

Catch Word #159 – Have you ever been canned?

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
- **gotta**: got to
- **kinda**: kind of

Transcript

Andrew: Hello everybody. This is Andrew.

Maura: And I'm here too. It's Maura.

Andrew: And we are back with yet another episode of the Culips Podcast.

Maura: That's right. That's us. And if you haven't been to our website, or even if you have, go back. It's Culips.com. That's C-U-L-I-P-S.com. And that's a very important website, because that is the only place where you can become a Culips member. And what do you get when you're a member?

Andrew: Well, you get a lot of great stuff, like access to the transcripts of our episodes, also, detailed explanations of some of the key expressions that we discuss. And we give you some quizzes to test what you have learned with us.

Maura: That sounds pretty good, so you should check it out if you haven't already. And if you have any ideas for episodes or something you'd like us to talk about, you can send those suggestions to us on Facebook or Twitter. Or you could even send us an email, too.

Andrew: Yup. There're lots of different ways to get in touch with us.

Maura: All right. Now, today we're going to do a Catchword episode. But before we get to that, what's new with you Andrew?

Andrew: Not a whole lot, you know. Actually I just graduated from school and I'm

kinda just hanging out. And, actually, one of the reasons why I'm not looking for a job right now is because I play in a band and we are going to go on a **tour** across Canada so right now I'm busy booking the **tour**.

Maura: Well that sounds pretty cool. Is it glamorous? Do you feel like a rock star?

Andrew: No. It's the opposite of glamorous, I think. I look forward to the day, maybe one day, of achieving my dream and becoming a band that can hire a manager and that person can do all this work for us 'cause it's not fun. I understand why bands have managers now.

Maura: But once you get your **tour** booked, I'm sure that that's when the fun starts. You'll be able to travel around Canada, visit different cities, play different venues. I'm sure you're looking forward to that.

Andrew: Yup. That will be the fun part. That's why we do it.

Maura: Well, good luck, and hopefully you can talk to us when you get back about the experience,

Andrew: Yeah. Hopefully nothing goes bad and I don't get **fired** from the band, 'cause that would be bad. And speaking of getting **fired**, that's what we're talking about today.

Maura: Right. Today we're going to look at different expressions related to being forced to leave; especially being forced to leave a job.

Andrew: Mmhmm. So this is not a positive experience when you're forced to leave your job, when you're dismissed. It's... It can be devastating.

Maura: You're right. But there are lots of fun little expressions to talk about it, so we decided to do an episode about it anyways, because you'll hear these expressions definitely in films and on TV. And hopefully not too much between friends and family, because you don't want to lose your job.

Andrew: That's right. So, in this episode, we're just going to describe three expressions and, yeah, just give you **the rundown** about them. So our first expression is *to can*.

Maura: That's right. Which is funny, 'cause most people probably think of the word *can* and don't think of it as a verb used in this way, but *to can* can mean **to fire**.

Andrew: That's right. So if you're dismissing somebody from their job or you're firing somebody from their job, you are canning them.

Maura: Right. And in the same way, if you are the person who was **fired** or was

dismissed, you can say that you got canned or you were canned.

Andrew: Exactly. That's an important point that you raise. All of these expressions can work both ways: they can describe the act of firing someone or they can describe receiving that action and actually being **fired**.

Maura: Right. Because it's really only the big bosses who have the power to can someone. Most of the time, people are employees who get canned.

Andrew: Mmhmm. And when I was doing my research for this episode, I came across the fact that said that this verb, *to can*, is very popular in North America. And it seems, certainly, familiar to me. But in other places around the world where they speak English, like in Britain and Australia, it's not as common, so if you're travelling in those areas, maybe you won't hear it as much.

Maura: OK. So let's look at some examples now with *to can* meaning **to fire**.

Maura: Ugh. I just got canned from my job this morning.

Andrew: Really? What happened?

Maura: Well, I mean, if I'm completely honest, I know it was kind of my fault. Like, this month I called in sick, I think, like, five times. And you know, I wasn't really sick, I was just really tired. And, yeah, you know, I didn't like the job. I wasn't working very hard when I got there, so I kinda get it but it still sucks.

Andrew: What are you going to do now? Are you going to look for another job?

Maura: Yup. That's what you gotta do, right? You gotta make a living. So I'm taking this week off, you know, just **to chill**. But next week I gotta start looking for, yeah, some new job somewhere.

Andrew: All right. Well, good luck!

