

Catch Word #87 – Get it off the ground

Transcript

- Harp: Hello everyone! This is Harp.
- Maura: And Maura.
- Harp: And we're here at Culips, bringing you an ESL podcast.
- Maura: If you're listening from iTunes, check out our website, where you can get access to our learning materials, including a transcript, more detailed explanations, and even a quiz.
- Harp: Yes. And so today, we're going to be doing a Catch Word podcast, which is where we take an expression, we break it down, we explain it, we give you some related expressions. But before we get started...
- Maura: We want to take the time to thank all of our listeners. And thanks especially to the ones who contact us by sending an email, leaving a comment, or writing to us on Facebook.
- Harp: We love comments. We love hearing from all of you out there. Because we're sitting in Montreal and you are all over the world, so it gives a way to connect to you.
- Maura: Right. It's hard to imagine that people are out there listening sometimes, so when we get a comment, then we know you're really there.
- Harp: Exactly.
- Maura: OK. Now let's get **started on** this episode.
- Harp: What's our theme for today?
- Maura: Well, the theme for our Catch Word episode today is getting things started, so expressions you can use when something is just beginning.
- Harp: Yeah. To explain when you're starting a new job, or starting a new project.

- Maura: Right. And some of these expressions can even be used for starting a new relationship with another person.
- Harp: Let's get started, Maura.
- Maura: OK. The first expression we're gonna look at is **to get it off the ground**.
- Harp: **To get it off the ground**.
- Maura: Right. So **to get something off the ground** is to get it started. So you're gonna use this expression at the beginning of a new **venture**, like a new project or a new job.
- Harp: Yes. So **to get it off the ground** is when, for example, if you have a project, you've thought of the idea, you've created a plan, but once you start the project, you **get it off the ground**.
- Maura: Right. And this expression is actually connected to an airplane. So, an airplane's rolling along, and when does the flight actually start? When it gets off the ground. That's when the flight begins.
- Harp: Yeah. So you've done all the preparation, you've thought of the idea, you've prepared, and now the project has started, so you've **got it off the ground**.
- Maura: Exactly.
- Harp: Yeah. Let's do a dialogue so we can explain this better.
- Maura: Sue, did your sister open her new restaurant?
- Harp: Yeah, she opened last week actually.
- Maura: Oh, wow. That's exciting. Is she having any trouble **getting it off the ground**?
- Harp: Not at all. It's very busy, and the reviews are really good, so it's starting really well.
- Maura: Oh, that's great. She must have a good location.
- Harp: Yes, and great food.

- Maura: Oh good, 'cause I know that starting a new restaurant can be tough.
- Harp: Yeah. It's hard **to get it off the ground** but it's going well for her.
- Maura: So, in that example, we were talking about a restaurant, a new business opening, and how it's complicated to get it started. And so we used the expression **to get it off the ground**.
- Harp: Exactly.
- Maura: Now, we should also say you don't have to use *it*. You could say **to get the restaurant off the ground**.
- Harp: Yeah. Or **to get the project off the ground**.
- Maura: Right. But often we use *it* to replace it. So this expression is mostly used for projects and plans, some new **venture** that you're **starting on**. Like, for example, a new project could be at work or school.
- Harp: Exactly.
- Maura: So, let's do another example with the expression **to get it off the ground** talking about a project.
- Harp: Hey Mary Jane, how are you?
- Maura: Pretty good, pretty good. How are you?
- Harp: I'm good. How's the marketing campaign?
- Maura: Well, you know, it's been a lot of trouble. We're having trouble **getting it off the ground**.
- Harp: Oh no. What's the problem?
- Maura: Well, we just can't seem to decide on a new logo. We've had so many meetings about our new marketing strategy and we just can't get started.
- Harp: Oh, that's too bad.
- Maura: Now, this next expression is, again, talking about the beginning of a new project, which is **to get off on the wrong foot**.

