

Catch Word #96 – Going down in flames

Transcript

- Maura: Hello everyone out there. It's Maura.
- Harp: And Harp.
- Maura: And we're here with your Culips English learning podcast.
- Harp: Go to our website, Culips.com, that's C-U-L-I-P-S.com, because there, you can become a member. When you're a member, you have access to the learning material, which is a complete transcript, detailed explanation, and even a quiz.
- Maura: Yes. And at our website, you can also make a donation, which goes to help us continue making interesting podcasts for you.
- Harp: And give us some feedback. You can leave a comment on the website, you can leave a comment on a Facebook, you can rate us on iTunes.
- Maura: Yeah. We love hearing from you and knowing what you're thinking. In fact, today's episode is even a suggestion from a listener.
- Harp: Yes, because we're doing a Catch Word, and that's where we give you a couple of expressions, we explain them, we give some examples.
- Maura: Yeah. And we teach you as much as we can about it so that you can use it maybe, or hear it and know how it's being used.
- Harp: And where did this Catch Word come from today, Maura?
- Maura: Well, as I was saying, this is actually from a few months ago. But one of our listeners from China emailed us, because sometimes we get questions from listeners, too. This listener emailed asking us about the expression **to go down in flames**. We thought that was a good expression and we could do a whole episode about it.
- Harp: All right. So let's start with our first expression.
- Maura: And our first expression is obviously **to go down in flames**.
- Harp: Yeah, **to go down in flames**.
- Maura: And **to go down in flames** means to end something in a very memorable, dramatic way.

- Harp: Yes. When there's an end to something and it's memorable and dramatic.
- Maura: So, this expression is also used to talk about something negative, so something ended in a negative way.
- Harp: Yes. When something ends and it's memorable and dramatic in a negative way.
- Maura: Yeah. So it could be that something didn't work or it failed. But any way you're gonna use it, it has a negative ending in a memorable way.
- Harp: And it could be used for anything. It could be sports, or work, or a project, or business. It... Really, **to go down in flames** could be used for so many different situations.
- Maura: Right. Any situation where something can end and something dramatic can happen, really. Now, if you think of the image of an airplane, that's connected to this expression. So you see an airplane flying and something's not going well, the plane is going down, it's falling to the ground, it's going to crash. And the flames make the scene very dramatic and memorable, but it's not a good thing, of course, that this plane is going to crash.
- Harp: Yeah. A plane crash is negative so that's why **to go down in flames** is used in negative situations.
- Maura: Right. So, let's give a couple dialogue examples using this expression.
- Harp: Let's do it, Maura.

- Harp: Did you watch the hockey game yesterday?
- Maura: No, but I heard our team **went down in flames**.
- Harp: Oh, it was so bad. I feel embarrassed that I like this team.
- Maura: Well, what happened?
- Harp: Well, it was going really well. Our team **was up 4-nothing**. We were winning; we got four goals really quickly. We were doing so well, almost to the end. I saw people leaving the stadium because they thought, "Oh the game's finished, 4-0." Then, all of a sudden, in the last two minutes, the other team scored five times.
- Maura: Wow. That is crazy.

Harp: It was embarrassing. Our team **went down in flames**.

Maura: I'm glad I didn't see it.

Maura: So there's an example using **to go down in flames** talking about sports.

Harp: Yes. So a team was doing really well and at the very end, they lost quite spectacularly.

Maura: Right. They lost in a horrible, horrible way. So let's give another example, this time, not about sports.

Harp: Let's do it.

Maura: So did you hear what's going on with Jenna?

Harp: No, not at all. What's going on?

Maura: Well, she was out for dinner last night with her fiancé, and then they just started arguing and not getting along well. They totally **created a scene**. Then, she throws her engagement ring at him and **pours a glass of water over his head**.

Harp: Wow, that relationship sure **went down in flames**.

Maura: Yeah, it's kind of sad, but I guess it's better that they don't get married.

Harp: Yeah, for sure.

Maura: So there's an example with a relationship that ended, and it happened in a very dramatic way.

Harp: Yes, it was not a quiet conversation. There was yelling and screaming and throwing of an engagement ring and throwing of a glass of water. It was very dramatic.