Maura: Thanks **man**.

Andrew: In that example, we heard two friends talking, and one friend was recently, actually, just canned. That very day. She lost her job. She was **fired**, and she was telling her friend about it. So, yeah, it's an unfortunate situation where because she was late all the time, she was calling in sick, and just being lazy and not really being passionate about job, her boss **fired** her, and she was canned.

Maura: So this one was really a straightforward example because it's obvious why she was canned. Once in a while, you might hear a story where it's a bit more **grey**, and maybe you're not sure why the person was **fired** or they don't know why, but it is actually, I think, quite difficult **to fire** or **get fired** in Canada. You have to have a pretty good reason.

Andrew: Yeah. That's right. There're a lot of obstacles, maybe, that you have to go around if you want **to fire** an employee of yours. Like, there are workers' rights, and there are unions and regulations. There's also the threat of a lawsuit. The employee might think that you dismissed him or her for the wrong reasons and actually sue you in court. So, yeah, there's a lot of **red tape**.

Maura: OK. Let's give one more example about someone being canned, but this time it won't be so clear cut.

Andrew: OK. That's a good idea.

Andrew: How's your brother doing these days?

Maura: Actually, you know, last month he was canned, just **out of the blue**. He doesn't know why he was **fired** and so he's been talking to a lawyer trying to work through that. So, you know, he's OK, but he's been going through a lot.

Andrew: That sounds awful! I'm sorry to hear that.

Maura: Yeah. But you know, he's been keeping pretty positive through it all and hopefully with the lawyer's help he'll get something sorted. I don't think he wants his job back anymore, but some kind of compensation.

Andrew: Yeah. Well, I wish him all the best.

Maura: Yeah. I'll let him know that you said that.

Andrew: Cool.

Maura: In that example, we heard from two friends, and one of them was talking about her brother, who was recently canned and he didn't know why. And like we had just previously said, that doesn't normally happen, and you can pursue legal action, and that's just what the brother was doing. He didn't know why he was canned and he was using the help of a lawyer to figure out why, or at least get some compensation, get some money.

Andrew: That's right, yeah. I guess if you feel like you've been unfairly **fired**, then, in Canada at least, it is your right to try and figure out why you were **fired**. And a lawyer can help you do that sometimes.

- Maura: All right. Let's look at the next expression now.
- Andrew: Sure. And this one is *to give somebody the boot*.
- Maura: Uh huh. *To give somebody the boot*.
- Andrew: Now, you're not actually giving somebody a pair of boots.
- Maura: No.
- Andrew: That would be nice, but what you're doing is much worse. You are forcing someone to leave their job. You're dismissing them. You're firing them.
- Maura: That's right. So this one can be used **to fire** a person, but it can also be used to talk about someone being forced to leave a place.
- Andrew: Yup. That's true, too. And, actually, when I think of this expression, I think of somebody getting kicked. You're sort of kicked out of your position. And I think why that is is because when we talk about the verb *to boot*, that can also mean to kick.
- Maura: Right. I really think of somebody wearing a boot and then kicking the person; kicking them out of a certain area. So it's like you're pushing the person with your foot, pushing them out of a place. And so the same idea is used to talk about pushing somebody out of a job.
- Andrew: Right. So when you lose your job or you've been pushed out of your job, you've been given the boot. Should we do some examples?
- Maura: That sounds good.

- Maura: So, hey! How's it going? How's the job?
- Andrew: Well, it was going all right, but I'm actually kind of worried that they're going to give me the boot soon.
- Maura: Why? What's happening?
- Andrew: Well, maybe this will be a lesson to you not to lie on your resume, but when I got hired, I told my boss that I was really good at Microsoft Excel. And that turned out to be a totally fine lie for the first 6 months or so, but now all of a sudden we've got this new account and he wants me to do all of these spreadsheets in Excel, and I have no idea what I'm doing, so I'm a little bit worried that I'm gonna get **fired**.

Maura:	You know what I suggest that you do? Go home, go online, find some tutorials, and maybe you can get yourself up to speed. But, yeah, don't lie on your resume!
Andrew:	I know. It's such a bad thing to do. But I really wanted the job so, what are you gonna do?
Maura:	Well good luck with that.
Andrew:	Thanks.