- Harp: Yeah, **to get off on the wrong foot**.
- Maura: So, in this case, you're saying that something started badly. It didn't go well. That's why you say **the wrong foot**.
- Harp: Yeah, so **to get off on the wrong foot** is when you have a bad start to a project, or to a relationship, or to a friendship.
- Maura: Right. And if you imagine you're sitting and then you begin to walk, the first foot you step on is the beginning of walking, really. And so if you step on the wrong foot, maybe you'll fall over, have an accident, it's not good.
- Harp: Exactly.
- Maura: OK, let's give another dialogue example for **to get off the wrong foot**.
- Harp: Hey, how did it go this weekend? You met the new boyfriend's family for the first time.
- Maura: I know. It's always a little bit stressful, isn't it?
- Harp: Definitely.
- Maura: Well, I was really tired on Saturday. I just wasn't in a good mood, and that's when I met Joe's mom, and to be honest, I think we **got off on the wrong foot**. We weren't really getting along and, like I said, I was tired. I don't know. It didn't go well.
- Harp: Oh no. But it's only the first time. You can show her your fun personality the next time.
- Maura: Yeah, I hope so.
- Harp: Make sure you get some rest next time before you meet her.
- Maura: So, in that example, I was talking about meeting my new boyfriend's mother, a new relationship, and it didn't begin well, so I could use the expression **to get off on the wrong foot**.
- Harp: Exactly.
- Maura: And in this case, if you can **get off on the wrong foot**, luckily you can also **get off on the right foot**.

- Harp: Yes, and this is the opposite; this means that something started well.
- Maura: Yup. And it can be used just like **to get off on the wrong foot**. It can be used with a project or a new relationship, something new in your life.
- Harp: Yes. So, **to get off on the right foot** means that it started positively.
- Maura: Right. And everything is moving forward in a good way.
- Harp: Exactly. Let's give an example with this expression, **to get off on the right foot**.
- Maura: So how's everything going at school?
- Harp: It's going really well.
- Maura: Oh, good, good.
- Harp: Yeah, I started my new project, and I met all my team members and we just **got off on the right foot**, we were all talking and no one was arguing. We're planning the project the right way and it's going so well.
- Maura: Good, because sometimes working with groups can be difficult. It can be hard to get everything to work out.
- Harp: Exactly. In the past, I've had groups where people don't talk, they don't share ideas. And this group was just great. We were all talking and sharing ideas and **we were all on the same page**. It was great.
- Maura: Good. I'm happy for you. So, we first looked at **to get it off the ground** and then we talked about **to get off on the right foot** and **to get off on the wrong foot**. And we have one more expression, which you can use to talk about starting a new project or a new task. And this one is also positive.
- Harp: Yes. This expression is **to put your best foot forward**.
- Maura: Yup. **To put your best foot forward**. So this one, again, deals with the idea of walking. You put out your foot, you start something right.

- Harp: Exactly.
- Maura: So, when you **put your best foot forward**, you're beginning something with a lot of positivity and good energy and you wanna be the best that you can be for this new thing.
- Harp: Exactly. When I started my new job, I definitely **put my best foot forward**, and it's going really well now.
- Maura: Right, because you wanna make a good impression, so you do everything **a hundred percent**.
- Harp: Exactly. I work really hard. I made a good impression.
- Maura: Great. So, let's give an example with ***to put your best foot forward***.
- Harp: OK. So, how's everything at work?
- Maura: Oh, good, very good, but we had a big change because we got a new boss from **headquarters**.
- Harp: Oh, did your old boss leave?
- Maura: Yeah, he retired.
- Harp: OK.
- Maura: Yeah. So, I really wanted to take advantage of the situation and get a good relationship with my new boss, so as soon as he started, I really tried **to put my best foot forward**.
- Harp: Oh, that's great. That's a good idea.
- Maura: Yeah. So far we're getting along really well, so hopefully it just continues like that.
- Harp: That's a great idea.
- Maura: So in this example, I was meeting a new boss. So, of course, I wanted to make the best impression possible and to start off the relationship well.
- Harp: Exactly.