Maura: Yeah, not good at all. So, let's look at a second expression, which is very easy to define for you, because it has exactly the same meaning as **to go down in flames**.

Harp: Yes, the second expression is **to crash and burn**.

Maura: Yes, **to crash and burn**.

Harp: OK, so what does **to crash and burn** mean?

- Maura: Well, it means... Just like **to go down in flames**, it means that something ends in a memorable, spectacular way, and... and whatever's ending is very negative.
- Harp: OK, so it's the exact same, when something ends and it's dramatic, it's spectacular, but it's negative.
- Maura: Right. And, again, think about airplanes; when an airplane crashes to the ground and then it begins to burn. So that's obviously negative, it ends the flight, it's very dramatic because of all of the burning and flames. It's the same idea of **to go down in flames**, really.
- Harp: Yes, **to crash and burn**.
- Maura: So, let's give a couple examples of **to crash and burn**, too.

- Maura: How's it going? You look pretty tired.
- Harp: I'm so tired right now.
- Maura: Oh, what's going on?
- Harp: I'm just working so hard on this new project. I'm putting all this energy. We've never done a project like this before, so I'm tired.
- Maura: OK, well, I hope it doesn't **crash and burn** on you. I hope all your work **pays off**.
- Harp: I hope so too, because it's the first time we've done something like this, so I really hope it works out.
- Maura: Good luck.
- Harp: Thanks.

- Maura: So in this case, there's a possibility that this project you're working on might not work very well, might be a disaster, which is when we could use the expression **to crash and burn**.
- Harp: Yes and because it's a new project and we're putting a lot of time and energy into it, if it failed it would be quite dramatic.
- Maura: Yup, for sure. So let's give one more example. This time let's talk about a concert.

- Harp: How was the concert last night?

Maura: It was crazy! But not in a good way, actually.

Harp: Oh no, what happened?

Maura: Well, at one point, the lead singer **was so out of it**, he couldn't even remember the words and then people starting getting really mad and **booing** and screaming at them to get off the stage and then they started throwing things and eventually the drummer just walked off. So, they totally crashed and burned.

Harp: Wow, that sounds like a really bad concert.

Maura: I don't think if they came back, anyone would go. It was really bad.

Harp: Oh, really, that bad. Wow.

Maura: So there's an example of a band, of a concert, that crashed and burned. It didn't end very well and it was very memorable for all the people at the concert.

Harp: Yes.

Maura: Now, let's look at our last expression.

Harp: Yes, the last expression is **to go out with a bang**.

Maura: Yes, **to go out with a bang**. And this expression is very similar to the first two, but a little bit different.

Harp: Yes, the end of something is very memorable or spectacular but it could be positive or negative.

Maura: Right. So our first two expressions, **to go down in flames** and **to crash and burn**, were always negative. And this expression, **to go out with a bang**, could be positive, so that's different from the first two.

Harp: So if you think of *bang* it's like a loud sound: BANG. It's very dramatic and spectacular, so when something **goes out with a bang**, it's dramatic.

Maura: Yeah. So, let's give a couple examples with this expression, too.

Harp: Hey, did you quit your job yet?

Maura: Oh no, but I plan on doing it tomorrow and I'll tell ya, I'm **going out with a bang**.

Harp: You sound so devious. What're you gonna do?

Maura: Well, I'm gonna tell my boss what I really think of him and just not gonna hold anything back and I'm walking outta there **on the spot**. I'm not even gonna give notice.

Harp: Wow. You're really gonna **go out with a bang**. Are you sure you wanna do this?

Maura: Yeah, I hate my boss.

Harp: I know, but what if you need a reference or something in the future?

Maura: Honestly, I'm at the point where I don't even care.

Harp: OK.

Harp: So in that example, someone is going to quit her job, but not with giving in the letter of notice, saying that, "Hi, I would like to resign," with two weeks' notice, like most people do. In this example, there was gonna be yelling and telling the truth about what they thought about the boss. It was gonna be very dramatic.