Andrew: In this example, we heard from a guy who is worried he's going to be **fired** soon. He's going to be given the boot. Why? Because he's a liar. He lied on his resume. He told his boss that he was proficient in Microsoft Excel and it was a complete lie. He's not good with the program. So now that he has some work to do in this program, he's worried that he's gonna be caught and **fired** as a result.

Maura: You know, I've heard that this kind of situation is actually common. A lot of people supposedly lie on their resumes. It doesn't seem like a good idea to me because of exactly this situation. You could be expected to do something that you really don't know how to do.

Andrew: Yeah. I've heard that statistic, too. Lots and lots of people lie on their resumes. But I think, as this example shows us, it can be a bad idea.

Maura: I've never lied on my resume. Have you, Andrew?

Andrew: No. I don't think I have either.

Maura: Well, how do I know that that's not a lie? I guess I'll just trust you.

Andrew: Yeah. You're gonna have to.

Maura: All right.

Andrew: Yeah. We're gonna give one more example with the expression *to give somebody the boot*.

Maura:	Hey, I was going to ask you: Have you gotten that report from Shawn yet? I think he was supposed to have it done, like, last week.
Andrew:	No. He still hasn't given it to me. And it's sort of annoying me, to tell you the truth, because he told me, like, a couple days ago that it would be done, it would be ready, and I've emailed him three or four times now about it and he hasn't gotten back to me. So this is just getting ridiculous.

Maura:	You know, I don't want to be mean, but I kinda hope that someone gives him the boot. I mean, he's just too slow and he slows down every project he's a part of.
Andrew:	I know. He's making me look bad because now my next report is going to be late because I need the information from his report to include in mine and I just can't really do anything until I get it.
Maura:	Well, if he causes you too much trouble, I've got your back . I'll defend you. Because he's also slowed down my projects before.
Andrew:	Yeah. I think everybody knows what the real problem is here.
Maura:	OK, well, hopefully you get it soon.
Andrew:	Yup.

- Maura: So here we heard from a couple colleagues who were hoping that Shawn was going to get the boot. They were hoping that he was going to be **fired**. I guess it sounded like he wasn't a very good employee. He was slowing other people's projects down. And, yeah, that happens. Sometimes you're at work and you don't think a colleague is working very well. Who knows? Like we said, it's hard to be **fired** in Canada sometimes, so maybe Shawn just got to keep his job.
- Andrew: That's right. You never know. And one thing that you mentioned, actually, about this expression is that it kind of sounds a little cutesy, and we probably wouldn't use this expression very often.
- Maura: Yeah. In a serious situation where a person has really been **fired**, you want to be sensitive because being **fired** doesn't feel good. So you might not use this expression to talk about someone being **fired** directly to them if they're feeling bad about it.
- Andrew: Exactly. So what would be a better expression to use if we wanted to be sensitive to somebody who had just been **fired**?
- Maura: I would definitely say something like, "Oh, I'm sorry to hear you lost your job." Or we could also say that someone is **let go** or has been **let go**.
- Andrew: Yeah. Those are more understanding ways of talking about this, because, like we said, getting **fired** is not fun and it can be embarrassing sometimes, too. Right? So you want to be sensitive to the person who lost their job. And if you said, "Oh, so you got the boot, eh?" That would be kind of rude.

Maura: Yeah, definitely. OK. Let's look at one more expression that means **to fire**. And this one is especially fun because it's not super popular in Canada. Although, of course, I know what it means and I could use it. But when I hear it I definitely think more about British English.

Andrew: Yeah. Me too. And this expression is *to sack*. It's very similar to all of the expressions that we've looked at today. So when you're sacked, when you have been sacked, you've been **fired**. And if you sack someone, you are firing them.

Maura: OK. Let's just jump right into some examples, shall we?

Andrew: Yup. That's a great idea.

Maura: Have you seen Terry today?

Andrew: Terry? No. Do you know where he is?

Maura: No, I don't. It seems like he just decided not to show up.

Andrew: Hmm. We should see if he called into the office or anything. You know what? This is not the first time that he's done this. He's just not showed up for work a couple times in the past, if I remember correctly.

Maura: No, you're definitely right. I'm thinking that I might have to sack him.

Andrew: Really?

Maura: Yup. I've had my eye on him for a while and, like you said, he didn't show up a few times. And, to be honest, when he's here, his work isn't the best either.

Andrew: Yeah. I mean, you have a point. If he's not showing up, then really, what use is he to this company? We need him to be here.

Maura: You know, I'm going to give him a first warning when he comes back.