- Maura: OK. Let's go over the expressions we used one more time.
- Harp: OK, so we started with ***to get it off the ground***.
- Maura: Yup, and then we looked at ***to get off on the wrong foot*** or ***to get off on the right foot***.
- Harp: And we ended with ***to put your best foot forward***.
- Maura: Good. So, if you want to know more about these expressions, you can go to our website and you can have access to the transcripts and more detailed explanations.
- Harp: Definitely. And if you like what you see, if you like what you hear, donate to help us make more wonderful podcasts.
- Maura: Right. Or if you're listening on iTunes, rate us; tell us how much you love us.
- Harp: That's it for us today.
- Maura: We will talk to you soon. This has been Maura.
- Harp: And Harp.
- Maura: Bye!
- Harp: Bye everyone!

Detailed Explanation

To get it off the ground

This expression is used when talking about the beginning of something, about getting something started. **To get it off the ground** is most often used to talk about a project or a plan. It's used to talk about starting something that's complicated, has many elements to it, and is a longer process.

Because this expression is most often used with plans and projects, it's often used to talk about business. It's often used with *it*, but you can also say **to get the project off the ground** or **to get the plans off the ground**, etc.

Here's another example with **to get it off the ground**:

Ted: We can't get started because we don't have enough money.

Sylvia: I guess we'll just have to wait until next year then.

Ted: Yeah. I hope we'll be able **to get the project off the ground** by then.

This expression has possible origins related to airplanes. When an airplane is off the ground, it means that the flight has started. Now, **to get it off the ground** can be used to mean that a variety of things, not just flights, have begun.

A venture

In this episode, we mention the word **venture** a couple of times. A **venture** is a business plan that has some risk, as you don't know if your plan will be successful. The risk is taken so that in the future it will be possible to earn money.

This is not a common word that's used every day, but it is a business word. Because we were talking about the phrase *getting it off the ground*, we talked about business plans and projects that could also be called **ventures**.

Here's another example with **venture**:

Cassy: There won't be any more business **ventures** this year!

Ivan: That's what I thought. We've lost too much money already.

Venture can also be used to talk about an activity that's not business-related, where there is risk, such as hiking up a very high mountain or going on a dangerous motorcycle trip.

To start on

This is another time when we have a two-word verb whose meaning is really no different than the one-word verb it's based on. **To start on** means *to start*. It is used in the same way that *to start* is used when talking about beginning an activity. In this episode, **to start on** was used to talk about beginning a venture.

Here's another example:

Lyle: Let's **start on** the cake now.

Pete: Yes, it's time for dessert!

To get off on the wrong foot

This expression is also used when talking about the beginning of something, when it did not start well. **To get off on the wrong foot** can be used to talk about the beginning of a project, a plan, or even a relationship. It is used when the project, plan, or relationship didn't start well.

When you take your first step, you begin to walk, and if you step on the wrong foot, you might fall. This example of walking gives some meaning to this expression, but now it is not used for walking, but about longer processes that people work on together.

Here's another example with **to get off on the wrong foot**:

Manny: How's your new project going?

Lois: It's going OK. But I didn't know Alex before we started and I just feel like we **got off on the wrong foot**.

Manny: Oh, that's too bad. Maybe as you keep working together things will get better.

To get off on the right foot

Some expressions are fixed expressions, with no variations. In this case, there's good news: you can say *to get off on the wrong foot*, and you can also say **to get off on the right foot**. This expression is used to talk about the beginning of something that's going well.

Here's another example with **to get off on the right foot**:

Vickie: How's the business plan going with Alfred?

Irene: Great! We got off on the right foot and everything is running smoothly.

You can also use these expressions in the negative: **not to get off on the right foot** and **not to get off on the wrong foot**.

To be on the same page

This is an expression that we've covered in a previous Culips episode. Check out that episode, which focuses on the expression **to be on the same page** on our website if you want to learn even more.

