

Catch Word #155 – Let's just play it by ear

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:

- **dunno**: don't know
- **gonna**: going to
- **gotta**: got to

Transcript

Maura: Hello everyone. It's Maura.

Andrew: Hey. And I'm Andrew. And we're back with another Culips episode.

Maura: That is right. And don't forget to go to our website, Culips.com. That's C-U-L-I-P-S.com. Because it is only on our website where you can become a member. And when you're a member, you have access to the transcripts for all of our episodes, more detailed explanations for the expressions that we use, and quizzes to test yourself when you're all done listening.

Andrew: That's right. And don't forget to check us out on Facebook and on Twitter. We're on iTunes and Stitcher, as well. So if you have some time on the Internet, come and visit us.

Maura: OK, cool. So, how's it going Andrew?

Andrew: I'm doing great. How are you?

Maura: Yeah, I'm good. Actually, I just went to a great wedding this past weekend.

Andrew: A wedding? Who got married?

Maura: Yeah. Two good friends of mine who are actually from Europe, but now they've been living in Canada for probably 7 or 8 years, and they finally decided to get married, so they did it here.

- Andrew: And how was it?
- Maura: It was really fun. And, actually, the concept was really original. What they decided to do was... Well, they rented an island. I think they were looking around for a cool place to hold their wedding and somehow they stumbled upon a small island near Kingston, Ontario that they could rent, so that's what they did.
- Andrew: That's really cool. You know what's sort of strange? I've actually been to a wedding that was also on a private island.
- Maura: Oh, really? In Ontario?
- Andrew: No, this one was in British Columbia. But it made for a really great wedding. Very beautiful.
- Maura: Yeah. Everyone could just camp and there were no neighbours to say, "Hey, you're making too much noise. Be quiet." So people just partied and had fun all night.
- Andrew: Yeah. Island weddings. They're great. I recommend it.
- Maura: Yeah. OK. Let's get to today's episode now. Today we're going to do a Catch Word episode, and that's where we look at three related expressions, and of course, we tell you what they mean and we give you examples of how you can use them, too.
- Andrew: That's right. And today's expressions are all about accepting a situation as it comes and doing what **comes easily** and naturally when that situation arises.
- Maura: I like this idea that you just don't try to change a situation or plan too much. You just kind of make decisions as things happen in the moment.
- Andrew: Yeah. You just react to things as they come.
- Maura: OK. Now, the first expression we're going to look at is **to play it by ear**.
- Andrew: That's right. **To play it by ear**.
- Maura: And this expression, **to play it by ear**, means that you don't plan something out in advance. You just decide what you're going to do when you're already in the situation and you just let things happen naturally.

- Andrew: Mmhmm. So, things happen naturally and then you react to the situation as it develops.
- Maura: Right. I hear this expression used a lot when people are talking about possibly making plans and maybe they can't decide what they're going to do so they say **let's play it by ear**. And that means let's not make a decision, or let's not make any plans. We'll just decide later when the event is actually happening.
- Andrew: Mmhmm. You don't have any plans that are **set in stone**. You just **play it by ear** and make your decision **on the spur of the moment**.
- Maura: Yeah. Actually, we were just talking about this a few minutes ago. I think, more and more, people do **play it by ear** because of cell phones and texting. They don't make set plans, sometimes, and they just text each other saying, "Oh, I'm 5 minutes away," or "Now I'm gonna be an hour late. Can I meet you at this place instead?" A lot of times we don't always make set plans. We just **play it by ear**.
- Andrew: Yup. That's right. And I think you're right, as well. With cell phones, people sort of make up things as they go along, because we can communicate with each other so easily now.
- Maura: And Andrew, do you have any guesses about the origin of this expression?
- Andrew: Hmm. **To play it by ear**. It sounds musical to me.
- Maura: Yes. That's why I asked you, because you're a musician. So I thought you would probably figure it out.
- Andrew: Mmhmm. Yeah. When I play music, actually, I play a lot of different instruments, and I've always been really bad at reading music. And music theory is not something that **comes easily to me**. So usually when I play music, I play it by ear. I just listen and try to figure out what I'm doing while I'm playing.
- Maura: Exactly. So that's where this expression comes from. That people would play music without looking at any notes and they just improvise the music in the moment. Maybe they're jamming with some other musicians. And so it's the same idea, except now we're not talking about music anymore. We're talking about plans for something.
- Andrew: Mmhmm. Yeah. I used to get in a lot of trouble during my piano lessons as a kid for playing it by ear a little too often.

