

Catch Word #184 – It's water under the bridge

Episode description

In English, bridges are a common image used to represent relationships between people. In this episode, Andrew and Morag explain two expressions that are useful for talking about relationships: it's water under the bridge and to burn your bridges.

Fun fact

The world is full of interesting little coincidences. For example, the first recorded use of the saying "water under the bridge" is from an 1858 novel by Julia Kavanagh called *Adèle*. Then, more than 150 years later, in 2015, the English singer Adele put out a single called *Water Under the Bridge*!

Expressions included in the learning materials

- Water under the bridge
- To burn your bridges
- Stoked
- To move on
- There's no going back



Transcript

Note: The words and expressions that appear in **bold text** within the transcript are discussed in more detail in the Detailed Explanations section that follows the transcript.

Andrew: Hey, everybody. My name's Andrew.

Morag: And my name is Morag.

Andrew: And we're back with another Culips episode. Hey, Morag. How are you?

Morag: I'm doin' all right, Andrew. I'm OK. How you doin'?

Andrew: I'm doin' pretty good. I don't know if I've been talking a lot today or what, but my throat feels a little congested. So if I sound weird in today's episode, I apologize for that.

I got a really cool email from one of our listeners named Mohammed. And he told me about how he studies with Culips, and he has actually created a study group. And he uses the chatting app Telegram to chat in English with his friends and to study Culips materials.

He asked for a special request. He asked for a shout-out to some of the members in his study group. He thought it would be very encouraging for them. And I'm really **stoked** to do this, because I don't think I've ever given a shout-out before. At least not one this big.

So to Reza, Hadi, Hammed, Benam, Amir, Lamoud, Asan, and of course Mohammed, thanks a lot for listening, guys. We love that you're studying Culips together over a Telegram.

Morag: That has put a really big smile on my face, Andrew. Thanks guys. That's really cool. I'm glad you are all using Culips and chatting. It's awesome!

Andrew: Definitely. And Morag, actually we've got a lot of emails asking us about Telegram. And I wasn't familiar with this app until recently, but I've started to use it and we've created a Telegram channel for Culips. So if you use Telegram and you want to get updates about Culips and stay in touch with us, please join our channel. I think this will be a really cool space to learn about Culips.

So the link is t.me/Culips, OK? t.me/Culips. So Telegram users, please join our channel. Let's get started with today's episode right after this message.

Morag: All right!

- Announcer: The best way to study with Culips is by becoming a Culips member. When you become a Culips member, you will get full transcripts, detailed vocabulary explanations, and quizzes for each episode. Visit Culips.com, that's C-U-L-I-P-S.com, to sign up and become a member.
- Andrew: Today we're doing a Catch Word episode. And in a Catch Word episode, we take a look at two English expressions, or idioms, that are very closely related in meaning. Today our expressions have two things in common. What are those two things, Morag?
- Morag: Both of our expressions include bridges.
- Andrew: Yeah. They both have the word bridge in them.
- Morag: Mmhmm.
- Andrew: And they're also both used to talk about relationships.
- Morag: Ah, right.
- Andrew: Friendships and relationships. So two things in common, very cool. So let's get to that first expression.
- Morag: Our first expression is **water under the bridge**. **Water under the bridge, water under the bridge**. And we use this expression to talk about something that is no longer an issue, no longer a problem. It has passed.
- Andrew: Right. So something that has happened in the past but is not important or relevant anymore. We've forgotten about that event. In this situation, we can say it's **water under the bridge**.
- Morag: The water that goes under the metaphorical bridge was usually a problem or an interpersonal conflict. But when it's over, then it becomes **water under the bridge**.
- Andrew: Yeah. That problem has floated downriver into the ocean. It's gone.
- Morag: It isn't around anymore. It's fine, yeah.
- Andrew: So what kind of situation can we use **water under the bridge** in?
- Morag: I think the most common one would be as a reassurance. If someone is apologizing for doing something wrong, you can say it's OK by saying, "Oh, that's **water under the bridge**." It's another way of saying it's not a problem anymore. I accept your apology. It's all fine.
- Andrew: Yeah, let's **move on**. And you'll hear the word "all" used with this expression. Oh, it's all **water under the bridge**.