Andrew: Yup. I think that's a good idea. Definitely.

Andrew: All right. In that example, we listened to a conversation between two managers at an office, and they were discussing one of their employees, Terry. And Terry hadn't shown up for work, and that's not the first time that he's not shown up for work, so they were **tossing around the idea** of sacking him, of firing him. And while they didn't go that far, they did decide to give him a first warning. So they are going to discipline Terry when he shows up for work, whenever that is.

Maura: Yup. And this is actually often how it goes. You don't get **fired** directly, but you get warnings, so that you know that you have to change your behaviour or else you could be **fired**. So they give you a chance to improve and work harder. But it doesn't always work out, does it?

Andrew: Not always, unfortunately. And hopefully things turn around for Terry. Uh... Should we move on to a second example?

Maura: Yes. Let's do it!

Andrew: I was talking to my friend the other day, and she told me that she just got **fired**, and I think that's so weird. Like, how can somebody actually get **fired**? I've never even been close to being **fired**.

Maura: Yeah. It sucks.

Andrew: Really? It happened to you too? You were sacked once?

Maura: Actually, I was. Uh... But, yeah, I'm really not proud of it.

Andrew: You must have really **screwed up**. What did you do?

Maura: Well, I was younger, you know. I was just in my early 20s, just taking whatever job was offered. And my friend worked in the same company, and she would email me and I'd email back to her. And we were really dumb 'cause we used the company email. And so eventually they saw that we were emailing back and forth all day, and so they just **let us go**.

Andrew: Yeah. That's such a **rookie mistake**. You never want to use the company email to talk about other people in your job.

Maura: I know. It was bad. But anyways, it was a long time ago, so I try to put it behind me.

Andrew: Yeah, for sure. I'm sure that you'll never do that again. Right?

Maura: No. I'll never do that again, that's for sure.

Andrew: Live and learn!

Maura: So here we heard two friends talking about being sacked, and one of them had never been sacked, and then we heard from the other friend and, yes, she had been **let go**. And, as we said, it can be a sensitive subject and as this person had been **fired**, she talked about it in a sensitive way. And when she talked about herself, she didn't talk about being sacked. She talked about being **let go**. Kind of the more polite way, the more sensitive way to talk about being canned.

- Andrew: That's exactly right. So, like we mentioned before, there are these alternative ways to talk about this sensitive issue.
- Maura: Now, at the beginning of this episode, Andrew, you said it's kind of a negative topic, so I feel like we have to end on a positive note. I hope that everyone listening has a great job, and they enjoy it, and that they are not worried at all about being canned.
- Andrew: Yes. And we hope that you never have to use or hear these expressions.
- Maura: When talking about yourself or friends and family.
- Andrew: Exactly, yeah. So, let's do a little recap, shall we? We started the episode with the expression *to can*.
- Maura: And then we looked at *to give someone the boot*.
- Andrew: And then ended up with *to sack*.
- Maura: All right. Now, don't forget to go to our website, Culips.com. That's C-U-L-I-P-S.com.
- Andrew: And please sign up and become a member, because when you support us through your membership, we can keep creating high-quality episodes for you to enjoy.
- Maura: That's right. So, check out our website. And that's about it for this time, so we will be talking to you again soon. Take care for now. Bye!
- Andrew: Bye bye!

Detailed Explanation

A tour

A tour occurs when a band, comedian, sports team, author, etc. makes a series of trips to different cities to perform. In this episode, Andrew says that his band is getting ready to go on **a tour** across Canada. This means that his band will play a series of concerts across the country.

Here are a couple more examples with this expression:

Tiffany: I haven't seen Brad for a while. Is he out of town?

Jack: Oh, you didn't hear? He finally found a publisher that wanted to publish his book and now he is in Europe on a book **tour**.

Tiffany: Wow, that's amazing.

Jack: Yeah, he has been working really hard to be an author and it looks like all that hard work has finally paid off.

Colleen: The comedian Louis CK is on **tour** right now. He's coming to town next month. Want to go see his show?

Mindy: Absolutely! I love Louis CK!

Colleen: OK, cool. I'll buy us some tickets.

Mindy: Sounds good!

To fire someone

To fire someone from their job means to dismiss them from their job. People are usually **fired** because they have made a mistake or have performed poorly at work.

In this episode, Andrew and Maura explain three expressions that have the same meaning as **to fire someone**: *to can someone*, *to give someone the boot*, and *to sack someone*.

