

Catch Word #189 – Go ape

Episode description

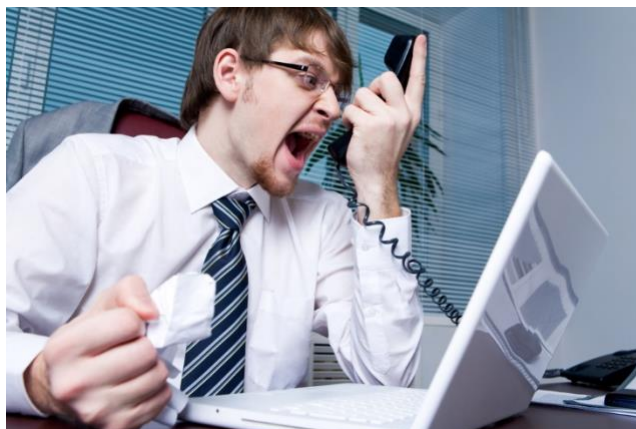
Anger is a strong emotion, and in English we have some equally strong idioms you can use to talk about it! Join Andrew and Morag in this episode to learn some ways you can describe behaving angrily: to go ape and to chew someone out.

Fun fact

The strangest things can make people angry. Did you know that simply being hungry, hot, or dehydrated can increase your chances of becoming angry? So if you don't want to go ape, try cooling down with a snack and a glass of water!

Expressions included in the study guide

- To go ape
- To chew [someone] out/to chew out [someone]
- Off-kilter
- To blow it
- To take [someone] to task



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.

Morag: Hey, Andrew.

Andrew: How is your morning going so far?

Morag: Wooo! I don't know. It's ... It's been kinda rough. Like nothing ... Nothing bad, but you know those mornings where you get up and nothing is quite right?

Andrew: Mmhmm.

Morag: It all seems to be a bit **off-kilter**?

Andrew: Mmhmm?

Morag: Yeah, you know?

Andrew: It's one of those mornings, is it?

Morag: Yeah, coffee tasted weird, there's a bunch of people in my house, you know? Like, what is this?

Andrew: A bunch of people?

Morag: Oh yeah.

Andrew: You having a party?

Morag: Oh no, it's just a ... I have ... I've got roommates.

Andrew: Hmm.

Morag: So I guess ... I guess that's not really something of note, but some days it's more ... It's more, sort of, frustrating than others. You're like, "Why is there someone in my bathroom? Oh, well, they live here too," you know?

Andrew: Right, shared space.

Morag: Oh, yeah.

Andrew: Well, Morag, please don't express your anger at your roommates too much. But if you do, you can maybe use the expressions from today's episode. Because today we're gonna do a Catch Word episode and, for our listeners that don't know, a Catch Word episode is where we take a look at a couple of slang expressions and define them, give examples of how to use them, and just talk about them.

And today our expressions are related to becoming angry or getting angry at somebody, aren't they?

Morag: Yes, they are. We've got two great ones, really nice and expressive. You both have good images with these ones.

Andrew: Yeah, I think they'll add a lot of colour to your English if you use these expressions.

Morag: Mmhmm.

Andrew: They'll really drive the point you're trying to make home. It'll be very clear to the listener about what you're trying to express.

Morag: Absolutely. So Andrew, our first expression today is **to go ape**, and there is no mistaking someone who's **going ape**.

Andrew: **Going ape**, OK? **To go ape**. And, of course, an ape is a big, big animal like a gorilla.

Morag: Mmhmm. They're like us but way more intense.

Andrew: Way more wild and hairier.

Morag: Yeah, hopefully. Although some people ...

Andrew: So what does it mean then, if you **go ape**?

Morag: **To go ape** is to become angry in almost a nonhuman way. So you're so angry that you're animalistic. You're primal, you're just completely given over to your anger.

Andrew: Exactly. You are not acting like a human anymore, you're acting like an ape. You're acting like an animal that's uncivilized and living in the jungle, and is not acting rationally anymore.

Morag: Mmhmm. It's a, kind of, like, breaking plates anger.