Maura: Mmhhh. Yeah, well I guess it is important to be able to read the music, too.

Andrew: And now I sometimes get in trouble in life for **playing it by ear** a little too often with my plans.

Maura: Yeah. When people **play it by ear**, it's very casual. If there's something really serious or important coming up, an important event, you probably don't want **to play it by ear**. You want to plan it out and make sure you're prepared.

Andrew: Exactly. Yup.

Maura: OK. So let's give a couple of examples with **to play it by ear** now.

Andrew: Let's do that.

Andrew: Hello?

Maura: Hey Paul. What's up?

Andrew: Not much. How are you doing?

Maura: I'm good. I'm just calling about tonight. I got your text. So you're up for going out?

Andrew: Yeah. I'd like to do something if you're still **down**.

Maura: Yeah, yeah. Um, I'm gonna be downtown I think around 6:30. I didn't know if you want to get something to eat or just, like, meet for drinks after **or what**.

Andrew: Hmm. 6:30, eh? Well, how about we just meet downtown and just **play it by ear** and we'll see what happens.

Maura: Yeah. OK, sure. Just text me or call me when you're down there then.

Andrew: OK. Well, see you soon.

Maura: OK. Bye.

Andrew: Bye.

Andrew: So we just heard an example of two friends talking on the telephone. And they were trying to make plans for meeting up. However, they couldn't decide on a solid plan, and instead they agreed to just **play it by ear**. They were just gonna meet up and figure out what they wanted to do when they saw each other.

Maura: Yup. That's right. And I think this is really a great example of how this expression is used. People don't know what they want to do. They don't want to have plans **set in stone**, and so they just decide to decide later.

Andrew: That's right.

Maura: OK. Let's give you another example with this expression. Now this time, at work.

Maura: So, what did you think of Fred's presentation this morning?

Andrew: Well, it was OK, I guess. But, to be honest, I think it could have been better.

Maura: Yeah. You know, I saw him, like, about 10 minutes before he started, and I asked him if he was feeling nervous. He said, "No, no, I'm just gonna **play it by ear**." I was a bit surprised.

Andrew: Yeah. That's crazy. He's usually so well prepared. I wonder what made him do that.

Maura: I don't know, but you could really tell, I think, that he wasn't prepared and he hadn't practised.

Andrew: Yeah. Well, he's gonna to have to try harder next time, I think.

Maura: In this example, we heard two colleagues talking about Fred. And I guess Fred had just given a presentation that wasn't very good. It didn't look like he had planned or practised. In fact, he said he was going **to play it by ear**. So in this situation, Fred didn't practise his presentation. He just decided what to do and what to talk about as he was giving the presentation.

Andrew: That's right. Poor Fred. He didn't prepare at all and he just made it up as he went along and just **played the presentation by ear**, really. Not a great idea.

Maura: Yeah. Sometimes people can **pull it off** and they're good at it, but if it's something really important, you should plan and you should practise.

Andrew: Yeah. Especially for work, I feel.

Maura: Yup. I agree. OK. Let's move on to the next expression now, and that is **to go with the flow**.

Andrew: **To go with the flow.**

Maura: This just means to relax and accept a situation as things happen.

- Andrew: Mmhmm. So if you don't stress out about things and just let them occur naturally, then you're **going with the flow**.
- Maura: Yup. You know, I like this expression. I think it's because it rhymes.
- Andrew: Yeah. I like this one too. It **rolls of the tongue**. It feels positive, in a way. **To go with the flow**.
- Maura: Right. If you're **going with the flow**, you're not trying to change or control a situation. You're just doing what comes naturally and going along with whatever happens. You're not trying to control what happens.
- Andrew: Mmhmm. And you're not being bossy or trying to force a situation to happen. If you're with friends and they want to do something, you're just an easygoing person so you agree, "Yeah, let's do what you want to do." That's **going with the flow**.
- Maura: Yup. That's right. For this expression, if you imagine a river flowing, and of course, a river only flows, really, in one direction. And if you're in that river, you just relax and the river will carry you and push you in one direction. That's really where the idea from this expression comes from. You do what comes naturally and what's easiest, right? When you're in a river and if you try to go in the opposite direction, it's a lot of work, so it's just easy and natural to **go with the flow**.
- Andrew: That's exactly right. Just **take things as they come** and do whatever feels natural.
- Maura: OK. Now we'll give you a couple of examples with this expression.

