

Catch Word #95 – She has something up her sleeve!**Transcript**

Harp: Hello everyone! This is Harp.

Maura: And this is Maura.

Harp: And we're bringing you another wonderful Culips English learning podcast.

Maura: Yes. And if you want to get to know us more, you can go to our website and you can read about us, you can see our pictures, and you can get to know what we're about at Culips.

Harp: And you can see all the older episodes, and you can become a member and then you'll have access to the learning materials, which is a complete transcript, detailed explanations, and a quiz for each episode. So go to the website, Culips.com, C-U-L-I-P-S.com.

Maura: Yes. That's the site. And today we're going to do a Catch Word episode, and that's where we look at different slang or expressions and we tell you what they mean and we give you examples and try to explain it as clearly as we can so that you can understand and start using these expressions.

Harp: Yes. And Maura, what are we gonna be looking at today?

Maura: So the first expression we're going to look at today is ***to have something up your sleeve***.

Harp: ***To have something up your sleeve.***

Maura: Yes, ***to have something up your sleeve*** means that you have a kind of secret, you have a secret plan or secret knowledge that you're going to use at the right moment, that will help you be successful or help you get what you want in a specific situation.

Harp: OK. So when you ***have something up your sleeve***, you some knowledge, you some tricks that you're gonna use to get something done.

Maura: Exactly. You might be trying to convince someone of something and you have some important knowledge that will convince them. So you have this secret plan and it will help you be successful in that particular situation.

Harp: OK, ***makes sense***. But what's the origin of this expression, Maura?

- Maura: Well, a long time ago, people didn't have pockets in their clothes. Now we have them in our pants—most pants—and sometimes even in our shirts, but a long time ago, people didn't have pockets, so sometimes they might have kept things up their sleeves. And the sleeve is the part of the shirt that covers the arm, completely. So you would maybe put some things up your sleeve and then they were hidden there, so whenever you needed something, you would take it out from your sleeve to use it, whenever you needed it.
- Harp: OK, OK.
- Maura: But this expression could also be linked to magicians.
- Harp: Oh, because they have the big robes and their sleeves are very long so maybe they're hiding things there.
- Maura: Exactly. So, magicians perform different tricks, for example, maybe they're hiding some flowers and they make flowers disappear and then suddenly they make the flowers reappear and they keep it up their sleeve, so they pull out the flowers and impress the audience at the right moment.
- Harp: OK. So now, **to have something up your sleeve** is not literal, it's more just that you could have some knowledge or you could have some techniques that could help you do something.
- Maura: Right. A lot of expressions start this way. They have a very physical meaning, but as time goes on, the expressions are not physical anymore, because you can't really have knowledge in your sleeve, right? It's in your head.
- Harp: Exactly.
- Maura: But we use this expression to mean that you secretly have this knowledge and you use it at a specific time.
- Harp: Yeah, so you're hiding this knowledge away and then when you need it, you use it.
- Maura: Right. So, maybe you go to a job interview and you have some impressive experience, but you save talking about this experience to really impress the person who's interviewing you at the right moment. So you **have this information up your sleeve** and you use it to impress the person who's interviewing you so they want to hire you.
- Harp: Yup, that's a good example. Or if you're trying to get someone to do something and you're telling them all of the information but you save a couple of special, fun things until the end, you **have something up your sleeve**, some special information you tell them right at the end.

Maura: Yeah. So, a lot of the time, you want to maybe convince someone of something and this is why you have this secret plan or trick that you want to use to convince the other person. So, let's give a couple dialogue examples with this expression.

Harp: Sounds good.

Maura: So, is Vicky coming out this weekend?

Harp: I'm not sure. I've been talking to her but she hasn't decided yet.

Maura: Yeah, she's been kind of **a bump on a log** lately. She doesn't really wanna do much of anything.

Harp: I know, but I **have something up my sleeve** if she says no.

Maura: Oh, you have a plan? How we gonna convince her?

Harp: Her favourite band is playing at the bar and she doesn't know.