- Andrew: Yeah, you're just throwing things around the room and stomping your feet and pounding your chest.
- Morag: Yeah, throwing things and screaming and just like, "Argh!" You know, that, that's **going ape**. Wooo!
- Andrew: Yeah. You can think of King Kong just going on a rampage.
- Morag: Mmhmm, mmhmm. If you've ever gone on a rampage around your house and ... You know, you've probably **gone ape**, yeah.
- Andrew: You've **gone ape**. Morag, let's get to a couple of examples with this expression, **to go ape**.
- Morag: Sounds good!

- Brother: Whoa! What did you do to the car?
- Sister: Oh, I got in a little fender bender on the way home from school.
- Brother: Little fender bender? Are you kidding me? The whole bumper's shot!
- Sister: I know. What should I do?
- Brother: I've no idea, but you'd better think of something fast. When Dad gets home, he's going **to go ape**!

- Andrew: In this example, we hear a brother and sister talk about a fender bender. A fender bender, of course, is a minor car crash, right, Morag, where you just sort of bump into the person ahead of you.
- Morag: You tap enough to bend part of the car, but not enough to really hurt something.
- Andrew: Mmhmm. You damage the car but you don't total it. You don't completely destroy it. So anyways, the sister in this example got into a fender bender, and the brother warns his sister that she'd better come up with a plan of how to break the news to their father, because when he sees the car, he's gonna **go ape**. So, in other words, he's gonna become very, very angry when he learns that his daughter has crashed his car.
- Morag: No kidding.
- Andrew: Ha, I would too. I don't know if I would **go ape**, but I would be angry I think, yes.

Morag: Yeah. Um, I did like one of the other expressions that we heard in the example, Andrew, which is to be shot. 'Cause the brother at one point said that the whole bumper is shot. What does that mean, exactly?

Andrew: I like this expression too, to be shot, or to describe something as being shot. Because when something is shot, it means it's completely broken or destroyed, right? So, for example, if I drop my phone and destroy it, I could say, "Argh, my phone's shot. I need a new one."

Morag: I can think up way too many examples to talk about right now.

Andrew: OK, Morag, let's listen to one more example with **to go ape**.

Coworker 1: How was your day?

Coworker 2: Surprisingly, not bad, actually.

Coworker 1: Oh yeah? The meeting with your boss, it went all right?

Coworker 2: Yeah. You know, I thought he was gonna **go ape** when he learned that I totally blew the sales meeting last week. But he was actually pretty cool about it.

Coworker 1: Well, that's a relief.

Coworker 2: Yeah, he just told me to chalk it up as a learning experience and to learn from my mistakes.

Morag: In this example, a junior-level employee tells his friend about his day. He mentions that he had a meeting with his boss that he was worried about. He expected his boss **to go ape** when he told him that he blew the sales meeting. But the boss didn't get mad at all. So, he thought that his boss would become really angry with him and maybe even fire him, but that's not what happened. The boss didn't get angry; he did not **go ape**.

Andrew: This guy's lucky. I thought he was gonna lose his job too, but not today, thankfully. So the guy in this example, Morag, he blew his sales meeting, he **blew it**. And I love this slang expression and I use it quite a bit.

Morag: So do I.

Andrew: What does it mean when you **blow it**?

- Morag: Well, if you **blow it**, you fail to take advantage of it, which is usually a good opportunity or something. So if the employee was presented with a good opportunity at this sales meeting but he failed to make the sale, he **blew it** because he didn't manage to take advantage of or succeed in a particular situation.
- Andrew: I actually use this expression to joke with my students sometimes.
- Morag: Mmhmm?
- Andrew: If they try to hand in their homework late, I always tell 'em, "Ah, it's too late. You **blew it**! Try better next time."
- Morag: Yup.
- Andrew: "Do a better job."
- Morag: Yup, yup, yup. That's great, yeah!
- Andrew: OK, Morag, why don't we continue on and take a look at another expression. Our second expression today is to **chew someone out**, to **chew someone out**.
- Morag: I like this one.
- Andrew: Yeah, so chew ... Chew, c-h-e-w, just like what we do with our food before we swallow it, right, to chew.
- Morag: Mmhmm. So if you are **chewing someone out**, the idea is that you pulverize someone with your words. You criticize them, you yell at them for doing something wrong.
- Andrew: Exactly. So when you **chew someone out** ... And, actually, we can use this ... This is a phrase-over. We can also use it in the construction **to chew out someone**.
- Morag: Mmhmm.
- Andrew: Both of them are OK. But when you **chew out someone** or you **chew someone out**, you are scolding that person for doing something wrong, but in an extreme way, right?
- Morag: Mmhmm.
- Andrew: You're getting really angry at that person. You're yelling at them, you're making a big scene, and you're really upset at that person for making a mistake.