Morag: It's just a way of saying, "I don't even want to talk about it," you know? "Oh, it's all **water under the bridge**. We don't even need to get into that. It's all gone."

Andrew: Yeah. Yeah, I like this expression. It's a very nice image that it creates, and it's nice thing to say to somebody when they apologize and you truly feel like you want to just **move on** from that event.

Well, Morag, let's listen to some examples using this expression, **water under the bridge**.

Speaker 1: Hey, Jane. I'm sorry about what happened yesterday. I really didn't mean to offend you.

Speaker 2: That's OK. Don't worry about it. It's all **water under the bridge**.

Andrew: In this example, we heard an apology. Specifically, a lady forgave her friend for something he did wrong by saying, "It's **all water under the bridge**." Let's listen to that one more time.

Speaker 2: It's all **water under the bridge**.

Andrew: Of course, this means that she had forgotten the offensive thing that her friend has done, and now she forgives him and has moved forward with her life. Cool. What a nice friend.

Morag: Mmhmm.

Andrew: Let's listen to example number two.

Speaker 1: Are you and your brother still not getting along? I know you've had your differences.

Speaker 2: No. These days our relationship is great. Whatever happened in the past is **water under the bridge**.

Morag: In this example, a man talks about his relationship with his brother. In the past, it seems their relationship wasn't so good, but these days it's much better. The man says that whatever happened in the past is **water under the bridge**. So what does he mean by this? Well, the toxic or bad part of the man's relationship with his brother has been forgotten. Both of the brothers have **moved on** with their lives, and all the nastiness from the past is no longer important.

Sounds like the sort of reconciliation we could all hope for with difficult family members or friendships.

Andrew: Yes, I concur. OK, Morag, let's look at our second bridge expression that we can use to talk about a relationship or a friendship. I like this one.

Morag: Me too.

Andrew: What is it?

Morag: It is **to burn your bridges, to burn your bridges**.

Andrew: **To burn your bridges, to burn your bridges**. And, yeah, that's interesting. If we both like this expression, maybe it doesn't reflect well on us, but it is an interesting one.

Morag: So what does it mean **to burn your bridges**? Well, when you're talking about **burning your bridges** in terms of a relationship with another person, it means to cut all contact or destroy any means of contact with that person. Just ruin your relationship so that there's no way back to friendship. It's kind of intense.

Andrew: It is intense. And this expression is easy to imagine, OK? Pretend you are walking across a suspension bridge, crossing a canyon. And when you get to the other side, you light the bridge on fire. You burn it.

Morag: Yeah. And the person that you have a relationship with is on the other side of the bridge, or the other side of the canyon, because now the bridge is gone. So there's no way for you guys to get together again because there's no route back.

Andrew: Yes. You've **burnt your bridges** and that's it. The relationship is finished.

Morag: I think that I like this expression partly because you can use it in situations where you need to let go of something.

Andrew: Mmhmm.

Morag: So it doesn't need to be destroying a relationship out of anger or malice, or just because you're mean. It can also be removing someone who is maybe toxic or damaging in your life. If you **burn the bridge** between the two of you, you can then move forward. So it's not always negative.

Andrew: And Morag, we should mention that for both of these expressions, **to burn your bridges** and **water under the bridge**, there are some other contexts that we can use them in, some slightly different meanings. Unfortunately, we don't have time to go into all of the definitions today.

But if you are a Culips member, you can find the full set of definitions along with some usage examples in the learning materials. So visit Culips.com to download the learning materials today.

Morag: OK, Andrew. So I think it's time for a couple of examples with **to burn your bridges**.

Speaker 1: Do you know if your company will be hiring soon? I really need a job.

Speaker 2: Can't you just ask your old boss for your job back? I'm sure he will understand.

Speaker 1: No, I **burned my bridges** with him. There's no way I can go back to my old position.

Andrew: In this example, we hear about a man who is looking for a job. Why is that? Well, he **burnt his bridges** with his old boss. In other words, his relationship with his old boss has been ruined, and there's no way that the relationship can be restored. It's over and **there's no goin' back**.

Morag: Yikes.

Andrew: Yikes.