Maura: Right. And that is a negative example of how this expression can be used. So **to go out with a bang** by yelling and creating conflict is not good.

Harp: No, you're definitely **burning your bridges** there.

Maura: So now let's look at another example, but this time, we're going to use the expression **to go out with a bang** in a positive example.

Harp: Yes, let's do it. This one's gonna be fun.

Maura: So how was the concert last night?

Harp: It was amazing.

Maura: Oh, nice.

Harp: Yeah. They sang all their classics, and at the end, they really **went out with a bang**. There were fireworks and lights exploding. It was crazy!

Maura: Wow, that does sound exciting.

Harp: Yeah, it was such a good show.

Maura: So, there's an example where **to go out with a bang** was used in a positive way. So, it was a very exciting, spectacular end to the concert, but it wasn't negative at all.

- Harp: No, it was a great concert, with lots of fireworks at the end.
- Maura: And if you'll notice, when we were talking about the expression **to crash and burn**, we also gave an example with a concert, but because **to crash and burn** is always negative, that concert didn't end well.
- Harp: Nope, but this one was very positive.
- Maura: OK, so let's go over our expressions from this episode one more time.
- Harp: OK, so we started with **to go down in flames**.
- Maura: And then we talked about the very similar expression, **to crash and burn**.
- Harp: And these both mean to end in a very memorable and dramatic way, but always in a negative situation.
- Maura: And then the last expression was **to go out with a bang**, which could be used in a positive or negative sense.
- Harp: Yes, when you **go out with a bang**, it's positive or negative, but it's, again, a spectacular or dramatic end.
- Maura: So, let's **go out with a bang** for this episode. Woo hoo!
- Harp: Woo hoo!
- Maura: So, we hope you enjoyed this episode. And if you have any other ideas or feedback for us, don't hesitate to contact us.
- Harp: Yeah, send us an email, write a comment on the Culips website or on Facebook.
- Maura: And we'll talk to you soon. This has been Maura.
- Harp: And Harp.
- Maura: See you later!
- Harp: Bye everyone!

Detailed Explanation

To go down in flames

As we say in this episode, this is an expression that talks about a dramatic end to something. **To go down in flames** is always used to talk about a negative situation.

The origin of this expression is the idea of an airplane literally going down in flames, crashing. This expression is now used to talk about people ending things in a dramatic way.

Here is an example with **to go down in flames**:

Ida: I can't believe Jerome forgot his speech last week.

Emmanuel: I know. It was horrible. First he went off topic, and then he started crying!

Ida: He really **went down in flames**.

To be up

This is an expression that is commonly used to talk about sports scores. **To be up** means to be winning. In this episode, we say that a sports team **is up** 4-nothing. This means that the score in the game is 4 points for the team that is *up*, and nothing (0 points) for the other team. If our team had 6 points and the other team had 2, we would say that our team **was up** 6-2. When talking about sports scores, the higher score is always said first.

Sometimes the score is not said with **to be up**. Someone could also say something like, "**We were up in the first period**," without mentioning the specific score. In cases like this, the number of points is not said, but we still know who was winning.

Another way to use this expression is to talk about the difference between two scores. For example, we could say that our team **was up** by 10. This means that our team had 10 more points than the other team, although it doesn't specify exactly how many points each team had.

Here are a couple of examples with **to be up**:

Marc: So tell me about the game!

Dean: The other team **was up** at half-time, but we came back to win! It was really exciting.

Sandra: In the first half of the game, the score was 24-10, but then we somehow won!

Sean: How is it possible that the other team **was up** by 14 and yet you still managed to win the game?

Sandra: I guess we were lucky!

We can also use say *to be down*. This means the opposite of ***to be up***. We use it the same way, but with the opposite meaning. However, the higher score is still said first. So for example, if our team were losing by 15 points, we could say that our team was *down by 15*. If the score was 20-5 and we wanted to say it another way, we could say we were *down 20-5*.

To pour a glass of water over someone's head

In many American films and TV shows, this is what someone does when they are very upset with another person, usually in a setting like a restaurant. In real life, people don't actually do this very often. The type of example that we used in this episode is probably the most common one. A woman gets angry with a man while they're in a restaurant, and the woman stands up and **pours a glass of water over his head**, or throws a glass of water or another beverage in his face (just the liquid, though, not the glass itself!).