- Morag: We use **to chew someone out** when someone really deserves the anger than is directed at them. So that's an important part, that you're criticizing someone strongly, very forcefully. But it's deserved because they did make a mistake, usually a big one.
- Andrew: Usually a big mistake.
- Morag: Mmhmm.
- Andrew: But, yeah, and there's usually a power dynamic at play too, right?
- Morag: Mmhmm.
- Andrew: Because, for example, will an employee **chew out their boss**? Highly unlikely, right?
- Morag: Bad idea, yeah.
- Andrew: Yeah, bad idea. So it's usually somebody with some power that's **chewing out somebody** that doesn't have as much power as them. There's an imbalance in the power dynamic.
- Morag: Yeah, I can see that 'cause another closely related expression is **to take somebody to task**.
- Andrew: Mmhmm.
- Morag: Which is ... It's very similar in that way where you're reminding them of what they should be doing, and then what they haven't ... Or what they have or haven't done, you know? So there's kind of a built-in superior/inferior dynamic in there.
- Andrew: Absolutely, absolutely.
- Morag: Mmhmm.
- Andrew: All right, Morag. Let's give some usage examples of how we can use this expression, **to chew someone out** in a natural, everyday conversational setting.
- Morag: All right!

Friend 1: When I was out for lunch today, a customer **chewed out the waiter** because he brought out the wrong dish.

Friend 2: Oh my god! I hate it when that happens. It's not the waiter's fault ... I mean usually. Why do people have to be so rude?

Friend 1: I know, right? There's no reason to get so angry over something silly like that.

Andrew: In this example, we hear about a customer who **chewed out a waiter** at a restaurant. So, in other words, the customer got really angry and yelled at the waiter because he brought him the wrong food, OK? And remember, when you **chew out someone**, you get angry and criticize that person for making a mistake. This is what the customer did. He **chewed out the waiter** because the waiter made a mistake.

Morag: Don't **chew out service people**, please.

Andrew: Yeah, this is not cool.

Morag: No, it's very rude.

Andrew: Very, very rude.

Morag: Yeah. Shall we get to our other example, Andrew?

Andrew: Yeah, let's take a look at one more example.

Student: Hey, can you give me a ride to school today?

Brother: I'm tight on time already, sorry.

Student: Oh, come on! It's on your way and everything.

Brother: Don't you remember what happened the last time I gave you a ride? I ended up being late for work and my boss **chewed me out**. I'm not gonna let that happen again.

Morag: In this example, a student begs her older brother for a ride to school, but the brother refuses because last time he gave his sister a ride, he ended up being late for work and his boss got angry with him and yelled at him. In other words, his boss **chewed him out**.

Because the brother doesn't want to get **chewed out** again, he tells his sister that she cannot have a ride to school.

Andrew: She's out of luck.