- Maura: So how was your trip to India?
- Andrew: It was amazing. I had a great time.
- Maura: Yeah, I'm sure. So what did you do while you were there?
- Andrew: You know, it was crazy. When I was planning this trip, I sort of made the decision to just not actually make a real itinerary and just **go with the flow**. And so that's what I did. And when I got over there, I met a bunch of amazing people at my hostel and we travelled around for 3 weeks together. It was really fun.
- Maura: Cool. Did you see the Taj Mahal?
- Andrew: I did. Amazing. Beautiful.
- Maura: Ah, sweet. Well, I hope the transition back to work isn't too rough.

Andrew: Thanks. I think it's gonna be tough. I'm not looking forward to getting back to work.

Maura: All right. Well good luck.

Andrew: Thank you.

Maura: So here we heard from someone who had just taken a trip to India. And his plans were **to go with the flow** when he got there. He didn't make a lot of plans and he didn't have a big list of things he wanted to do. He just did what happened naturally and, like he said, he met some people and he travelled with them. Things just kind of happened.

Andrew: That's right. So this traveller just **went with the flow**.

Maura: OK. Let's give you one more example with this expression.

Maura: So, do you want to get together this weekend?

Andrew: I can't, actually. I'm meeting my girlfriend's parents for the very first time.

Maura: Oh, wow. That's kind of a big deal, isn't it?

Andrew: It's **a big step**, yeah. And to be honest, I'm a little bit nervous.

Maura: Oh, don't worry. Just **go with the flow**. I'm sure they're excited and nervous to meet you, too.

Andrew: Yeah. It'll be OK. I don't know why I'm so worried about it. It'll be fine.

Maura: Yeah. And **when in doubt**, you can always talk about your girlfriend. I'm sure that her parents love to talk about her.

Andrew: Hey, yeah. That's a good idea. I'll try that out. Thanks.

Andrew: So in this last example, we heard a conversation between two friends. And one of the friends was a little bit nervous about going to meet his girlfriend's parents for the very first time. And his friend reassured him that if he just **goes with the flow**, if he just acts natural, everything will be OK.

Maura: That's right. I think that was pretty good advice.

Andrew: Absolutely. I think this is good advice for life in general. Just **go with the flow**. Don't stress out.

Maura: Yup. I agree. OK. Let's look at the last expression, which is **to roll with the punches**.

Andrew: Mmhmm. **To roll with the punches.**

Maura: And this expression is a little bit different from the other ones we've heard, because when we use this expression, **to roll with the punches**, you're dealing with the situation as it happens, but it's a negative situation where negative things are happening to you, but you're just deciding to deal with them and accept them as they happen.

Andrew: Mmhmm. So, when you **roll with the punches**, you are reacting to something negative that has happened.

Maura: Right. But you're not trying to control it or getting really upset. You're just accepting that these negative things happened and you move on because life goes on.

Andrew: Exactly. So the origin for this expression, **to roll with the punches**, actually comes from boxing. And when you're boxing, this is kind of a defensive manoeuvre: to roll with the punches so that the impact of your opponent's punch doesn't injure you as much.

Maura: Yeah. That's right. So, obviously, a punch is negative. So that's where the idea comes from that when you **roll with the punches**, something negative has happened to you but you don't want to feel the impact and you just want to keep going with your life.

Andrew: Exactly. So now let's give a couple of examples using this expression.

Andrew: So, how's it going?

Maura: Not good, actually. I just got laid off.

Andrew: What? Really? That's awful. What happened?

Maura: Well, I guess the company's not making as much money. That's what they told me. So, for now, I don't have a job.

Andrew: You'll be fine. You'll just **roll with the punches**. This happened to me too when I was, I dunno, just starting out 20 years ago. I got laid off from my job, but then I went back to school and a bunch of really good things happened for me. So don't worry about it. You'll be totally fine.