To create a scene/To make a scene/To cause a scene

When someone **makes a scene** or **creates a scene** or **causes a scene**, it means that they are acting in a negative and dramatic way in public, drawing a lot of attention to themselves. When someone **makes a scene**, they are usually reacting to something that they do not like. **To create a scene**, **to make a scene**, and **to cause a scene** have the same meaning. We can use them each in the same way.

Here is an example using ***to make a scene***:

Adam: When Alison and I got to the restaurant last night, we were told that we would have to wait for an hour to get a table.

Sara: Uh oh. Did Alison **make a scene**? I know she hates waiting.

Adam: Yeah, she got very upset and yelled. It was kind of embarrassing.

To crash and burn

As we mention in this episode, ***to crash and burn*** means the same thing as *to go down in flames*. It refers to a dramatic and negative end to something. This expression also relates to a plane crashing and burning, which is obviously very dramatic.

Here is one more example with ***to crash and burn***:

Henry: Jeff went out last night and told his girlfriend of only three weeks that he loved her and wanted to be the father of her children. She got really freaked out and left. Now she's not answering any of his phone calls.

Mikah: Wow. That relationship really crashed and burned!

To pay off

This expression, **to pay off**, usually talks about the reward of hard work. If something **pays off**, it means that you have been rewarded for your hard work. For example, if we work hard at a subject at school, and then we get a good mark at the end of the year, we can say that our hard work **paid off**.

In this episode, we give the example of someone working hard on a project. This person hopes the hard work on the project will **pay off**. In this case, the reward could be creating an excellent project or feeling appreciated at work.

Here's another example with **to pay off**:

Fiona: We're all practicing our lines to make sure we can put on the best play possible next week.

Helen: That's great. I'm sure all your practicing will **pay off**.

We can also simply use the word **pay** to have a similar meaning. For example, we could say that it **pays** to work hard at school, because we'll get good marks.

Here's an example with **to pay** used in this sense:

Student: I'm very happy with the mark I got on my math test. I really studied hard, so I guess I shouldn't be surprised.

Teacher: That's right, you shouldn't be surprised. It **pays** to work hard, as you can see!

To be out of it

If someone is **out of it**, it means that they're distracted, or they don't have a lot of energy. It may even seem like they're almost asleep. As we say in this episode, if a singer in a band **is out of it**, he would obviously not be very entertaining. He would not be energetic, and may even forget some of the words to the songs!

Here's another example:

Carey: I shouldn't have gone to that party last night.

Danielle: Why not?

Carey: I was really, really tired, and I didn't feel like talking to anyone.

Danielle: Yeah, I thought you seemed a little **out of it**.

To boo

As we say in this episode, you can **boo** at a concert if you don't like it. **To boo** is a way to show the performers that you're not happy with their performance. All you do is yell the word **boo** and they'll know what you mean!

You can also **boo** *someone off the stage*, which would mean that you **booed** so much that the band walked off the stage.

Here's an example with **to boo** *someone off the stage*:

Christine: That band last night was so terrible. I can't believe I paid money to see them.
Kevin: Yeah, I'm glad they got **booed** off the stage. I was ready to leave after their first song.

To go out with a bang

As Maura and Harp said, this can be either a positive or negative expression. Either way, **to go out with a bang** is to end something in a very dramatic way. If you **go out with a bang**, people will remember it!

Here's one more positive example with **to go out with a bang**:

Trevor: Your presentation was great!
Lucy: Thanks! We really wanted **to go out with a bang**, so we decided to hand out all the free stuff at the end so that people would really remember us.

On the spot

When you have to do something **on the spot**, it means that you have to do it without warning, without knowing beforehand that you're going to have to do it. **On the spot** can also be used when someone has to do something without a lot of preparation. The way it's used in this episode, the woman is quitting her job without warning. She's just going to walk out of her office **on the spot**, without giving the customary two weeks' notice.

If you're doing something without a lot of preparation, you can also be doing something **on the spot**. You have to think quickly if you need to do something **on the spot**.