- Morag: Yup!
- Andrew: Better head to the bus stop.
- Morag: Mmhmm, yeah. Get movin'.
- Andrew: Hey, Morag, I think that brings us to the end of today's episode. Just to summarize what we talked about today, we looked at two expressions, right? What were those two expressions, one more time?
- Morag: **To go ape**, and **to chew someone out** or **to chew out someone**.
- Andrew: And they are both used to talk about anger. Either becoming angry, like in **to go ape**, or expressing anger by criticizing and scolding someone harshly, like in **to chew someone out**.
- Morag: I hope no one **goes ape** or **chews anyone out** today.
- Andrew: To get the learning materials for this episode, which include a transcript, detailed vocabulary explanations, and a quiz, check out Culips.com.
- Morag: If you have any comments, questions, or suggestions for future episodes, drop us a line. Send us a message via our Facebook page, Facebook.com/CulipsPodcast, or email us directly, contact@culips.com.
- Andrew: You can find more episodes of the show on our home page or wherever you get your podcasts.
- Morag: We'll be back soon with another episode, so stay tuned guys.
- Andrew: Talk to you soon, bye-bye!
- Morag: Good-bye.
- Announcer: Are you following Culips on social media? If you want to stay up to date with all the latest Culips news and tips for learning English, check us out on Facebook and on Twitter at @Culips.

Detailed Explanations

To go ape

The first key expression from this episode, **to go ape**, means to become extremely and uncontrollably angry.

As Andrew and Morag mentioned in the episode, when someone **goes ape**, it is a specific sort of angry, one where they are so angry that they seem like a wild animal. So, saying something hurtful or writing an angry note is not **going ape**. **Going ape** is the sort of angry where you behave wildly, such as if you are so angry that you throw an object, punch a wall, or yell loudly.

So, when someone is behaving in an wild and uncontrollably angry manner, you can say they're **going ape**!

Here's one more example with **to go ape**:

Maria:	Wow, did you just see that?
Luke:	No, what happened?
Maria:	This driver almost hit a pedestrian and the pedestrian went ape ! He was screaming and banging on the roof of the car. Crazy!

To chew [someone] out/to chew out [someone]

Our second key expression from this episode, **to chew [someone] out**, is a phrase-over. So, you can use it either in the form **chew [someone] out** or **chew out [someone]**. **To chew [someone] out** means to criticize or reprimand someone angrily.

For example, if your roommate angrily reprimands you for not doing your dishes, you can say they are **chewing you out**.

Here's one more example with **to chew [someone] out/to chew out [someone]**:

James:	What are all these shopping bags? Did you buy all of this today?
Holly:	Yeah, I did a little shopping. So what?
James:	What the heck! I thought we were trying to save money for our vacation! You're behaving in a totally financially irresponsible manner!
Holly:	Whoa! I can take some of it back! You don't need to chew me out .

Off-kilter

Off-kilter is an adjective that has two meanings.

The first meaning of **off-kilter** is unbalanced or not perfectly straight. For example, if you saw a painting on a wall that was at an angle because it was not hung straight, you could say that it's hanging **off-kilter**. Or, if someone is wearing a piece of clothing that isn't hanging on them properly, such as if their hat is sitting sideways, then it too is **off-kilter**.

The second meaning of **off-kilter** is slightly strange or eccentric. For example, if someone says that you're behaving **off-kilter**, they mean that you're behaving in a way that is a bit unusual! This is the meaning that Morag used when she was describing her morning. She mentions that was a bit **off-kilter**. In other words, it was an unusual morning during which she felt slightly strange.

Here are a couple more examples with both meanings of **off-kilter**:

Ann:	Hey, can you help me with something?
Edgar:	Sure! What do you need help with?
Ann:	I'm trying to assemble this bookcase. I think I'm done. Does it look straight to you?
Edgar:	Now that you mention it, the shelves do look a bit off-kilter . Are you sure you put it together correctly?
Ann:	I might not have followed all of the instructions.

Evelyn:	Did you go to see John's band last night?
Billy:	I did, yeah.
Evelyn:	I wanted to go, but I had too much work to do. How was it? Was it good music?
Billy:	Honestly, I couldn't really tell. The whole show was off-kilter .
Evelyn:	You mean it was strange?
Billy:	Yeah, pretty weird. The band members were all wearing suits and face masks. They had a dance they would do sometimes, too. It was distracting enough that I don't really remember the music.

To blow it

To blow it is an informal expression that means to miss an opportunity because of either inaction or a wrong action. Put in the simplest way, **to blow it** means to spoil an opportunity.