As Andrew and Maura mention in this episode, these expressions can describe the act of dismissing a person from their job (when used in the active voice) or the act of being dismissed from a job (when used in the passive voice).

For example, a boss who wants to remove an employee from his company might say something like, "John isn't a hard worker. I'm going **to fire** him next week." After John finds out, he might tell his friends, "I can't believe I was **fired**. I didn't even see it coming."

Here are two more examples, with **to fire someone** and with **to be fired**:

Faye: When I was in college I worked as a manager at a local coffee shop. I took care of everything and made sure the business ran smoothly. I even **fired** an employee once.

Leigh: Wow. Why did you have **to fire** him?

Faye: He spilled a hot cup of coffee all over a customer.

Leigh: Oh no! Was the customer OK?

Faye: In the end, yes. But she had to go to the hospital because her arm was burned.

Raul: Hey, do you know if your company is hiring?

Juan: I'm not sure. Why?

Raul: I was **fired** last week. I need a new job really badly. I'm pretty much willing to do anything.

Juan: I work in construction, you know. It is pretty hard work. If you think you can handle long hours and physical work though, I'll talk to my boss about you.

Raul: That would be great. I'm not afraid of hard work, don't worry!

A rundown

A rundown is a short summary or report that provides a description or information about something. In this episode, Andrew explains that he and Maura are going to provide a **rundown** of the episode's key expressions. This means that they will describe and carefully explain the three expressions talked about in this episode.

Here are a couple more examples with this expression:

Eloise: Did you study for today's literature test?

Marcella: No. I didn't have time.

Eloise: Well, did you at least finish reading Hamlet?

Marcella: No. I'm totally going to fail.

Eloise: Here. I'll give you a quick **rundown** of what happened in the play.

Marcella: Thanks so much! You're a lifesaver!

Alejandro: Before we head into our meeting with Mr. Smith, I'm going to give you a **rundown** of how we can close this sale.

Joe: OK.

Alejandro: First of all, let me do most of the talking. Mr. Smith and I have a good relationship and I know what he wants.

Joe: OK. Anything else?

Alejandro: Yes. Make sure you have memorized all the information from our quarterly report. Mr. Smith will probably ask you about those numbers and I need you to know them inside and out.

Joe: OK, no problem.

To chill

To chill is a shortened version of the idiomatic verb **to chill out**. When you **chill**, you stop stressing out about the worries in your life and relax.

In one of the dialogue examples in this episode, a woman was just canned. Instead of worrying about immediately finding a new job, she instead chose to take a week **to chill** and relax before starting to search for work.

To chill can also mean to hang out. So, when you **chill** with your friends, you hang out and spend time with them. Time spent **chilling** with your friends is also a very relaxing time. If you **chill** with your friends, then you are usually just sitting around, chatting, and spending time together.

If you **chill** by yourself, then you spend time relaxing. If you **chill** with friends, then you hang out and relax with your friends. Both types of **chilling** are stress-free and enjoyable.

This expression is extremely casual, and should be avoided in formal situations.

Here are a couple more examples with **to chill**:

Candace: Are you going to Dan's party tonight?

Melissa: No. I'm just going to stay home and **chill**.

Candace: Lame. You should come out! It'll be fun!

Melissa: Yeah. You're probably right, but I've had a long day and I just really want to relax.

Will: Hey man, what did you get up to last night?

Noah: Not much. I went to a pub and **chilled** with a couple of friends from work.

Will: Sweet. Sounds fun.

Man

The word **man** is used to address a person. Usually it is used to refer to males but some people use it when talking to females too. The term is used between close friends and is also used by strangers when they don't know each other's names.

This is a casual expression and should be used only in informal situations.

This is one of those difficult expressions that is best demonstrated through examples. Here are a couple of examples with **man** used as a term of address:

Customer 1: Hey **man**! Is this your wallet? I think you left it at the cash register.

Customer 2: Ah, yeah it is. Thanks a bunch, **man**. I would have been in big trouble if I had lost it.

Naomi: Hey, can I borrow your bike for the day?

Felix: Yeah, sure. I don't mind.

Naomi: Awesome. Thanks **man**.

Felix: No problem.