Maura: All right. Thanks. Yeah. I mean, I thought about a career change anyway, so I guess I just have to start looking for something new now.

Andrew: Yup. **It'll happen for you**. Don't stress out.

Maura: All right. Thanks.

Maura: In this example, we unfortunately heard from someone who just got laid off. And obviously, in that situation you're not feeling very good. But her friend gave her the advice that you just gotta **roll with the punches**; that when negative things happen to you, like losing your job, you just gotta keep going, accept the situation, and start new and go on.

Andrew: That's right. You gotta just move on from the negative stuff that happens and go on with your life.

Maura: And here is another example with **to roll with the punches**.

Andrew: Hey. Do you think I could get a ride home from work today?

Maura: Yeah, sure. What happened to your car?

Andrew: It actually broke down, and I've just been **rolling with the punches** and trying to save some money to fix the car. So I've been taking the bus, but it's awful. So, yeah. If you could just give me a ride, that would be awesome.

Maura: Yeah. No problem. If you need a ride back to work tomorrow, I can give you a ride too. Whatever.

Andrew: Really? Yeah. I may **take you up on that**. Thanks.

Maura: OK, cool. Let's go.

Andrew: In this example, we heard a conversation between two colleagues at work. And one of the workers had some bad luck recently, and his car broke down. So he had just been **rolling with the punches** by taking the bus to work every day until he could save up enough money to repair his car.

Maura: You know, and that's something interesting with this expression, **rolling with the punches**. *Punches* is plural, and so sometimes more than one negative thing has happened, but you can also use this expression when only one negative thing has happened, like in this case, the car breaking down.

Andrew: Mhmm. That's a good point, actually. You always want to use this expression in its plural form, with *punches*. Don't say *roll with the punch*. It sounds very strange.

Maura: It's funny how just a small change like that is not natural anymore. Sometimes we have expressions and they're just so particular.

Andrew: Yup. They're just fixed expressions, and if you don't say them the way they're intended, it sounds strange. So remember: **to roll with the punches**.

- Maura: That's right. And the two other expressions that we looked at today were ***to play it by ear*** and ***to go with the flow***.
- Andrew: Mmhmm. So, those are three expressions that we talked about today that all deal about reacting to a situation without planning in advance.
- Maura: Right. And doing what **comes easily** and naturally and letting things happen.
- Andrew: Mmhmm. So I guess that about wraps it up for us today. Remember to check us out on our website, Culips.com. And pay a visit to our Facebook page as well.
- Maura: That's right. And if you're on the go and want to listen to our episodes anywhere, you should check out iTunes and you can also use the Stitcher app.
- Andrew: Well, that's it for us for now. We'll catch you next time.
- Maura: See you later.

Detailed Explanation

To take things as they come

To take things as they come means to deal with things as they happen. Instead of planning for how things will happen, you will see what happens and make decisions in that moment.

The expression can also be used in the singular form, **to take something as it comes**, or **to take it as it comes**. For example, a common expression is **to take every day as it comes**. You will overcome any problems you face with each day as each day arrives, rather than thinking about what might happen before the day comes.

In this episode, Andrew and Maura talk about reacting to situations and **taking things as they come**. Instead of trying to plan ahead, you can **take things as they come** and decide what you want to do when the moment arrives. You only need to deal with problems as you face them.

Here's another example with **to take things as they come**:

Abigail: Now that your baby is a week old, how does it feel being a new mom?

Genevieve: You know, I don't really know what to expect. Every day is a new challenge, so I just **take things as they come**.

To play it by ear

To play it by ear means to not make plans, but to react or decide what you are going to do as things happen. So instead of having plans or deciding what you will do ahead of time, you see what happens and then act. For example, you may decide to meet with a friend, but instead of deciding what to do before meeting up, you wait to decide what to do when you see your friend.

The other meaning is to play music by ear. This is mentioned in the episode, when Andrew talks about playing music by ear, which means he improvises instead of reading notes.

In one example in this episode, two friends talk about Fred's presentation. Fred didn't prepare for it and he just **played it by ear**. This means he didn't prepare or have anything planned, and he just saw what happened and reacted accordingly. But in this case, his presentation didn't go well because he didn't seem prepared. Maura and Andrew also use the example to talk about making plans. When you **play it by ear**, you do not have set plans. You just do whatever suits the situation when it comes.