Morag: Yeah.

Andrew: I don't recommend this.

Morag: No, especially in an employment context. It's a bad idea.

Andrew: I wonder what he did?

Morag: Yeah.

Andrew: We'll leave it up to our imaginations. Let's listen to one more example with **to burn your bridges**.

Speaker 1: How's Jen doing these days? Do you guys still keep in touch?

Speaker 2: I haven't talked to her in years. I definitely **burned my bridges** there.

Speaker 1: Oh, that's right. I forgot you guys had a falling out. Sorry to bring her up.

Morag: In this example, a woman says that her relationship with Jen is totally over. The woman had **burned her bridges** with Jen. Let's listen to that part of the example one more time.

Speaker 2: I definitely **burned my bridges** there.

Morag: So something happened that ended the woman's friendship with Jen, and there is no way that they can be friends again. The bridge has been burnt and the friendship is over.

Andrew: Again, I'm so curious about what happened. Must've been something major.

Morag: You don't usually **burn bridges** over something small.

Andrew: It's true. It's gotta be a big thing.

Morag: Or you're just a really mean person. Let's hope not.

Andrew: Let's hope not. Thank you for listening, everyone. If you have any comments, questions, or even a suggestion for future episodes, drop us a line. Send us a message via our Facebook page, facebook.com/culipspodcast. Or email me directly, Andrew@culips.com.

Morag: Or you can always reach us through our website, Culips.com.

Andrew: We will be back soon with another Culips episode, so stay tuned.

Morag: Talk to you soon. Goodbye.

Andrew: Bye everybody.

Detailed Explanations

Water under the bridge

The first key expression from this episode is **water under the bridge**. When someone says that something is **water under the bridge**, they mean that it occurred in the past and no longer matters. As Andrew and Morag explained, **water under the bridge** is used to talk about problems or disagreements that are no longer worth talking about because they are in the past.

In this episode, we focused on how **water under the bridge** is used to accept an apology. The other main use of this expression is discounting an issue or problem. For example, if someone wants to talk about an argument or problem that happened in the past, you can say, "It's **water under the bridge**" as a way of telling the person that you don't want to talk about that subject.

Here's one more example with **water under the bridge**:

Shelby:	I heard that you went camping with your ex-boyfriend Andy last weekend. I thought you guys had a big fight and broke up months ago!
Marianne:	Oh, that's all water under the bridge . We're back together and happier than ever!

To burn your bridges

The second key expression in this episode is **to burn your bridges**. When you **burn your bridges**, you destroy any possibility of returning to a situation that you were in.

While we focused on using **to burn your bridges** to talk about destroying relationships with people, you can use **to burn your bridges** to talk about being in any situation that you make impossible to return to. For example, imagine that you walk out of a restaurant without paying. If you do that, you've **burned your bridges** with that restaurant because they wouldn't let you eat there again.

Here's one more example with **to burn your bridges**:

Lucas:	Do you think your friend Nathan would let us borrow his car?
Emmy:	No, he definitely wouldn't.
Lucas:	Why not? He's such a nice guy.
Emmy:	I burned my bridges with him. We fought and haven't talked in months.

Stoked

When you're feeling really happy and excited, you are **stoked**!

While you can simply say, "I'm **stoked**" to tell someone that you're excited, this phrase is more commonly followed by phrases with "about" or "to" identifying the thing that you're excited about.

For example, in this episode Andrew is excited to give a shout-out to a group of listeners. To express his excitement, he says that he's "**stoked** to do this."

Although it's cool to be **stoked** about **stoked**, it's a very casual slang word that should be avoided in formal contexts.

Here are a couple more examples with **stoked**:

Nadia: I can't wait for Friday!

Jeremy: Why, what's happening on Friday?

Nadia: I'm going on a vacation to Costa Rica! I'm really **stoked** about it.

Jeremy: That's awesome! I hope you have an amazing time.

Nadia: How could I not? I'm going to spend a week on the beach!

Susan: I had a weird night last night.

Greg: Oh yeah, what happened?

Susan: My old best friend texted me. We talked for a long time. She said that she wants to be friends again.

Greg: That's cool! Are you happy to be back in contact with her?