Here's an example with **on the spot**:

Jeff: That was a stressful meeting! I had to do a presentation right there **on the spot**. My manager didn't mention anything about it to me beforehand. I was NOT prepared.
Doug: Yikes! I hope it went well anyway.

You can also **put someone on the spot**, which means that you put them in an unexpected situation or ask them a difficult question that they can't or don't want to answer, sometimes in front of a lot of people. In the example above, Jeff's manager **put Jeff on the spot** during the meeting because he didn't tell Jeff about the presentation beforehand.

Here's another example with **to put someone on the spot**:

Amanda: Did you see that interview with the president last night? Wow!

Heather: Yeah, that reporter really asked him some tough questions. She really **put him on the spot**.

To burn bridges

If you **burn bridges**, it means that you ruin your relationship with someone. If you don't act well in a situation, you can ruin your relationship with a person or group of people so that you will no longer have a good connection with them. In the future, you will not be able to contact that person if you need to because the relationship was ruined.

If you think about a bridge, it connects two places, like the two sides of a river. If you burn it, those two places are no longer connected. In this idiom, the bridge represents the relationship between two people. If there's no relationship, then nothing connects them.

As we say in this episode, the woman who quits her job on the spot in a rude way will **burn her bridges** with her employer, because she is planning to be very negative and dramatic when she quits, so the employer will not be likely to want to help her out in any way in the future. This expression is often used to talk about people quitting a job or leaving an employer in a rude or unprofessional way.

People often give advice not to ruin any relationships by saying *Don't burn your bridges*. It's a general rule of thumb in North American culture that it's never a good idea to **burn any bridges**, because you never know when you might want that contact in the future, whether to provide a job reference or to help you out in some other way.

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

Sylvia: I'm quitting my job and I want to tell my boss where she can make improvements in her company. Do you think that's a good idea?

Don: Yeah. Just make sure that you do it in a professional, polite way. I'm sure she'll appreciate your advice. Just make sure you're not rude about it, because you don't want **to burn any bridges**.

Quiz

1. What is the literal origin of *to go down in flames*?

- a) a lit match falling to the ground
- b) a person on fire
- c) a ball of flames being thrown
- d) an airplane on fire that is falling from the sky

2. If the Tigers are playing the Red Sox and the Tigers are up 3-2, who is winning?

- a) the Tigers
- b) the Red Sox
- c) It's a tie.
- d) No one has scored any points yet.

3. In North American movies, when does someone usually pour a glass of water, or another drink, over someone's head?

- a) when they're really thirsty
- b) when they're mad
- c) when the other person is really hot
- d) when the other person is sad

4. Jack and Tyler meet at the mall.

Jack: Where were you?! I've been waiting here like a fool for one hour!

Tyler: Jack, relax. Don't _____.

Please fill in the blank with the appropriate expression.

- a) be so easy-going
- b) make a scene
- c) steal the scene
- d) go down in flames

5. All of Jon's efforts to get more clients for his new business paid off.

What does this mean?

- a) Jon got more clients.
- b) Jon did not get more clients.
- c) Jon's clients have paid him.
- d) Jon's clients have not paid him.

6. If you're performing a concert, what do you NOT want to hear from the people at your show?
- a) "Boo!"
 - b) "Yeah!"
 - c) "Wow!"
 - d) "Woo!"
7. Why is the expression *to go out with a bang* different from the other two expressions discussed in this episode?
- a) *To go out with a bang* is not always negative.
 - b) *To go out with a bang* is always positive.
 - c) *To go out with a bang* means to use a gun.
 - d) *To go out with a bang* is not different from the other expressions.
8. If someone wants you to help them on the spot, what does that mean?
- a) They do not want your help.
 - b) They want you to help them get to a certain place.
 - c) They want you to help them in that moment.
 - d) They want you to help them tomorrow at the same time.
9. What advice is often given to people who are quitting their jobs?
- a) Don't burn your bridges.
 - b) Burn your bridges.
 - c) Don't forget to burn your bridges.
 - d) Bridges are to be burned.

Answers

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