Here's another example with this expression:

Mason: What are you going to do after your job contract ends?

Curtis: I think I'm just going **to play it by ear**. I don't want to worry about it for now.

Set in stone

Set in stone means fixed or unchangable. So if something is **set in stone**, it is established or agreed upon. For example, when a contract is **set in stone**, this means you have signed the contract and you cannot change anything in it after. We also sometimes say that something is **carved** or **etched in stone**.

We often use this expression with a negative, to say that something is **not set in stone**. This means that the plans can still change. For example, you can make plans to go on a trip, but those plans may **not be set in stone**. This means that your plans for the trip can still change.

In this episode, Andrew and Maura use the expression **set in stone** to talk about making plans. Maura talks about how people do not **set plans in stone** so that they can be flexible about what happens. They can still change what they want to do if they decide that they want to do something else, or have a better idea. You may have some ideas, but they are **not set in stone**.

Here's another example with **set in stone**:

Kelly: I hear you just got engaged! When is the wedding date?

Sarah: We are thinking of July, but nothing is **set in stone** yet.

On the spur of the moment

When you do something **on the spur of the moment**, you do something without planning. You do something suddenly, and are being spontaneous. For example, you may be sitting at home, and then you decide **on the spur of the moment** to visit your friend. This means it is not planned. You decided at the last minute to go visit your friend.

In this episode, Andrew talks about making decisions or plans **on the spur of the moment**. When people make decisions **on the spur of the moment**, they are being spontaneous. They make a decision in the moment, or at the last minute, instead of planning for it. Someone comes up with an idea to do something at that moment, or **on the spur of the moment**.

Here's another example with this expression:

Holly: What do you normally do when you go on dates with you girlfriend?

Gary: We never really make plans. We just decide to do things **on the spur of the moment**.

To come easily (to someone)

If something **comes easily to you**, it means that you don't have to work hard to be good at it. You are naturally good at it. This doesn't mean you are lazy, just that you don't have to put a lot of effort in to doing something to be good at it.

In this episode, Andrew talks about his music abilities. He's good at playing different instruments, but not at music theory. It's not something that **comes easily to him**, which means he has to work hard to be good at it. Playing instruments **comes easily to him**, which means he doesn't have to practise a lot to be good at it, but music theory doesn't **come easily to him**.

Here's another example with this expression:

Tom: I'm so jealous that you can speak five languages. How did you learn so many?

Barry: To be honest, I can't explain it. It just **comes easily to me**. I never even really have to study.

To be down (with something)

To be down with something means to be interested in or approve of an idea. This is an informal expression usually used to express your participation in a suggestion. For example, if a friend makes a suggestion of something to do and you agree, you could say you're **down** with the suggestion, or just **down**. Check out our episode called Word for more information about this expression.

In a dialogue example in this episode, someone named Paul receives a call from a friend inviting him to meet up. Paul says he would like to do something if his friend is still **down**. This means he is interested in doing something if his friend is still interested in doing something too. When you are **down**, you want to be included or you approve of something.

Here's another example with **to be down**:

Gabriel: I'm starving. I'm going to call to order a pizza. You want some?

Michelle: Yeah. I'm **down**. I haven't had dinner yet either.

Or what

The phrase **or what** is used when making suggestions. You can say **or what** to try to get the other person's opinion on the suggestions you have given them so far. This phrase can also be used when you are looking for agreement on what you have said. You may be looking for a yes or no answer, or another suggestion.

In a dialogue example in this episode, Paul's friend (played by Maura) makes a suggestion for plans to go have a drink or get some food. She says, "I didn't know if you want to get something to eat or just meet for drinks after **or what**." Now Paul can either agree with Maura's suggestions, or he can give his own suggestion if he doesn't want to eat or drink. In this example, Paul doesn't agree to either suggestion, but says they should meet up first and then play it by ear, or figure things out when they see each other.

Here's another example with **or what**:

Tiana: So where do you think you're going to go for vacation? Thailand, Korea, **or what**?

Josephine: Actually, I changed my mind. I'm not going to Asia at all. I'm going to San Francisco instead.