Susan: I'm not sure. We used to be really close, but we drifted apart over the last few years. I used to really miss her! It was weird talking to her last night, though. I think we're both really different people now.

Greg: Well, if you're not **stoked** to be her friend, you don't have to be. Sometimes friendships just don't last. It's OK if that's the case.

Susan: Yeah, you're right. Thanks!

To move on

To move on is a phrasal verb that means to leave a place or situation and do something new.

There are three situations in which you can use **to move on**. The first is when talking about moving locations. For example, if you're thinking of moving away from where you currently live, you can say that you're thinking of **moving on** to a new city.

You can also use **to move on** when talking about changing activities or topics. For example, if someone in a meeting says, "We should **move on**," they mean that the current topic of discussion should be dropped and everyone should start talking about something new.

Finally, **to move on** can also mean to emotionally accept and get over a difficult change or a bad situation. For example, it's common to advise someone **to move on** after a breakup. In other words, they need to accept that things have changed and prepare themselves for new experiences.

Here are a few more examples with the three uses of **to move on**:

Melvin:	Oh man, I love your apartment! It's so huge!
Laura:	I used to love it, but I think I'm ready to move on . I've lived here for almost 10 years! I'm done with this whole neighbourhood.
Melvin:	Fair enough.

Randy:	Ugh, I've been working on this one math question for 45 minutes. I can't believe it's taking me so long!
Jess:	Maybe you should just move on to your other homework. If you take much longer on that question, you're not going to have any time for the rest.
Randy:	You're right. It'll probably make more sense later, after a break.

Nick:	Sarah, I don't know what to do. I'm still so sad about the fight I had with my brother. We used to be so close, and now it's just weird between us.
Sarah:	You both need to move on . You're family! I'm sure if you let this fight go, you'll be close again eventually.

There's no going back

There's no going back is an expression used to say that once something has been decided or an action has been taken, there's nothing that can reverse it.

In this episode, Morag explains burning your bridges by saying that you “ruin your relationship so that **there's no way back** to friendship.” In other words, once you burn your bridges, there's nothing you can do to change that fact.

One common use of **there's no going back** is to caution someone who is about to make a big decision. For example, if someone were considering quitting their job, you might warn them that **there's no going back**. In other words, they need to be careful about that decision because once you quit a job, you can't change your mind.

So, you can use **there's no going back** to identify any situation where a decision or action is final.

Here are a couple more examples with **there's no going back**:

Kevin:	Nadine, I need some advice.
Nadine:	Sure, what about?
Kevin:	I don't know if I can handle living with my roommate anymore. We are OK as friends, but I can't stand how messy he is. He loves living together, though, so I'm afraid he would be really hurt if I moved out. He's a really sensitive guy. I don't even know if he would want to be friends anymore!
Nadine:	Well, if he's that sensitive, you should make sure that you want to move out more than you want him as a friend. It sounds like there would be no going back .
Kevin:	You're right. I should think about it for a while longer.

Jules:	I'm so excited—I found a new apartment!
Catherine:	Oh no! I mean, I'm happy for you, but my roommate just told me she's moving out and I was going to see if you wanted to live with me.
Jules:	Damn! That would have been awesome, but I've already signed the lease for the apartment. There's no going back now.
Catherine:	Oh well, I'm sure I'll find someone else.

Quiz

- 1. If you want to stop an activity and switch to a different one, you can say that you want:**
 - a) to move out
 - b) to move in
 - c) to move along
 - d) to move on

- 2. When a problem between two people is water under the bridge, it:**
 - a) needs to be discussed
 - b) will always be remembered
 - c) is no longer important
 - d) has ruined their relationship

- 3. If someone says that there's no going back after a decision, they mean that the decision is:**
 - a) unimportant
 - b) final
 - c) difficult
 - d) reversible

- 4. When you make it impossible to return to a situation, you've _____ your bridges.**
 - a) built
 - b) burned
 - c) slashed
 - d) torn down

- 5. When you're stoked, you feel:**
 - a) happy and excited
 - b) worried and anxious
 - c) bored and alone
 - d) curious and interested

Quiz Answers

1.d 2.c 3.b 4.b 5.a

Episode credits

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