A grey area

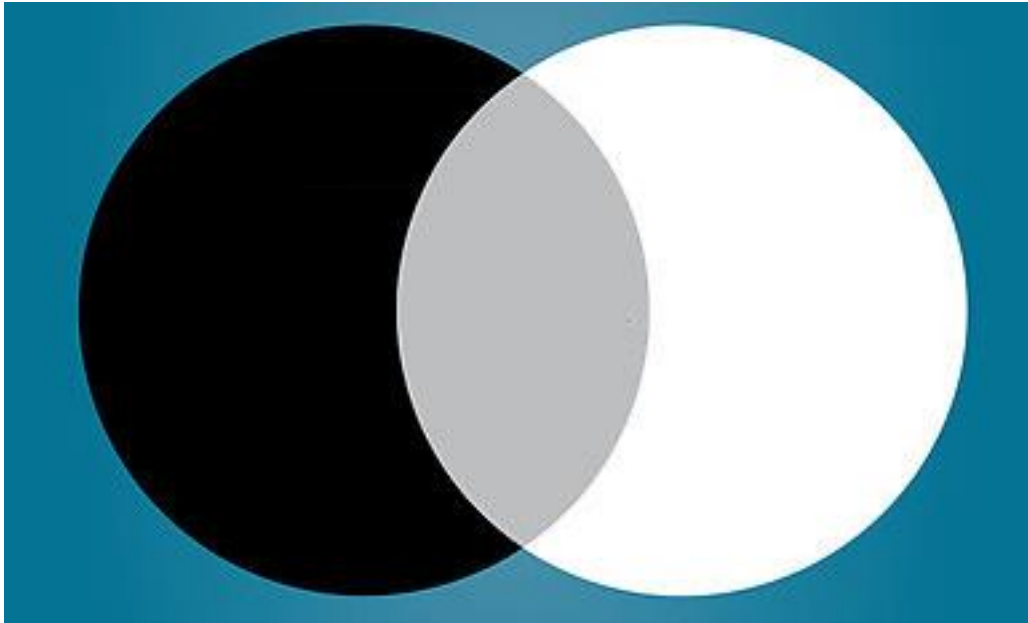
In this episode, Maura explains that sometimes when people are fired, the reasons behind their dismissal are **grey**.

This is a shortened version of the expression **a grey area**. Whenever a situation is not easily understandable and is difficult to comprehend or define, we can say that it is **a grey area**.

This expression is closely related to the expression black and white. If something is black and white, it is easy to understand. However, if something exists in the middle between black and white, in the **grey area**, then it is confusing, complicated, or difficult to understand.

These expressions are often used to talk about the law and morality. If an act someone does is black or white, then it is easy to determine whether it is right or wrong, or legal or illegal. However, when it is difficult to determine whether an action is right or wrong or legal or illegal, then it is **grey**.

This image demonstrates these concepts:



Here are a couple of examples with this expression:

Mona: My grandma got tricked into giving some money to some computer spammers last week.

Luther: Oh no. That's awful. Did you call the police?

Mona: Yeah. I talked to them. They said there isn't much they can do because spamming is such a new phenomenon, and it exists within a **grey area** of the law.

Luther: Ah. That's frustrating.

Dennis: I heard that there is going to be a protest downtown tomorrow. Are you going to go?

Cedric: Isn't that illegal? Won't the protesters get in trouble?

Dennis: It's true that you need a permit to protest. However, if they refer to the protest as a "parade" instead of a "demonstration," they can get away with it and not get into trouble.

Cedric: Really?

Dennis: Yeah. The law is a little **grey** in that regard.

Cedric: Hmm. Interesting. Maybe I'll see you at the demonstration.

Red tape

Red tape is an idiomatic expression that we use to refer to official rules that get in the way of doing something quickly or easily. For example, in this episode Andrew talks about the **red tape** that can prevent a boss from firing an employee. He means that sometimes labour laws and employee rights can prevent bosses from firing employees as easily as they may like.

Red tape is the rules and laws that must be followed when doing something. Often people become frustrated at the **red tape** because it slows down or prevents people from doing what they want.



This expression has an interesting origin. In the 16th century, the administration of the Spanish King Charles V used to bind all of their official court documents with **red tape**. This tradition was passed along to governments of other European countries and eventually this **red tape** became synonymous for following the official rules and laws when trying to get something done.

Here are a couple more examples with **red tape**:

Harry: I'm thinking of officially becoming a Canadian citizen.

Becky: You're not Canadian? I never knew.

Harry: No. I was actually born in New Zealand and hold New Zealand citizenship. I moved to Canada with my family when I was 2 and grew up here, though.