To pull it off

To pull it off is an informal expression that means to manage to do something successfully even though there are difficulties. When you **pull something off**, you are able to do what you are trying to do. This expression can also refer to something that you were able to do successfully unexpectedly, or at the last minute.

In this episode, Andrew and Maura give the example of Fred giving a presentation he didn't prepare for. Maura says that some people are able to **pull off** giving a presentation without planning for it, but it is better to be prepared. Fred's presentation did not go well; it was obvious he wasn't prepared. He wasn't able **to pull it off**.

Here's another example with **to pull it off**:

Tim: Congratulations on winning the race!

Emily: Thanks! I was actually really sick last night. I didn't think I'd be racing today, but in the end I still managed **to pull it off** this morning.

To go with the flow

To go with the flow is an informal expression that means to do what comes naturally and easily. You don't resist or try to control the situation, but instead, you accept what is happening and do what is easiest.

As Maura mentions in this episode, this expression comes from the idea of a river flowing. A river only flows in one direction, and to try to move up the river in the opposite direction is difficult and takes a lot of work. It is much easier to go with the flow of the river instead. So instead of trying to force something to happen, it is easier **to go with the flow**, and let things happen naturally.

In this episode, Maura and Andrew give a dialogue example with someone about to meet his girlfriend's parents. He is nervous, and wants the meeting to go well. His friend tells him **to go with the flow** and just let things happen naturally. The girlfriend's parents are probably nervous and excited to meet him too, so it is better for him to not worry and just be himself.

Here's another example with **to go with the flow**:

Sandy: I'm really nervous about my interview. I really want this job, and I never do well in interviews.

Kate: Don't worry too much. You just gotta **go with the flow**. I'm sure the interviewer will see how perfect you are for the job!

To roll off the tongue

A word or phrase that **rolls off the tongue** is easy to say or to pronounce. Words or phrases that **roll off the tongue** can be said fluently and without difficulty. The opposite of something that **rolls off the tongue** is a tongue twister. Tongue twisters are difficult to say and do not **roll off the tongue**.

An example of a tongue twister is: *she sells sea shells by the sea shore*. Tongue twisters are sentences that are difficult to pronounce, even for native speakers.

In this episode, Andrew says that the expression *to go with the flow* **rolls off the tongue**. This means that the phrase is not difficult to say. It's an expression that is easy to say, and he can say it without making a mistake.

Here's another example with **to roll off the tongue**:

Phil: Your presentation was great! You seemed really prepared!

Alicia: I had points I knew I had to say, and when I started talking, the words just seemed to **roll off the tongue**.

A big step

When you take **a big step**, you make a big change. Usually, you take **a big step** forward in life when there is a big change. This change could be related to a job, having a baby, getting married, or your relationship with someone.

This expression can refer to making either an improvement (**a big step** forward, or just **a big step**) or a regression (**a big step** backward). For example, you can take **a big step** forward in your level of English, meaning that your English improves a lot. Or you might take a bit step backward in English, meaning that your English gets much worse. You can also use other words that mean *big* with this phrase; for example, *huge*, *gigantic*, and *massive*.

In a dialogue example in this episode, Andrew says that meeting your girlfriend's parents for the first time is **a big step**. This is because meeting your girlfriend's or boyfriend's parents is important. Usually, this means that your relationship is getting more serious, so it is often considered **a big step** to meet your girlfriend's parents for the first time.

Here's another example with **a big step**:

Margret: I quit my job today, because I got offered that other job I was telling you about!
Cheryl: That's great! That job is so much closer to what you want to do with your life.
That's **a big step** towards your dream job.

When in doubt

The expression **when in doubt** is used when you are giving advice to someone. It is advice or instructions given to someone when they are unsure about what to do in a situation. The expression is usually used before the advice is given. *To be in doubt* means to be uncertain or unsure. So when you are uncertain or unsure, you should do this. The expression is like saying *if you don't know what to do, do this*.

In a dialogue example in this episode, a friend gives advice about what someone should do if he doesn't know what to talk about with his girlfriend's parents. She says "**When in doubt**, you can always talk about your girlfriend." She's suggesting that he talk about his girlfriend, since her parents would probably like talking about their daughter. If the friend runs out of things to say to his girlfriend's parents, or doesn't know what he can talk about, he can just talk about his girlfriend.