To be on the same page means to think the same way and to understand each other, to get along easily. In a dialogue example, Harp says that a group she's working with is working well together. She says that they got off on the right foot and that they **are all on the same page**.

Here's another example with **to be on the same page**:

Kristen: I just started working with my new tutor. So far, I've really enjoyed the lessons. It's exactly what I was hoping for.

Elaine: That's great. It seems like you two **are really on the same page**.

To put your best foot forward

At the beginning of something new and important, most people want to make an effort to be the very best they can. At this time, you want **to put your best foot forward**; you want to begin with energy and intelligence.

Here's an example with **to be put your best foot forward**:

Stan: What are you wearing to your interview?

Lyle: I'm not sure. I want **to put my best foot forward** though, so I think I might go and buy a new suit.

You can also say **to put his best foot forward** or **her best foot forward**. You could also say **they put their best foot forward**.

A hundred percent

Sometimes we talk about effort using percentages. When someone tries their best and puts all their effort into something, we say that they gave **a hundred percent**.

People might also say they only gave **fifty percent** if they put forth only a bit of effort. You might also hear **zero percent** if someone didn't try at all. Sometimes people might get more specific, but generally people comment on effort by saying **zero percent**, **fifty percent**, or **a hundred percent**. Sometimes, people even say larger numbers, like **a hundred and ten percent** or **a thousand percent**, if they really want to emphasize that a lot of effort was made. Even though giving **one hundred percent** of what you're capable of is technically the most you can do, people use larger numbers to underline how much effort was made.

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Here are some examples:

Kevin: Did you even try to complete your work? It looks like you put **zero percent** effort into this assignment.

Oscar: Yeah, I didn't try very hard.

Pete: How do you think you played today?

Mike: I'm tired and not focused. I only played at about **fifty percent** of what I'm capable of.

Justin: I gave it my all last weekend.

Nathan: You did a great job. I could tell you gave it **a hundred percent**.

Steph: Did you see the game last weekend? It was amazing!

Errol: Yeah, both teams really gave it **a thousand percent**. I've never seen such a good match!

Headquarters

In a business or organization that has many locations, or branches, there is almost always a **headquarters**. **Headquarters** is the location that is in charge of all the other locations. **Headquarters** is where the bosses work, and where the big decisions that affect the other locations are made. It's always written with an s, **headquarters**, even though it's only one place.

Headquarters is just one word that we can use to talk about this place. There are many other words to talk about a place of business where the most important decisions are made that affect every other location in the organization. You might also hear synonyms for **headquarters** like, *head office*, *main office*, or *central office*.

Headquarters is also used for military and police operations.

Quiz

1. Brent: It took two years to get the project _____.

Please fill in the blank with the expression meaning *started*.

- a) grounded
- b) on the ground
- c) off the ground
- d) ground up

2. What do you call taking a risk by opening a new business?

- a) an adventure
- b) a venture
- c) advent
- d) an invention

3. What is the opposite of *to get off on the wrong foot*?

- a) to get off on a strange foot
- b) to get off on the right foot
- c) not to get off on the wrong foot
- d) b) and c)

4. Tim and Tanya are really working well together on their assignment. They seem to have the same vision.

Which is definitely true about Tim and Tanya?

- a) They are on the same page.
- b) They are on different pages.
- c) They got off on the wrong foot.
- d) Tanya didn't put her best foot forward.

5. Which is **NOT** an expression about starting something new?

- a) to put your best foot forward
- b) to put your worst foot forward
- c) to start off on the wrong foot
- d) to start off on the right foot

6. Shayne gave the work one hundred percent.**How hard did Shayne try?**

- a) He tried his best.
- b) He didn't try at all.
- c) He tried a little bit.
- d) He tried as much as one hundred people.

7. What is headquarters?

- a) a football position
- b) the head office of an organization
- c) a shampoo
- d) all the various locations of an organization

Answers: 1.c 2.b 3.d 4.a 5.b 6.a 7.b