Maura: Oh, so you're gonna tell her if she tries **to get out of it**?

Harp: Yeah. If she tries to say no, I'm gonna tell her about her favourite band. She'll come for sure.

Maura: Pretty **sneaky**.

Harp: I think so.

Maura: So, in that example, we were trying to convince our friend to come out at night with us.

Harp: Yeah. And I didn't wanna tell her about her favourite band playing in the beginning because maybe she'll just try to make excuses, so I'm gonna save it to the end and tell her as a big surprise.

Maura: So we could say that you **have something up your sleeve**, because you have a plan to try to convince her. So, there are some variations on this expression, too. You could speak generally, like we have been, saying **to have something up your sleeve**, or you could also say that **you have some tricks up your sleeve**.

Harp: Yup.

Maura: There are a few variations. We'll go into them more in our learning materials.

Harp: Yes, definitely.

Maura: Well, since we're here, let's do a dialogue example with **to have some tricks up someone's sleeve**.

Harp: Sounds good. Let's do it.

Harp: Are you all ready for the meeting with the customer today?

Maura: Oh, I'm so ready. I **have a few tricks up my sleeve**, too.

Harp: Oh, really? **Whadaya** have?

Maura: Well, after we give them the initial presentation, I'm going to show them the new video that we've just edited.

Harp: Oh!

Maura: Oh yeah! And then, if that doesn't work, I'm going to suggest that we all go out for dinner together and continue the conversation in a more casual way.

Harp: That's a good idea.

Maura: I think so. And if that doesn't work, I'm going to offer them a 5% discount.

Harp: Wow, you **have a lot of tricks up your sleeve**.

Maura: Oh yeah, and I'm not afraid to use 'em.

Maura: OK. So in that example, I **had some tricks up my sleeve**. I **had something up my sleeve**. I had a plan of how I was going to get these customers to work with my company.

Harp: Yeah, I think you had some good plans there.

Maura: Yeah. So, sometimes, people are specific and they might tell people what they **have up their sleeve**, but in other cases, they might keep it a secret from everybody.

Harp: Yes, so that it's more of a surprise and more effective.

Maura: Yeah, more effective, you're right. So, that was our first expression, **to have something up your sleeve**. Now, what's the second one?

Harp: **To have a bag of tricks**.

Maura: Mmhmm. **To have a bag of tricks**. Now, this also has me thinking about magicians.

- Harp: Definitely. I'm thinking of a bag they have and they pull out a rabbit from it and they pull out some flowers from it, but when they show us, it's empty.
- Maura: Mmhhh. Very tricky. So, this could be where this expression comes from too. So magicians have a bag, you don't know what's inside of it, because it's a secret, but they're eventually going to show you some interesting and exciting things that you'll like.
- Harp: Yeah. So **to have a bag of tricks** is to have special techniques or methods that you don't show people and they could be part of your plan to accomplish something.
- Maura: Yeah. A good example for this would be as a teacher, you **have a bag of tricks**.
- Harp: You have **to have a bag of tricks** as a teacher, I think.
- Maura: Yeah. So, a teacher's **bag of tricks** would be different activities or lessons that you know will get the students interested.
- Harp: Yeah.
- Maura: So, a teacher might have some kind of game that they know every time they do with the class, the students really like it or every time they watch this video with the students they're very quiet, so that could be some examples of what a teacher would have in their **bag of tricks**.
- Harp: And I think teachers need to keep them very secret, their **bag of tricks**, because if all the students know then it's not a **bag of tricks**, then they know what the surprises are gonna be.
- Maura: Yup, that's true. And a teacher could use their **bag of tricks** any time.
- Harp: Any time.
- Maura: So, this expression, too, is just like the first one: A person would use their **bag of tricks** because they want to accomplish something and they want to see a certain result.
- Harp: Yeah. Let's give another example with this expression.

Maura: So how are you feeling?

Harp: I'm not feeling too well right now.

Maura: Oh no. Is there anything I can do to help?