Here's another example with **when in doubt**:

Oliver: I never know what to say when I run into my students on the street. It's such an awkward situation.

Cassidy: Really? I like it. It gives my students a chance to see me outside of school, but I guess I can see how it could be uncomfortable. **When in doubt**, just ask them what they're up to and then wish them a pleasant day.

To roll with the punches

To roll with the punches means to deal with difficulties well. If you can **roll with the punches**, you are able to accept whatever happens and deal with any problems you may face. When you **roll with the punches**, it can also mean you are flexible, and can adapt to any situation. If something bad happens, you can make changes to make the situation better.

This expression comes from boxing. When you get punched, you are supposed to move with the punch to make it hurt less. So when you are able **to roll with the punches**, you can adapt to changes and keep going, rather than give up and fail.

In the dialogue example in the episode, Maura's character had lost her job. Andrew tells her to just **roll with the punches**. Losing your job is a bad situation, and Andrew suggests that Maura should just accept the situation and move on. Instead of being sad, she can try to change her situation by looking for a new job or going back to school.

Here's another example with **to roll with the punches**:

Charlotte: You're such a strong person. Nothing ever seems to make you upset.

Andy: I learned at an early age that when bad things happen, you just have **to roll with the punches**. Life can't always be easy.

It'll happen for you

When someone says **it'll happen for you**, they mean that the thing that you're hoping for is going to happen. What you are hoping will happen is going to happen eventually with time.

In a dialogue example in this episode, Maura's character says she lost her job and she will begin to look for a new one. Andrew says, "**It'll happen for you.**" He means that his friend will eventually find a job. She may not find a job right away, but she will sometime soon in the future.

Here's another example with this expression:

Ben: For some reason, I just can't figure out how to stay on my snowboard. I keep falling every few metres.

Josh: You need to keep practising. One of these days, **it'll happen for you**. And then you'll forget what it was like before you knew how to snowboard.

To take someone up on something

When you **take someone up on something**, you accept someone's offer or invitation. You take advantage of someone's offer of something. The offer is usually something the person accepting will benefit from.

In a dialogue example in this episode, Maura offers Andrew a ride to work after she finds out that his car broke down. Andrew says he might **take her up on that**. This means that he is considering accepting Maura's offer to drive him to work. Since Maura offered Andrew a ride, he may take advantage of her kindness and go to work with her, instead of taking the bus every day.

Here's another example with this expression:

Catherine: I've got an extra ticket to tomorrow's game if you want to buy it from me.

Kelvin: Really? That's great! I'll have to check how much money I have left in the bank, but I might **take you up on that**.

Quiz

1. When something is easy to say, it _____.

Please fill in the blank.

- a) is down
- b) rolls off the tongue
- c) will happen
- d) is a big step

2. Which of the following means that something can't be changed anymore?

- a) It's in doubt.
- b) It's going with the flow.
- c) It's playing it by ear.
- d) It's set in stone.

3. Which of the following means to succeed at something even with difficulties?

Please fill in the blanks.

- a) to pull it off
- b) to trip out
- c) to carry on it
- d) to ride the train

4. Which of the following means you will accept someone's offer?

- a) You will follow through.
- b) You will have your cake and eat it too.
- c) You will take someone up on something.
- d) You will connect to the Internet.

5. Which of the following might you say when you're giving advice?

- a) I'll take you up on...
- b) When in doubt...
- c) Overpass...
- d) Hey little doggy...

6. Which of the following means you do not plan ahead?

- a) You are prepared.
- b) You look ahead.
- c) You are down.
- d) You take things as they come.

7. Which of the following means you are making a big change?

- a) You're rolling with the punches.
- b) You're kissing and making up.
- c) You're taking a big step.
- d) You're trying a pair of shoes.

8. If something comes easily to you, it means _____.

Please fill in the blank

- a) you can read music
- b) you are strong
- c) you have to work hard at it
- d) you are naturally good at it

9. When you do something on the spur of the moment, you _____.

Please fill in the blank.

- a) planned it
- b) do it with spurs
- c) throw a party
- d) didn't plan it

Answers:

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