few other meanings of **to be down**. Here is a quick rundown of how this expression can be used:

1. To be unhappy: When you are **down**, you feel sad or depressed. Usage example: *I'm feeling a bit **down** today. I think I am going to go to the gym and work out, that usually makes me feel a bit better.*
2. To not work: When something (usually a computer or high tech device) is temporarily broken, we can say that it is **down**. Usage example: *I'd like to check my email but the Internet seems to be down at the moment. I'm going to call my service provider and see what the problem is.*

And now here are a few examples of **to be down** in the sense of to agree to or to want to do something.

Wanda: I'm **down** to check out the basketball game on Saturday night if you are.
Thom: Sure, sounds fun! Let's go.

Yan: We should throw a surprise party for Lisa's birthday this year.
Kim: Yeah I'm totally **down**. That would be so much fun!

No way José

The expression **no way José** is used as a cute and child-like way to disagree with a suggestion. The expression originated in the 1960s and was first used in the Village Voice, a free weekly newspaper from New York City. No one knows for certain why the name José is used in this expression, but it is probably just because it rhymes with the word way.

So, whenever you want to disagree with someone in a lighthearted way, you can say **no way José**. Keep in mind that this expression can be used in informal conversation and writing, but that it should be avoided in more formal settings.

Here are a few examples that use **no way José**:

Kevin: I just got asked out by a super creepy girl.

Gabby: Really? What did you tell her?

Kevin: I was like **no way José**!

Trevor: Can you help me move at the end of the month?

Wes: **No way José**. I'm going to be in LA, sorry!

Wine and cheese

A **wine and cheese** is a type of party where **wine and cheese** are served. These two items are paired together because their flavours complement each other. In Montreal, **wine and cheese** parties are common after conferences and conventions. They allow for people to mingle, socialize, and network. Here is an example that shows you how this expression can be used:

Katie: What did you do last night?

Fabien: We had a **wine and cheese** office party. It was really fun! I had a great time hanging out with my coworkers.

Sweet

We use the expression **sweet** in an informal way when we want to show that something is great or that we approve of an idea or suggestion. It is very similar to the slang expression *cool*. So, whenever something is **sweet** it means that it is good, awesome, or excellent. Since this is a very relaxed expression, it should be avoided in formal conversation and writing. Here are a few usage examples that use **sweet**:

Jon: I just won a free trip to Hawaii in a radio contest. I can't believe it!

Ursula: That's so **sweet**! You're going to have the best time!

Jon: I know! I'm really excited! I've never been to Hawaii.

Amy: I just bought a new phone!

Pat: **Sweet**! What type did you get?

Amy: The brand new iPhone.

Pat: Very cool. That's a great phone. You'll love it.

Quiz

1. Which expression is NOT used when you want to agree with something?
 - a) word
 - b) I'm loving it
 - c) I'm game
 - d) I'm down

2. Which slang expression is very similar to *cool* and is used to show that something is really great.
 - a) sweet
 - b) sour
 - c) salty
 - d) tangy

3. What is the motto of the London Stock Exchange?
 - a) my word is my bond
 - b) money matters
 - c) a dollar in your pocket
 - d) my bond is my word

4. If an experience is really horrible or difficult to deal with, then it is a _____.
 - a) nightmare
 - b) day dream
 - c) dream come true
 - d) vision

5. When you can handle a situation, what are you able to do?
 - a) hold the situation in the palm of your hands
 - b) mismanage the situation
 - c) tolerate or manage the situation
 - d) make the situation worse

6. A person who is relaxed and calm is ____ ____?

- a) so shy
- b) laid-back
- c) stressed out
- d) all uptight

7. Complete the dialogue by selecting the expression that is the best fit.

Janet: I'm so hungry but I don't have much time before class.

Randi: Why don't we just _____ a bite to eat at the cafeteria?

- a) pick up
- b) grab
- c) sneak
- d) order

8. If you really disagree with a suggestion, but don't want to be rude with your reply, what slang expression can you use?

- a) absolutely not!
- b) nope!
- c) never in a million years, ever!
- d) no way José!

9. Which of the following definitions CANNOT be used to define *to take on*?

- a) to change
- b) to pick up
- c) to follow through
- d) to accept more responsibility

Answers:

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