Becky: Wow. So why have you waited so long to become a citizen?

Harry: I guess I'm just afraid of all the **red tape** that I'll have to go through. The process is not easy at all and is going to take a long time.

Becky: Oh yeah. I can image that'll be a nightmare. Well, good luck!

Harry: Thanks!

Kate: John and I are going to paint our house.

Andres: Did you know that it is illegal to paint your house without a permit?

Kate: What? Really?

Andres: Yeah. It has to be preapproved by city hall. If a home owner does a bad job painting their house, it can bring down the property value of all the homes in the neighbourhood.

Kate: That is really frustrating! I should be allowed to paint my own house without having to go through a bunch of **red tape**.

Out of the blue

When something happens **out of the blue**, it is a surprise. It is unexpected and shocking. In one of the dialogue examples in this episode, a man's brother was fired, and he says that it happened **out of the blue**. The brother was not expecting to be fired. When he was canned, it was very surprising. When something occurs without a warning and is totally unexpected, it happens **out of the blue**.

Here are a couple more examples with this expression:

Tina: I have some bad news to tell you.

Max: Oh no. What is it?

Tina: I got in a little fender-bender when I borrowed your car last night.

Max: WHAT?

Tina: Yeah. I'm so sorry.

Max: What happened?

Tina: I'm not really sure. I was just driving along and everything was fine. Then all of a sudden this other car just came **out of the blue** and ended up hitting me.

Max: Is the car damaged?

Tina: The door has a little dent in it, but don't worry. I'm going to pay to have everything repaired.

Max: OK, well I'm just glad you weren't injured.

Dominick: Hey James, I heard from Olive that you are looking for work right now. We actually could use some help down at the store. Are you interested in coming in for an interview?

James: Really? That would be awesome.

Dominick: Yeah. One of our employees just quit **out of the blue** and we're desperate for some help. Can you come down this afternoon?

James: Absolutely. I'll see you then.

Dominick: Thanks!

To have someone's back

When **you have someone's back**, it means that you are supporting or protecting that person. We can also say that **we've got someone's back**.

In one of the dialogue examples in this episode, an employee says **she's got her coworker's back**. This means that she will support her coworker during any difficulties he may have at work due to another coworker's laziness.

This expression is sometimes used with the verb *to have* and sometimes used with the verb *to have got*. Both mean the same thing: to support or protect someone.

Here are a couple more examples with this expression:

Patsy: The downstairs neighbours are making so much noise. Don't they know it's after midnight?

Steve: Why don't you knock on their door and ask them to turn it down?

Patsy: Nah, I don't want to do that. They might yell at me or something.

Steve: Don't worry. **I've got your back**. I'll go down with you and we can confront them together.

Salvatore: I was almost mugged one time when my friend and I were walking home from school.

Robert: That's crazy. What happened?

Salvatore: These thugs just jumped us and screamed at us to give them our wallets.

Robert: What did you do?

Salvatore: Well, luckily **my friend had my back** and we just screamed at them both together and scared them away. It was a close call though.

Robert: That's really scary.

To toss around an idea

To toss means to throw. When you **toss around an idea**, you discuss or talk about the idea with other people. We can think of people playing catch with an idea. One person shares an idea with another person, and then that person contributes something new to the conversation by throwing the idea back.



In a dialogue example in this episode, two managers **toss around the idea** of firing one of their employees because he is always late for work. In other words, the managers have a conversation to discuss firing this employee.

When you **toss around an idea** you have a conversation or discussion with other people about a specific topic.

Here are a couple more examples with this expression:

Pearl: I'm meeting with the sales team tomorrow afternoon **to toss around a few ideas** for a new marketing campaign. It would be awesome if you could join us. Do you think you could make it?

Henry: I wish I'd heard about this earlier. I'm leaving town tonight for a business trip. Please fill me in on how the meeting goes.

Pearl: That's too bad. I'll do that for sure.

Jamie: My husband and I have been **tossing around the idea** of moving to New York.

Randall: Really? I've always wanted to live in New York.

Jamie: Me too. But housing is so expensive there. That's really the only thing that's holding us back.

Randall: Yeah. Even renting an apartment there can cost an arm and a leg.

To screw up

To screw up means to make a mistake. In one of the dialogue examples in this episode, an employee was fired because she **screwed up** by using her work email account for personal business.