For example, in this episode Andrew mentions that when students try to turn in their homework late, he tells them they've **blown it**. In other words, they failed to take advantage of the time when they could have handed in their homework.

Another example of **blowing it** would be saying something stupid or embarrassing in an interview. Say, for example, that in an interview you couldn't come up with an answer to one of the questions. Failing to answer that question could make you look bad and cause you to lose the chance to get the job. In other words, you **blew it**!

So, when someone loses or ruins an opportunity, we can say they **blew it**.

Here are a couple more examples with **to blow it**:

Andre:	Hey, Harriet! How was your date last night?
Harriet:	Not great!
Andre:	Why do you say that?
Harriet:	I think I blew it ! I was so nervous that I couldn't stop talking. My date looked both uncomfortable and bored, but for some reason I just kept on telling stories about my cat. I can't believe I messed up so badly!
Andre:	It might not be so bad. Maybe he found your awkwardness charming?
Harriet:	That's sweet of you to say, but I know I blew it .

Gabriel:	I'm leaving now. Wish me luck on my audition today!
Maude:	OK—don't blow it !
Gabriel:	Hey, that's not the same thing.
Maude:	You don't need luck, you just need to make sure you don't mess up! Luck is out of your control, but you have completely control over your actions. I believe in you.
Gabriel:	Aw, thanks!

To take [someone] to task

To take [someone] to task is an idiom that has a very similar meaning to to chew someone out. However, it is not a phrase-over like to chew someone out. When you **take [someone] to task**, you strongly or angrily criticize someone for something they've done wrong.

Taking [someone] to task means specifically getting angry at them for an action they've taken. For example, your boss might **take you to task** for doing your job incorrectly, or your friend might **take you to task** for giving them bad advice.

The key thing to remember about this expression is that, unlike to chew out someone, you cannot **take [someone] to task** for something they haven't done. For example, you cannot **take [someone] to task** for forgetting to clean up. You could, however, **take them to task** for doing a bad job cleaning up.

So, when you want to talk about angrily or forcefully telling someone about something they've done wrong, you can use **to take [someone] to task**.

Here are a couple more examples with **to take [someone] to task**:

Georgette:	Oscar! Good to see you. How was your vacation back home?
Oscar:	It was OK. Things were a bit tense with my mom, though.
Georgette:	Oh dear, that doesn't sound good.
Oscar:	I'm sure it'll be fine in the long run. She just really took me to task for breaking up with my old girlfriend. Apparently my mom thought she was good for me and was angry that I let her get away.

Sylvia:	How was your day?
Cal:	It was terrible! Nothing but meetings all day, and the last one was such a headache.
Sylvia:	Why was it so bad?
Cal:	It was a team meeting. Well, it was actually just an hour where my boss yelled at us for everything we've been doing wrong!
Sylvia:	He took you to task for a whole hour? That's an awful way to end the day.

Quiz

1. **Which of these expressions can mean to criticize someone for an action they have failed to take?**
 - a) to go ape
 - b) to chew someone out
 - c) to take someone to task

2. **Which of these expressions does NOT mean to criticize someone angrily?**
 - a) to go ape
 - b) to chew someone out
 - c) to take someone to task

3. **Off-kilter means either not perfectly straight or _____.**
 - a) slightly loud and annoying
 - b) a bit sad and depressed
 - c) extremely bizarre and upsetting
 - d) slightly strange and unusual

4. **Which of these expressions means to behave in a wildly angry manner?**
 - a) to go ape
 - b) to chew someone out
 - c) to take someone to task

5. **When you blow it, you've failed to take advantage of:**
 - a) good advice
 - b) an offer of help
 - c) an opportunity
 - d) your free time

Quiz Answers

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

Episode credits

Hosts: Andrew Bates and Morag St. Clair

Music: *Something Elated* by Broke For Free

Episode preparation/research: Andrew Bates

Audio editor: Andrew Bates

Study guide writer: Morag St. Clair

English editor: Stephanie MacLean

Business manager: Tsuyoshi Kaneshima

Project manager: Jessica Cox