Harp: No, it's OK. I'm gonna see my mom tonight. She always **has a bag of tricks**

to make me feel better.

Maura: Oh, like **secret home remedies**.

Harp: Definitely. She makes some special teas that taste so good and sometimes she gives me a little back massage. She's great.

Maura: Ah, nice. Well, I hope you feel better.

Maura: So, in that expression, it was your mother who **had a bag of tricks**; she had different methods or ways to help you feel better.

Harp: Yeah. And it could be all sorts of different things. It's always a surprise.

Maura: So, let's look at one more expression that's very similar to the first two.

Harp: The third expression is **to have a secret weapon**.

Maura: Yes, **to have a secret weapon**. And this expression actually has the word *secret* in it, although all of the expressions really are secrets.

Harp: Yes, definitely. **To have a secret weapon**. And again, this is some sort of plan or method that a person has to achieve a goal.

Maura: Right. And the actual meaning is really more connected to war, where you would be against your opponent, against your enemy, and if you had a secret weapon, you could possibly win, because they didn't know about this weapon.

Harp: Yup.

Maura: But now, of course, we're not talking about war anymore. We're happy people at Culips. No war over here.

Harp: No, no. This expression could be for anything. It's not related only to war.

Maura: Right. It just means that, again, you have a secret plan or secret knowledge that will help you achieve what you want to achieve.

Harp: Even though I do think... The first thing I think when I think of **to have a secret weapon** is kids playing with a snowball fight and they plan all these secret tricks and plans and they always say "I **have a secret weapon**."

Maura: Yup, yup, you're right. Like maybe you're having a water gun fight but your **secret weapon** is a whole bucket of water that you're gonna throw on someone.

Harp: You did that when you were young, didn't you? That was your **secret**

weapon.

Maura: I liked water fights. I'll admit it. OK, so let's give one more example with **to have a secret weapon**.

Harp: So, are you all ready for the customer visit today?

Maura: Oh yeah, I'm ready! I **have a secret weapon**, too.

Harp: Really? What is it?

Maura: Well, after the initial presentation, I'm going to show them the new video that we did.

Harp: Oh, that's gonna be great. I've seen it.

Maura: Yeah. I think that will definitely convince them to work with us.

Harp: Yeah, I think so.

Maura: So, in that example, I **had a secret weapon**. And you may have realized that that example is very similar to the example that we used for the expression **to have something up your sleeve**.

Harp: Yup. The only difference is **to have a secret weapon** is just one thing. With **to have something up your sleeve**, or **to have a bag of tricks**, it can be numerous things.

Maura: Yup, that's a good point. So that's why it was a similar example but when I talked about a **secret weapon**, I only mentioned the video.

Harp: Yup, exactly.

Maura: So, that's about it.

Harp: Let's recap. Today we started with **to have something up your sleeve**.

Maura: And also **to have a bag of tricks**.

Harp: And **to have a secret weapon**.

Maura: If you want to know more about these expressions, become a member, check out our detailed explanations, and you'll have even more examples, more explanation for those expressions.

Harp: Yes, definitely. And the website, again, is Culips.com, C-U-L-I-P-S.com.

Maura: And we'll talk to you soon.

Harp: Bye everyone!

Maura: Bye!

Detailed Explanation

To have something up your sleeve

Here is an expression that we use when we're talking about getting what we want. In order to get what you want, you can sometimes use a secret at exactly the right moment. When you have a secret strength or asset, you can say that you **have something up your sleeve**.

As we talk about in this episode, this expression probably comes from a time when people didn't have pockets in their clothes. The only way to put something away, or hide something, was to put it up their sleeve.

Here's another example using ***to have something up your sleeve***:

Sarah: So, are you nervous about cooking for your mother-in-law?

Kate: Yeah. I've never made a turkey dinner before, but I **have something up my sleeve** in case it doesn't work out.

Sarah: Yeah? What are you going to do?

Kate: I'm going to order pizza!

Another variation is ***to have an ace up your sleeve***. This means that you have a hidden strength or advantage that you can use at just the right moment.