If you've made a mistake or done something incorrectly, you've **screwed up**. This is a casual expression and should be avoided in formal situations. Some people consider this expression to be rude, so if you are speaking with someone you don't know well or who is easily offended, it is a good idea to avoid this expression.

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

Gabriel: I need to take my bike to get repaired today.

Isaac: I can fix it for you.

Gabriel: No way. Last time you said you could fix it, you **screwed up** big time and broke my brakes. This time I'm taking it to the shop.

Isaac: OK, fine.

Erika: Wow, I really **screwed up** when I wrote my paper for history class. I got a C minus.

John: Yikes. I didn't do great either, I got a B.

A rookie mistake

Anyone who is new to an organization, company, club, or sports team can be called a rookie. **A rookie mistake** is a mistake that is made by someone who is new and inexperienced.

In one of the dialogue examples in this episode, an employee was fired because she made the **rookie mistake** of using her company email for personal reasons. She did not realize that this would cause her to leave her job. This is **a rookie mistake** because more experienced employees know that this kind of behaviour is not tolerated at work.

When someone makes an error or mistake because they are new to a job or organization and they do not have enough experience to know how to do things the correct way, we can call that error **a rookie mistake**.

Here are a couple more examples with this expression:

Marlon: Can you help me? I think I broke the photocopier.

Sabrina: You probably just caused a paper jam. Don't worry, that is common **rookie mistake**. The photocopier at this office is weird. Come with me and I'll show you how to use it properly.

Marlon: Great. Thanks.

Brittany: I made an embarrassing **rookie mistake** today at school.

Beth: What happened?

Brittany: I put my new textbooks in the locker and then quickly ran to the washroom before class. The problem is that I totally forgot my locker number and had to go to class without my books.

Beth: Well, that isn't the end of the world.

Brittany: I know, I know.

To let someone go

Then an employer **lets an employee go**, they dismiss the employee from their job.

Similarly, when you are **let go**, you are dismissed from your job. However, this is not due to your performance, but because of a problem with your employer. For example, if your company is losing money and can't afford to employ you any longer, they might have **to let some people go**. Or if your employer has decided to outsource a job to another country, then they might have **to let you go**.

When someone gets fired, it's because of their own mistakes at work, But employees can be **let go** because their employer made a decision that means they can no longer afford to keep the employees or they no longer need the employees.

The expression **to let someone go** can also be used to mean to fire someone. Because being fired can be an embarrassing event, people sometimes use **to be let go** as a more polite way of talking about this sensitive subject.

Here are a couple more examples with ***to be let go***:

Gill: My husband was **let go** from his job last week at the mill. We're really worried that he won't be able to find a new job.

Mike: Yeah. The economy is really bad right now. I'm sorry to hear he was **let go**. I hope he finds a new job soon.

Mariah: I'm so angry. I was **let go** at work today because they said they are moving all of the computer programming jobs overseas.

Tom: So your job's been outsourced?

Mariah: Yup. I can't believe it.

Tom: I'm sorry to hear that.

Mariah: All my company cares about is making a profit. They don't care about their employees. I'm glad I won't be working for them anymore.

Quiz

1. If you give someone the rundown, what do you give them?

- a) a scolding
- b) an apology
- c) an excuse
- d) a summary

2. What is a rookie?

- a) someone who is new to an organization
- b) someone who is ready to retire
- c) someone who is experienced
- d) someone who is an expert

3. Which expression is the odd one out?

- a) to fire someone
- b) to let someone go
- c) to sack someone
- d) to can someone

4. What is red tape?

- a) a special tape used to wrap birthday presents
- b) a type of audio cassette tape
- c) an official document
- d) rules and regulations

5. Which expression means to discuss something?

- a) to do something out of the blue
- b) to toss around an idea
- c) to be in a grey area
- d) to crunch the numbers

6. When something is unclear, it exists in a _____.

Fill in the blank.

- a) black area
- b) white area
- c) grey area
- d) rainbow area

7. What do you do when you chill?

- a) go for a run
- b) take a test
- c) run errands
- d) relax

8. Fill in the blank to complete the dialogue.

Betty: I'm worried that I might get fired.

Tom: Why?

Betty: I really _____ and accidentally overcharged one of our customer's accounts. When my boss finds out, he's going to be angry!

- a) screwed up
- b) made up
- c) baffled up
- d) brought up

9. What is a tour?

- a) a type of bus
- b) a hiatus
- c) a series of performances in different cities
- d) a concert festival

Answers:

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