Here's an example using ***to have an ace up your sleeve***:

Sports Reporter: Coach, how are you going to win the football game today?

Coach: Well, we're going to try our best, and if things aren't going well, we'll bring out our newest player. He's the ace up our sleeve.

Sports Reporter: So the other team doesn't know that he's going to play?

Coach: That's right. He just joined the team yesterday!

To make sense

This is an expression that means to be understandable. If something **makes sense**, it means you can understand it. This is a very common expression used by people of all ages.

Here is an example using this expression:

Jennifer: Thanks for helping me with my math homework.

Steven: No problem. I hope your exam goes well.

Jennifer: It will. Math **makes sense** now! Your explanations were so clear.

You can also say something **makes sense to me**. Jennifer could also have said, "Math **makes sense** to me now."

This expression can also be used to describe something that is logical or reasonable. If you say something **makes sense**, it can mean that you think it is a good, reasonable idea.

Here's an example with **to make sense** used in that way:

Michelle: I feel like I'm getting a cold, so I'm going to stay home from work today.

John: That **makes sense**. You don't want to have a cold when we go on vacation this weekend.

In this example, if Michelle stays home from work, she will have time to recover from her cold before the weekend, which means that she can have more fun on vacation! For this reason, it is logical for her to stay home.

To be a bump on a log

Don't just sit there like **a bump on a log**! This is an expression that means that someone is not reacting to what is going on around them. They are not helping, or they are being lazy. In this episode, in a dialogue example, one friend is being lazy and is not interested in going out with her friends. This is why she is called **a bump on a log**. This isn't really a polite expression, since you're accusing someone of being lazy, so be careful when you use it!

A *log* is a piece of cut wood, and a *bump* is a little, rounded, pushed out part on the wood. An actual bump on a log does nothing. It never moves (since it's attached to the wood and is not alive). When a person is called **a bump on a log**, it means that they have the same qualities.

Here's one more example with **to be a bump on a log**:

Sheila: Harry has just been sitting around all day doing nothing lately.

Kevin: What **a bump on a log**! Maybe we should ask if he's feeling OK.

To get out of something

Here's an expression for when you don't want to attend something or don't want to be responsible for something. Often, **to get out of something**, you have to make an excuse or give a reason why you cannot be part of it. When people make excuses, they sometimes lie or exaggerate.

Here's an example with **to get out of something**:

Carol: I don't want to go to the symphony tonight with my grandmother. It's going to be so boring.

Chris: You should try **to get out of it**.

Carol: How?

Chris: Pretend you have a lot of homework!

Sneaky

The word **sneaky** describes someone who does things secretly, or an action that is done secretly.

Here's an example with **sneaky**:

Scott: I was really surprised that we had a quiz today. Our teacher didn't mention anything about it last week.

Tim: Yeah, that was a really **sneaky** thing for her to do. I hope I passed the test.

As we use it in today's episode, **sneaky** is not actually a negative word. Harp just wanted to convince her friend to come to the concert, and found a trick that would work. The word **sneaky** can be used very negatively sometimes though, and can be used to describe someone (or something) who is dishonest.

Here is an example with **sneaky** used in a negative way:

Hannah: I think Josh stole some of the cookies I made for the bake sale, because now I have less than I brought in.

Mike: He's so **sneaky**. I think we should find him and make him pay for them.

And here's an example with **sneaky** being used to describe something very positive:

Phil: I'm organizing a surprise party for my girlfriend's birthday. I'm going to take her out to dinner and then have her whole family waiting for us at the restaurant.

Veronica: Oh, you're so **sneaky**! She's going to love that!

To have some tricks up your sleeve

To have some tricks up your sleeve means to have a few different things you could try in case you need help to get what you want. This expression is just like *to have something up your sleeve*, but in this case, you have more than one thing you can do.

Here's an example with **to have some tricks up your sleeve**:

Joanna: It's such a boring presentation topic today. Jasper's **got some tricks up his sleeve** though, in case anyone starts to fall asleep.

Christa: Oh, good! I was afraid it was going to be dull.

Whadaya

Sometimes, when you hear someone speaking English, you can't pick out all of the separate words they're saying, and it can get really confusing. **Whadaya** is an example of this. When you hear someone say **whadaya**, they are really saying *what do you*. This should never be written as **whadaya**, except in very casual exchanges between friends.

To have a bag of tricks

If you **have a bag of tricks**, it means that you have a few things that will help you in a specific situation. Imagine a witch or wizard reaching into an actual bag of tricks, and finding a variety of different tricks that they could use at the right time.

Let's look at an example with **bag of tricks**, using two teachers:

Mrs. Wilson: There were 15 minutes left in class today, but the students had already finished all of their work. I didn't know what to do!

Mr. Ford: When that happens to me, I reach into my **bag of tricks**. Sometimes, we play a word game, or we have a group discussion. Sometimes I'll even make them draw a picture!

Mrs. Wilson: Thanks for the suggestions. I'll try one of those next time.

Secret home remedies

A home remedy or **a secret remedy** is something you use from home (not medicine from a hospital or pharmacy) when you're sick. The word *remedy* means a treatment to make someone feel better. Instead of buying cough syrup from the pharmacy, a popular **home remedy** for a cold is hot water with lemon and honey. Chicken soup is another common **home remedy** in North America. Ginger is known as a **home remedy** for stomach aches.

Often, **secret remedy** and **home remedy** are used the same way, but **secret remedy** can sometimes refer to a remedy that is a little strange. Maybe it's something your grandmother told you about. Also, because it is a secret, it may be that only people in your family know the exact recipe.

Here is an example with **secret remedy**:

Alison: Oh, I have such a bad cold. I have a fever and a runny nose, and I feel awful.

Marie: Try my grandmother's **secret remedy**. Mix a clove of garlic with vinegar and an onion. Put it in a cup of hot water. You'll feel so much better the next morning.

Alison: That sounds awful, but I'll try anything to get rid of this cold!

To have a secret weapon

To have a secret weapon is to have one specific plan or tool in case you need help. This expression is similar to the expression *to have something up your sleeve*, and it can be used in a similar way.

Remember the football player we talked about when we looked at *an ace up your sleeve*? He was the newest, best player and was going to play only at the right moment, when the team needed him. We could also call that football player **a secret weapon**.

A **secret weapon**, just like an ace up your sleeve, does not always refer to a person.

Let's look at an example with **secret weapon** that is not referring to a person:

Chef George: I really hope we win the baking competition today. I'm really nervous.

Chef Roger: If we need to, we'll bring out our **secret weapon**: our award-winning chocolate cake. Everyone loves it!

Quiz

1. Which of the following is an expression that means to have a secret trick to help you get what you want?
 - a) to have something up your shirt
 - b) to have a bag of sleeves
 - c) to have something up your sleeve
 - d) to have a secret in your pocket

2. If Joe is described as a bump on a log, what does this mean about him?
 - a) Joe is very active.
 - b) Joe is lazy and inactive.
 - c) Joe has no money.
 - d) Joe is crazy.

3. Peter: I'm supposed to go to a work party tonight, but I so don't feel like going. Deidre: Why don't you try to _____? Tell them you're not feeling well.

Please fill in the blank.
 - a) get out of it
 - b) get into it
 - c) get it off
 - d) get on it

4. What words does *whadaya* represent?
 - a) what did you
 - b) what do you
 - c) what are you
 - d) what is it

5. Which of the following is NOT a variation of *to have something up your sleeve*?
 - a) to have some tricks up your sleeve
 - b) to have a trick up your sleeve
 - c) to have an ace up your sleeve
 - d) to have a one up your sleeve

6. When would you use a home remedy?

- a) when your TV is broken
- b) when someone comes to visit
- c) when you're sick
- d) when you have a lot of homework

7. Shelly's our secret _____ at the concert. She can really sing!

Please fill in the blank.

- a) trick
- b) bag
- c) weapon
- d) ace

Answers

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